

Meeker golfer wins state title

By GARY BAINES
Camera Sports Writer

DENVER — In the end, the best amateurs from the posh country club and public golf courses couldn't catch the guy from the 9-hole layout in Meeker.

Shawn McGechie, a greenskeeper from the Meeker course in northwest Colorado, led from wire to wire to win the State Stroke Play tournament at The Ranch Country Club. His 1-under-par score of 70 Sunday — the best of the final round — left him at 4-under 280, four shots better than former University of Colorado golfer Mark Crabtree and 1989 State Match Play champ Kent Moore.

Crabtree was McGechie's closest challenger Sunday, but couldn't manage any better than a 72.

In the last four State Stroke Play tournaments, Crabtree has finished fifth, fourth, third and second. "That's kind of strange, isn't it," he said. "I don't know what that means for next year. But I guess I can compare that record with about anyone over the last four years."

One player who can come close to matching it is Moore, the Cherry Hills Country Club member who won the Stroke Play in 1986, was 12th in '87, third in '88 and second this year. On Sunday, he closed with a 71.

But really, no one made a run at McGechie during the final 18 holes. He started the day with a two-stroke lead and by the time he finished nine holes, he was up by five. Crabtree narrowed the gap to three on the par-4 10th when he rolled in a 12-foot birdie and McGechie 3-putted from 15 feet for his only bogey of the day. But after McGechie parred the next hole and Crabtree bogeyed, the Meeker golfer never held less than a four-stroke edge the rest of the way.

"Shawn played very steady all day, but neither Tom (McGraw, who was also in the final group) or I put any pressure on him," said Crabtree. "We never really got an opportunity to see what he could do. Maybe it would have been a little different if someone had been within one or two shots. But the biggest tribute you can pay to Shawn is that he led start to finish. That isn't easy to do."

McGechie agreed.

"The chances of that happening aren't very good," said the 25-year-old. "This is a strong field. I feel fortunate."

It's even more surprising because a golfer few people had heard of, much less expected to win, had accomplished the feat. McGechie's biggest golf accomplishment coming into the Stroke Play was being the low amateur at the 1988 Rocky

STATE STROKE PLAY

Results after Sunday's final round of the State Stroke Play golf tournament held at the par-71 Ranch Country Club course in Denver. Player's club follows his name.

Shawn McGechie, Meeker	69-68-73-70—280
Mark Crabtree, Collindale	74-70-68-72—284
Kent Moore, Cherry Hills	71-72-70-71—284
Tom McGraw, Riverdale	71-72-69-73—285
Carter Mathies, Hiwan	74-70-71-70—285
Shane Bertsch, Bear Creek	72-72-70-72—286
Gary Longfellow, Lakewood	73-71-71-71—286
Scott Petersen, Valley	73-71-71-71—286
Terry Russell, Mead. Hills	71-68-75-73—287
Monte Montgomery, Bkcliff	70-72-73-72—287
Trey Maples, Meridian	71-71-73-73—288
Steve Murphy, Hyland Hills	75-70-71-73—289
Dave McCleave, Ci. Park 9	75-68-73-74—290
Ray Makloski, Trinidad	71-76-70-73—290
Charles Brown, Peterson	77-69-72-72—290
Dave Holobaugh, Pinehurst	71-70-78-71—290
Brad Broughton, Bookcliff	71-75-70-75—291
Erik Heiny, Highland Hills	78-70-72-71—291
Charlie Luther, Denver CC	73-70-74-75—292
Rick Petri, Highland Hills	75-70-73-74—292
Rick DeWitt, Indian Tree	72-71-74-76—293
Tim Glasgow, Hyland Hills	74-71-77-71—293
Dave Brown, Meridian	74-75-74-70—293
Greg Shakespeare, S. Sub.	72-74-73-75—294
Morgan Murphy, Salida	76-70-74-74—294
Donald Davis, La Junta	76-74-72-72—294
Scotty Hofer, The Meadows	72-70-71-82—295
Jeff Salter, The Ranch	75-73-71-76—295
Bill Boyd, Highland Hills	74-77-69-75—295
Bill Fowler, Rolling Hills	72-74-74-75—295
Joe Brady, The Meadows	79-70-73-73—295
Eric Tis, The Pinery	76-69-73-78—296
Steve Wash, The Ranch	74-73-75-74—296
Ted Parker, Battle. Mesa	77-72-73-74—296
Bob Lynn, Twin Peaks	81-68-73-76—298
Tom Kozney, The Ranch	72-75-76-75—298
Randall Harrist, S. Suburb.	73-69-74-82—298
John Segelke, Cherry Hills	74-77-69-78—298
Erich Helmich, Snowmass	74-70-76-78—298
Mike Mulhern, Valley	76-75-70-78—299
Matt Julander, Columbine	73-78-73-75—299
Bob Heiny, Highland Hills	77-68-80-74—299
Bill Werley, Pinehurst	74-77-76-72—299
Michael Somma, Ranch	74-73-73-80—300
Dave Boisture, Glenmoor	73-73-77-77—300
Blake Sterling, Wellshire	78-73-73-76—300
Bob Lowry, Overland	72-77-73-79—301
Bob Russo, Bear Creek	78-73-76-74—301
Mark Spinner, Hyland Hills	76-74-75-77—302
Brian Soerensen, Gleneagle	72-76-72-83—303
Scott Peterson, Denver CC	71-77-74-81—303
Brian Wherry, Cherry Hills	79-70-83-71—303
Stan Gonzales, High. Hills	80-70-75-79—304
Bobby Anderson, Ch. Hills	77-74-75-78—304
Pat Bowe, Aurora Hills	73-76-77-78—304
Harry King, City Park	78-71-75-81—305
Bill Winkler, Lakewood	76-74-77-78—305
John Sostmann, Columbine	76-73-78-79—306
Steve Hull, Foothills	71-74-78-84—307
Brad Neher, S. Suburban	78-73-79-81—311
Dave Farabaugh, Ranch	80-70-75-88—313
John Pappadakis, C. Sprngs	74-77-80-82—313

Mountain Open.

"It's kind of surprising to win," he admitted. "But you've got to always think you're going to win."

Even with his big advantage down the stretch Sunday, McGechie wasn't exactly feeling secure.

"It sure didn't feel like a four-shot lead out there," he said. "But my target score was a 69 and I tried not to pay attention to what the other guys (in the group) were doing."

They weren't doing much, particularly at the start of the round. Crabtree and McGraw, McGechie's closest pursuers going into the day, shot 2 over and 4 over, respectively, on the front nine to lose ground. It certainly didn't help their cause when both 3-putted No. 9 from 25 feet for bogeys, while McGechie 2-putted from 60 feet for par.

Another key point came at the par-5 12th. Both Crabtree and McGraw narrowly missed eagles and wound up with tap-in birdies. But after a bad chip, McGechie rolled in a tough 20-footer for a birdie of his own to maintain his big lead.

"As far as I was concerned, that was pretty much the tournament right there," said Crabtree.