

Wins 3rd Amateur Title

Veghte's Birdie Clinches Crown

15-Year-Old Shines 3C

By **LEN HARSH**
News-Press Sports Editor

Jack Veghte, 40-year-old Clearwater insurance executive, wrapped up his third Florida State Amateur golf championship with a birdie on the 17th hole at Lehigh Acres Country Club Sunday.

Veghte trailed Miami's Julian Arnold by three strokes entering the final round. As the gallery watched Veghte and Arnold battle, young Fred Ridley, a Stetson University law student, crept quietly into contention and finished second two strokes behind Veghte and two in front of Arnold.

"I went out trying to shoot a 69 for the day and I shot a 70," Veghte said. "Anytime you can shoot below par in the final round of the State Amateur you have a good chance."

Veghte fired a one-under-par 70 Sunday for a 72-hole total of 277, a new record for the Florida Amateur.

"The kid (Ridley) pulled to within a stroke of me on 16 and I needed that birdie on 17. I missed a short putt on 18 but I knew I could three-putt there and it didn't matter."

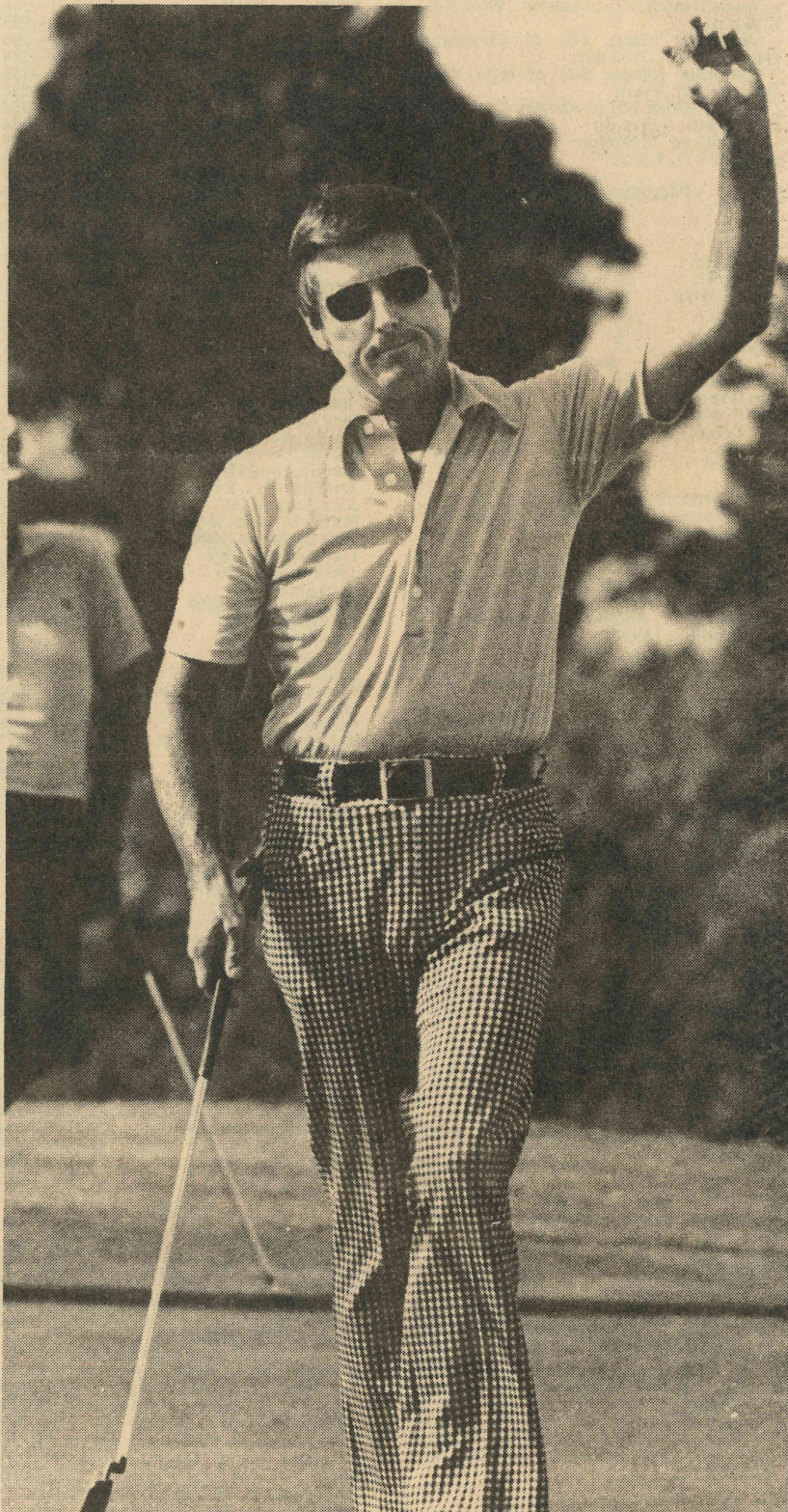
Veghte caught up with Arnold on the fourth hole as he played the first four holes two under par with birdies on one and four. But Arnold regained the lead when Veghte took a bogey on the ninth.

