

Kuchar, Allen Tie With 70s

By JIM WARTERS

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Youthful Wally Kuchar is trying to win his second straight state golf championship and 36-year-old Tracy Allen is trying to win his first after both fired two-under-par 70s Thursday.

It was Allen's best start in the Florida State Amateur in four previous attempts, playing this time on his home course where he set the course record of 65 in 1967 and 1968.

"I thought, since the tournament is at Bay Hill, that I'd better give it one last gasp for this seasoned old veteran," quipped the Winter Park stock broker. "They'll be calling me durable Tracy Allen before long."

Allen posted his 70 more than an hour before Kuchar came home in the twilight to tie for the lead on the trying Arnold Palmer-owned course that was as stingy with sub-par rounds as Lyndon Johnson with the White House light bill.

"MY SCORE could have been better a lot easier than it could have been worse," said the 24-year-old Kuchar who moved from Indiana to the outskirts of Daytona Beach last October. A 1971 graduate of Arizona State, the slim blond is trying to add the 55th Florida Amateur crown to the Indiana title he won last year.

Both players had four birdies and two bogeys in their rounds over the

immaculately groomed Dr. Phillips course which hasn't yet been stretched out its full 7,055-yard length. And both leaders felt they could have been three or four shots lower if a few more putts had rattled home.

Some of the other golfers in the 187-man field which, with five previous state titleholders, boasts more talent than any previous amateur the past five years, were unable to solve the rolling fairways, multitude of sand traps and water hazards.

After barely getting into the lineup as an alternate, 1963 champion Ed Kirkland of Orlando began his round with a bogey, double bogey and triple bogey in the first four holes. Complaining of an arthritic wrist, the flamboyant barrister failed to turn in his scorecard and withdrew from the tournament.

Clearwater insurance agent Bob Rankin, winner in 1969, fired a pair of 40s, two shots better than 1967 champ and tournament record holder John Darr of Coconut Creek and three better than defending champion Randy Sansing of Lakeland.

AND CONSIDER the plight of Winter Park's William Richards who had a two-under 34 on the front nine and stumbled in with an horrendous 49.

Stalking Allen and Kuchar only one shot back were six 71 shooters, including University of Florida's All-America Gary Koch of Temple Terrace. Also at that figure was a surprised Gerry Grissom, past club champion at Rio Pinar.

Another six were at even par 72, marked by Fern Park golfer Ron Royer's steady 36-36. He was one of a half dozen Central Floridians with a chance to bring the area its first coveted Can Bowl since Kirkland's

triumph at Port St. Lucie eight years ago.

Other area golfers in contention with three more days of competition are Maitland's Lou Essex, Apopka's Hal Marchman and Bushnell's Karl Humes, all at 73. Matching the 73 figure was two-time amateur king Jack Veghte, Clearwater, who has never been worse than third since 1960.

Allen and Kuchar had tabbed themselves as pre-tournament

threats — Tracy on the basis of four club championships on the host layout and Wally for his victory in the Azalea Invitational at Charleston, S.C., this past April and local U.S. Open qualifying (74-74) at Longboat Key Golf Club last week.

Trimmed from an elephantine 161 pounds to fighting weight of 145, Allen also is remembered for a memorable round with Palmer

(Continued On Page 3-C, Col. 5)

Koch: No Pro's Life Right Now

ORLANDO — The lure of big money on the pro golf tour is strong and probably most of the amateurs gathered here for the 55th annual Florida State Golf Association Amateur Championship want a piece of the action.

Gary Koch of Temple Terrace and the University of Florida is no different. But the refreshingly different thing about this frank, 19-year-old star of the future is that he's put the goal in its proper perspective.

For Koch, who is nearing his 20th birthday and has won some significant titles in his short golf life, including the Florida Open, it's something that every golfer aspires to but he's certainly in no hurry.

"THE TEMPTATION is something," he said yesterday, relaxing at plush Bay Hill, the course Arnold Palmer calls home, "there's so much money out there but I want to finish school first."

Gary is finishing his second year at Florida and is majoring in public relations. He wants that degree.

"Oh, sure I want to play pro golf," he said. "If you're any good at all I think you owe it to yourself to try. But, it's still three years away for me."

Completing college is the most important thing right now and, his other major goal, "a spot on the Walker Cup team."

"EVERYTHING I do now is geared toward a berth on the Walker Cup squad. I want that more than anything.

"I'm only 19, I'm not really mature enough to play in the pros. The pressure would be too great."

And, there's always the possibility that he couldn't make it on the tour. He's thought of that.

"That's why I want to graduate, it's something to fall back on. I'm just not ready to live as a 30-year-old right now."

OF COURSE the pro tour gets no easier. Only a fraction of a stroke separates the big winners from the losers. The chances of having a phenomenal season like young Lanny Wadkins are few and far between.

"I remember when I played junior golf," said Koch. "I got to the top and maybe there were two or three others as

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good. Then I went into the bigger amateur group and there were a hundred as good or better than me."

He's making the grade in school so there is really no hurry to skip to the pros. After the tournament here, it's up to Atlanta for a shot at qualifying for the U.S. Open.

"THAT'S another good example of how tough it is to be a pro," said Koch. "Last year when I tried to qualify we were shooting for 30 spots. But, I played in the same field as Charles Coody, former masters champ, Gay Brewer and a few others that are used to the pressure."

He failed to qualify last year after passing the sectional trials. He got through the sectionals again this year, shooting 67-81.

"That 81 came because I was very tired and after my 67 I knew I had qualified."

Gary admits he could have shot better. He just let down after the 67.

"That's the difference between me and a pro. Things still bother me that wouldn't bother him. It's really a mental thing."

ON THAT note, he was called to the starting tee by FSGA executive director Bill Carey. Somehow, he seemed older and much wiser.

ORLANDO