Longfellow Holds Off Jones, Despite Final 78 in Amateur

By CRAIG HARPER
Camera Sports Writer

Maybe Gary Longfellow felt sorry for everybody else.

The 29-year-old airline co-pilot from Lakewood had owned the Colorado Golf Association Stroke Play Championship for the first three days at the Boulder Country Club, firing rounds of 68, 67 and 64 while wrestling to an imposing 15-shot lead heading into today’s final round.

But then, as they say, a funny thing happened.

You’ve heard that Longfellow was playing the final nine holes in the U.S. Open at Cherry Hills Country Club, his hot streak turned to ice and the former Colorado Open champion slipped to a seven-over-par 78.

Meanwhile, Steve Jones, a 19-year-old sophomore-to-be at the University of Colorado nearly stole the winner’s crown.

That’s “nearly,” because for Jones to have won outright, he would have had to shave, 6, which, of course, he didn’t.

Jones settled for a one-over 73 on a day when the pin placements were so demanding that Bill Leffler was the only player to break par with a 68.

Still, Jones made up seven shots on Longfellow, who finished the tournament with a 23-hole total of 279, two better than Jones, whose highest round was a 73 on Friday, wound up four shots back at 283, or 14 strokes ahead of Leffler.

Actually, Jones was just four behind with nine holes to go, having watched Longfellow struggle to a seven-over 68 on the front nine.

But then, when Longfellow teed up on the 12th, perhaps thinking he was Andy North on the day he won, Longfellow made a miraculous par on the 11th hole and Jones never could cut the lead of the rest of the way. They both made pars through 15 and then Longfellow missed the 15th green and took a bogey while Longfellow got his pars, regained the stroke lead on 16 when Longfellow’s approach landed right under the birdie chance, and took the bogey, and they held that lead on the final two holes.

“We did well and didn’t give up,” said Jones, a fierce competitor who was much more experienced on the course than the more methodical and more experienced Longfellow.

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Leaders’ Cards For par

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State Amateur

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Steve Jones... fires final round 71 at BCC.

“Ok, ya, I’m disappointed with today’s play,” said Longfellow, “but I played to win. I played this course yesterday and made a lot of putts.”

Longfellow admitted the 15th hole was probably the turning point.

As he had been doing most of the day, Longfellow hit his tee shot left and could hardly find the fairway sand trap. Jones, who drove the ball the middle of the fairway, knocked his approach about 22 feet away and all Longfellow could do was place his second shot of the green.

But then Longfellow chipped it to within six feet and made his par to remain up one instead of just tying with eight holes left.

“Today was the first day I didn’t hit a shot in one,” Longfellow said.

“Then I hit a good three iron on the next hole at par and that kind of settled me down.

After the fairway I had gone off 11 ahead to lose and that’s not too good. Then you got to wondering and you’re going to start making pars.

Jones, of course, felt he had a chance to win the tournament after the front nine but said: “Nothing could stop me. I couldn’t do anything on it. It is a lot harder to play with the leader. They did it last year and I didn’t know where I stood. Maybe that was my problem.”

Jones led by two strokes heading into the final round but was surprised by Bill Olive and lost by two strokes tying Longfellow for second.

Mostly, Jones found himself in contention because of Longfellow’s problems. After one round par on 1 and 2, Longfellow dropped 3 from the back nine for a bogey and they were even at 0 on the final hole.

The team won over the green on #13 three-putted from 36 say on 2, looked his drive in a 6 and a crown pushback on #18.

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