It was Veghte going in front on the 12th when he dropped a nine-foot putt for a birdie while Arnold missed a three-footer for bogey. Arnold missed another three-footer on the next hole. But Arnold got one stroke back on the 14th when he dropped a 10-foot putt for a bird.

But disaster struck Arnold on the 15th when he went in the water on his drive, hit a tree and wound up with a double bogey six. That put Arnold out of the running.

Ridley then made his charge as he parred No. 16, his birdie try hitting the cup and bouncing out less than a foot away. That left him a stroke behind Veghte, who missed a four-foot putt and took a bogey.

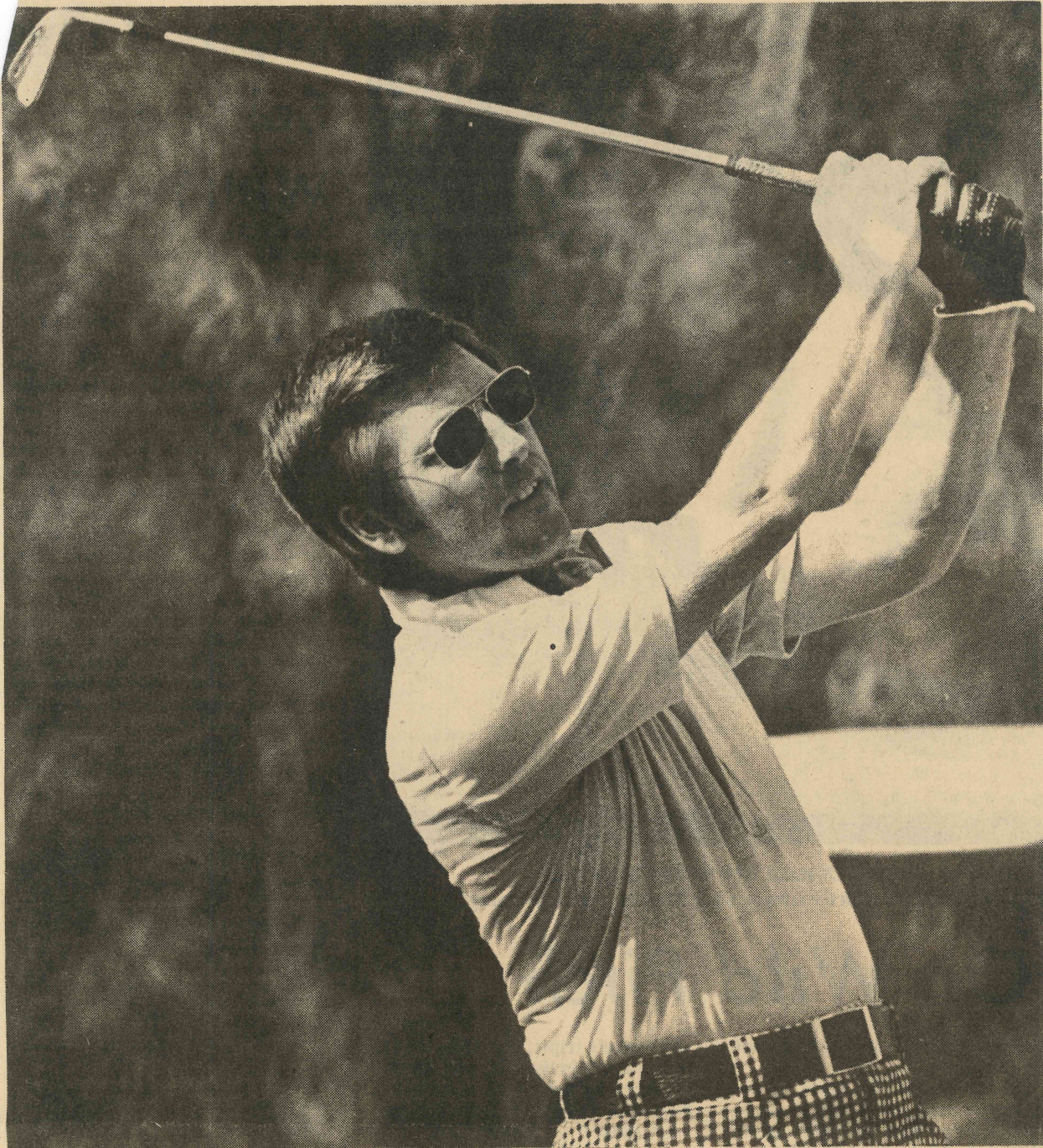
"I just ran out of time, there should have been another 18 holes," Ridley said as he walked off the final



