

## Irwin could be called 'Mr. Consistency'

Hale Irwin came out of a slump of sorts recently and won the 1979 U.S. Open.

Wins didn't come for Irwin in 1978 — for the first time since '72. All Irwin did last year was cash more than \$191,000 in checks, make every cut and finish in the top 10 an amazing 13 of 22 times.

His earnings were the most ever in a season on the PGA tour without a victory, and his string of making 86 consecutive cuts was the third longest in tour history. Irwin last missed a cut at the 1975 Tucson Open.

In 1978 Irwin was a runnerup twice; he finished third or tied for third four times. Aside from a four-tournament "slump," in which his worst finish was a tie for 40th, Irwin never went longer than two starts without a top-10 showing.

A typical four-event stretch looked like this: Tied for fifth in the Kemper Open, tied for fourth in the U.S. Open and Western Open, and tied for third in the IVB-Philadelphia Classic.

Perhaps 1977 was Irwin's most satisfying of his 10 years on the tour. He won three tournaments — a personal high — and his most notable performance came in the Colgate Hall of Fame Classic. In the event, Irwin devastated Pinehurst's revered No. 2 course in a record smashing 264 — 20 under par — to win by five strokes.

He also passed the \$200,000 mark in season earnings for the third consecutive time, a feat equaled in the same years by just one other player — Jack Nicklaus.

Irwin left the University of Colorado

in 1968 with a degree in marketing, an NCAA golf title and the honor of having been selected twice as an All-Big Eight Conference defensive back. He joined the PGA tour that fall and climbed steadily on the money list each year through 1976.

Although he twice won the Heritage Classic on the demanding Harbour Town Links on Hilton Head Island, S.C., Irwin was among the less familiar U.S. Open champions when he captured that major championship in 1974 at Winged Foot.

In 1975 he won his first Atlanta Classic and also the Western Open at Butler National. In 1976 he won — two weeks apart — at Los Angeles and Orlando. His second-place finish in the 1976 World Series lifted him over \$1 million in career earnings.



HALE IRWIN

## Zoeller shows steady improvement

Fuzzy Zoeller's statistics have improved greatly since he joined the PGA tour after finishing qualifying school in 1974.

From 1975 through 1978 his money-winnings have jumped by \$45,239, \$23,860 and \$32,638, respectively. During that span, he has lowered his position on the money list by 90, 16 and 20 places.

Zoeller's best opportunities for victory in 1978 came in a three-tournament stretch in April. At the Greater

Greensboro Open he tied for second with Jack Renner, one stroke behind winner Seve Ballesteros. Two starts later, after missing the cut in the Houston Open, Zoeller tied for second again, this time in the First NBC-New Orleans Open.

In the New Orleans event, Zoeller opened 70-65-70 and entered the final round tied for the lead with Lon Hinkel, Gibby Gilbert, Gary Player and Homero Blancas. Zoeller and Gilbert posted five-under 67s and then

watched as Hinkle birdied the last hole for a 66.

Until the Ed McMahon-Quad Cities Open of 1976, Zoeller attracted attention on the PGA Tour principally because of his distinctive first name and the extreme length of his shots.

After that event's first round, Zoeller strolled into the press room at Oakwood and said, "I was told to come down for an interview."



FUZZY ZOELLER

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