

Maples needs birdie on 18th for state win

By GARY BAINES
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With five shots separating the top two golfers at the start of the day, Sunday's final round of the State Stroke Play amateur tournament could easily have turned into a runaway. Instead, it produced something akin to a photo finish.

Trey Maples of Golden, who early in the round had built his lead to six shots, needed a 10-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole at Boulder Country Club to win the tournament by one stroke over University of Colorado golfer Jonathan Kaye.

Kaye led by a shot after 16 holes, but bogeyed No. 17 after a poor drive and could do no better than par on 18, allowing Maples to make up the two shots he needed.

The victory capped a phenomenal last three weeks for Maples, who also finished tied for second in the Colorado Open and qualified for the U.S. Amateur during that stretch.

"This is the first (Colorado Golf Association) tournament I've won and I've been playing them for 13 years," he said. "I guess the longer you wait, the sweeter it is."

Ironically, it's probably Maples last state amateur tournament as well as the 21-year-old plans to turn pro in early September.

On Sunday, Maples posted a 3-over-par 73 total to finish the tournament at 1-under 279. Kaye was at 280 following a 69 Sunday.

Kaye's CU teammate, 1991 Stroke Play champion Scott Petersen, birdied four of the last six holes for a 69 to come in tied for third with former Buff golfer Mark Crabtree at 281.

Crabtree has finished in the top three the last five years in this tournament, but has yet to win. On Sunday, he blew his chances on No. 14, three-putting from 5 feet — missing a tap-in in the process — and making double bogey. He went on to birdie 15, 16 and 17 for a 67, Sunday's best round, but it wasn't enough.

"It was a mental mistake," Crabtree said of No. 14. "I had just missed makeable putts on 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, and I was frustrated. ... This

round could have been a 63 or 64."

Two Boulder golfers, John Hamer and Chuck Melvin, shared fifth place at 287 after rebounding with final-round 69s.

Though both Crabtree and Petersen were on Maples' heels throughout the day, only Kaye, the State Public Links champion, caught or passed him.

Kaye fell behind by six shots when he bogeyed the first hole Sunday, but he closed the gap in a hurry on holes 4 through 8. In that stretch, Kaye chipped in twice for birdies (from 30 and 20 feet) and added a 2-foot birdie putt to make up all six shots and pull even. There were two-shot swings on holes 4 and 6, and a three-shot difference on the par-4 eighth, where Maples had tree trouble and later 3-putted for

double bogey.

Kaye said he wasn't surprised by how quickly he caught Maples, who shot a 3-over-par 38 on the front nine.

"Anything can happen in golf," Kaye said. But even after the front nine, when Maples admits he was frustrated, Kaye didn't think he was in charge. "Trey is a game competitor," he said. "I knew he wouldn't roll over."

And he didn't.

Maples regained the outright lead — by two — when Kaye bogeyed Nos. 10 (by missing a 2-foot putt) and 11.

Kaye then made another move at holes 14 through 16. He rolled in a five-foot birdie to pick up a stroke on the 14th and Maples needed an 8-footer to save par on 15. Then Kaye got another two-shot swing at the par-4 16th, draining a 12-foot birdie then

watching Maples lip out a 4-foot par attempt. That put Kaye in the sole possession of the lead for the first time Sunday.

"At that point, I was just hoping to get back to even (with Kaye) and make it go extra holes," said Maples. "I just kept grinding away."

Kaye admits making a tactical mistake on the 17th tee as he aimed up the right side of the fairway with his 3-wood. He pushed the shot slightly and it bounded underneath the edge of a large bush.

"Usually the best part of my game is the tee ball, but I almost missed that one completely," said Kaye.

From beside the tree, Kaye came up well short of the green and ended up with a bogey, which left things all tied going into the final hole.

After both players hit good drives on the par-4 18th, Maples put the pressure on by spinning his 164-yard 7-iron shot to 10 feet below the flagstick. Kaye missed the green short and right, then chipped up within 3½ feet. But Maples settled things by dropping his birdie putt.



Trey Maples