

Local close in O&E tourney

By DOUG FUNKE



Bill Curtis, a Farmington resident and a former O&E Golf Tournament winner, tied for first place in the Championship Flight last weekend only to finish third in a playoff. (Photo by Bill Gibson)

To say that the Observer & Eccentric Men's Golf Tournament gets more exciting and competitive every year would be an understatement.

Sudden-death playoffs were necessary to decide titles in both the Championship Flight and Flight 1, while the winner in Flight 2 belated the runner-up there by only one shot.

The 222 golfers who signed up for the 36-hole tournament experienced beautiful course and weather conditions last weekend at Whispering Willows Municipal Golf Course in Livonia. The closeness of the competition reflected those conditions.

Jerry Thomas, a 20-year-old Livonia resident, grabbed top honors in the Championship Flight by winning a sudden-death playoff over Bill Curtis, from Farmington, and Roger Springsteen, a Plymouth resident.

All three tied after 36 holes with scores of 144.

Thomas sank an 18-inch birdie putt on the 460-yard par-5 first hole to win the championship.

Springsteen, whose birdie putt lipped the cup, earned the second trophy by scoring a par on the second extra hole to Curtis' bogey.

Curtis left the ball in a trap on his third shot at the first hole to effectively take himself out of contention.

Ironically, Thomas played with Curtis five years ago when Thomas first entered the O&E tournament. Curtis won that year.

TO FURTHER ADD to the playoff drama, Springsteen was Thomas' physical education teacher at Bryant Jr. High.

If that weren't enough, Curtis and Springsteen were paired together Sunday during the second round of the tourney.

Thomas, a Plymouth Salem graduate who attends the University of Detroit, put together rounds of 74-70 on the 6,265-yard par 71 course. The 70 was the first time Thomas has broken par in a round during his golfing career.

"I flipped the very same putt (the tournament winner) in the first two rounds. 'Didn't you see me shaking (during the playing)?" asked Thomas.

"With the exception of putting on number one both of those days, my short putting was very, very clutch," Springsteen turned in the best individual round of the tourney with his 69 Saturday. He recorded an eagle, two birdies, 13 pars and a pair of bogeys.

Springsteen said that the putter was his best friend during the round. "I think I only had 27 putts yesterday (Saturday)," he said. "The putter started to desert me today (Sunday)."

Springsteen followed his round of 69 with 75.

CURTIS, MEANWHILE, expressed annoyance with how he lost a couple of strokes here and there during the competition.

"I missed a 12 inch putt today (Sunday) on 15 and took a two-stroke penalty yesterday on number 11 when I hit the ball into the woods and couldn't find it (one stroke penalty for loss of ball, plus loss of distance on shot, in effect a loss of two strokes), said Curtis.

"I three-putted the last hole yesterday," he added. "When you go back and think what you did..."

Richard Wheeler, a Westland resi-

dent, defeated Kim Rzetelny, a Livonian, in a sudden-death playoff for the Flight 1 title. Wheeler had rounds of 79-75, while Rzetelny carded 76-78.

Wheeler earned a nine-foot birdie putt on the first extra hole to win the playoff.

"Believe it or not, chipping and putting were equally (helpful)," said Wheeler. "I was getting down in two whether I was on or off the green. Putting was the main thing today (Sunday). I made them when I needed to."

Wheeler said that he had been so disappointed in how he had been playing lately that he hadn't played in several weeks until just prior to the O&E tourney.

TOM BLAZER, among the final golfers to complete the tourney, claimed the Flight 2 championship with a 161 total on rounds of 82-79. The West Bloomfield resident edged Nick Lubnik, who lives in Farmington Hills, by a single shot.

Lubnik shot rounds of 80-82.

"Today's (Sunday's) round was so brutal - I was playing so lousy," said Blazer. "My short game wasn't really sharp, but it was keeping me in there, I guess."

Jack Quigley, a Westland resident, won the Flight 3 title with the biggest margin of the tourney - five strokes. Quigley shot 90-85 for a 175 total. An-

gelo Fratarconcelli, from Canton, landed second with a score of 181 on rounds of 87-94.

Quigley, who has been golfing 35 years, was competing in his first O&E tournament.

THE GOLFERS were also competing for net (handicap-adjusted scores) honors.

Bob Jamrog, from Livonia, who carries an eight handicap, had a net score of 135 with an actual 151. His net score was the best in the Championship Flight.

Al Cieslak, from Canton, and Bob Manning, Livonia, tied for low-net honors in Flight 1 - 133. Cieslak, who carries a 14 handicap, shot an actual 161 and Manning, with an 11 handicap, fired an actual 155.

Rudy Sedlacek, a Livonian with an 18 handicap, and Brent Sheldon, from Westland, who sports a 21 handicap, tied for low net in Flight 2 at 128. Sedlacek scored an actual 164, Sheldon, 170.

See results on P. 8B

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