News-Press Photo By Neil Grahame

Turn To **VEGHTE**, Page 3C

JACK VEGHTE ACKNOWLEDGES APPLAUSE
... after crucial birdie three on 17th hole



News-Press Photo By Neil Grahame

A SWEET SWING AND A PLEASED EXPRESSION MEAN IT'S A GOOD SHOT

... State Amateur champ Jack Veghte of Clearwater captured fancy of gallery with his picture swing

Veghte Dons Amateur Crown

From Page 1C

green. "A putt here or there and it could have been different."

Ridley had three putts rim the cup, two others go in and bounce out and just missed on several others.

Arnold was disappointed but was a gracious loser. "Naturally we all want to win," Arnold said. "I don't mind losing but it feels a lot better to lose when you play well. And I didn't play well today."

Arnold gave up golf for over 15 years and only started playing the game again less than five years ago.

"Maybe that's why I had the bad round," Arnold said. "I just wasn't used to the pressure."

A pair of Tampa golfers finished in tie for third. Tom Mikell had a final 8 for 285 and Ric Pearson toured the course in 69 for 285. Another stroke

back was University of Florida golfer Ben Duncan and Jack Shubert of Altamonte Springs.

Tied at 288 were Gary Schroeder of West Palm Beach, Bob Rankin of Clearwater, Bob Michael of Sarasota, George DeSears of Bradenton and John Jones of Tampa.

Larry Rinker of Stuart had the low round of the day, a five-under-par 66, and totaled 286 to capture the first flight silver. Jack Rountree of Lake City won the second flight at 291. Lew Smither of Sarasota was the third flight champion with 292 and H. O. Davis of Clearwater totaled 301 to lead the fourth flight.

Jay Williams of Sarasota, former Edison Community College golfer, shot 70 Sunday and finished at 196 to lead the fifth flight. Ed Stephens of Temple Terrace took honors in the sixth with 303. Chip Neptune of

Sebring was first in the seventh flight with 308 and Al Tidrow of St. Petersburg won the eighth flight with 316.

Miami Dolphin Charlie Babb fired 72 Sunday and finished second in the fourth flight, one stroke behind Davis. Former Florida State All-American Ron Sellers totaled 298 with a final round 75.

Southwest Florida scorers, who did not finish among the prize winners in their flights, included Bob Bradburn of North Fort Myers 303; Bill Hoffer, Lehigh Acres 328; Al Johns, Punta Gorda 295; Steve Kern, Fort Myers 303; Charlie McCormick, North Fort Myers 309; John McCreary, Lehigh Acres, 337; W. E. Morris, Naples, 304; Dan Pioli, Fort Myers, 330; Dan Sheffler, North Fort Myers, 301; Howard Wright, Fort Myers, 300; Steve Wiles, Fort Myers, 301; Larry Cunningham, Naples, 298.

Age No. Difference To Teenager Abell

By **LEN HARSH**
News-Press Sports Editor

David Abell doesn't respect his elders — on the golf course. Then again, he doesn't respect the other teenagers he plays against either.

He just goes out and tries to beat them all.

He beats a lot of the men two and three times his age and most of the youngsters his own age.

Abell is a 15-year-old who just completed playing in the Florida State Amateur at Lehigh Acres. He didn't win it, but Abell had the distinction of being the youngest player to make the championship flight.

The Fort Pierce youngster will be a junior at John Carroll High next year and is looking forward to adding to his already long string of victories.

A scratch golfer, Abell has picked up championships in the Future Masters, the Sebring Citrus Junior, the Florida Junior and the Junior Orange Bowl.

It was the Junior Orange Bowl championship which has given Abell the biggest enjoyment of his career.

"Gary Player invited the winner to South Africa and I was lucky enough to win," Abell said. "It was supposed to be for eight days but I liked it so well I stayed five weeks."

Young Abell had the opportunity to play golf with Player and picked up some golf tips from the little man who ranks among the world's best professionals.

While visiting in South Africa, Abell became quite a close friend to Player's son.

"We got to be pretty good friends," Abell said. "He is supposed to come over and spend some time visiting me pretty soon. We get along real good together."

A slender six-footer, Abell already hits the ball for distance and has a fine short game.

He comes by his golfing talent quite naturally and gets quite a bit of encouragement from his father, Dr. Embry Abell.

Dr. Abell, a native Kentuckian and graduate of the University of Louisville dental school, coached the Indian River Community College golf team for several years and currently is coaching the John Carroll team.

"It looks like David is going to

have pretty good size," Dr. Abell said. The father is slightly taller than his son but much heavier.

"He has always liked golf and we encourage him and back him all we can," Dr. Abell said. But he stressed the word "encourage" and hastened to make sure it wasn't "pushed."

The Abell family is close knit. When David finished his Saturday round he headed for the tennis courts to watch his sister play.

The future? David Abell doesn't have it spelled out but it does include golf and an education. First comes the final two years of high school and then college golf. After that, he'll play it by ear.

Meanwhile, he plans to play in as many tournaments as he can, including several this summer.

The State Amateur this year marked the eighth time Abell has been in Lehigh Acres for tournament play.

"I have been here six times for the junior event sponsored by the Florida State Women's Golf Association and once for the State Jaycees," Abell said. "It's getting to be almost like coming home to me. I'll be back in a few weeks for another junior tournament."

Abell had 146 for the first two rounds and then shot consecutive 75s on each of the next two rounds for a 296 total, well ahead of many in the championship flight.

He'll be back for another crack at the State Amateur next year.

Leaders in flights other than championship:

First Flight

Larry Rinker, Stuart, 75-73-72-66 — 286; Mark McConnell, Tampa, 75-73-72-69 — 289; Mike Parrish, Rockledge, 77-71-72-71 — 291; Joe Hodge, Tampa, 75-73-69-78 — 295; William Geisler, Maitland, 71-77-74-74 — 296.

Second Flight

Jack Rountree, Lake City, 74-75-71-71 — 291; Terry May, Longwood, 74-76-73-70 — 293; Bill Dotson, Auburndale, 76-73-74-72 — 295; Anthony Wilds, Winter Garden, 76-74-73-73 — 296; Skip Lujack, Valrico, 74-75-71-77 — 297; Kim Young, Orlando, 77-73-73-76 — 297.

Third Flight

Lew Smithers, Sarasota, 74-77-71-70 — 292; Gerald Grissom, Casselberry, 75-76-75-72 — 298; Mike Yahl, Naples, 74-76-72-79 — 301; Gary Tomisch, Sebring, 74-76-74-77 — 301; Barry House, Port St. Joe, 77-74-73-78 — 302.

Fourth Flight

H. O. Davis, Clearwater, 77-76-71-77 — 301; Charlie Babb, Plantation, 74-78-78-72 — 302; Lance Ball, Winter Haven, 75-77-75-75 — 302; Wayne Powers, North Fort Myers, 79-74-73-77 — 303; Rich Leckey, St. Petersburg, 73-79-75-77 — 304.

Fifth Flight

Jay Williams, Sarasota, 74-79-73-70 — 296; Karl Stewart, Winter Haven, 81-74-70-74 — 299; Steve Leblanc, Sarasota, 78-76-72-73 — 219; Bill Lemke, Lakeland, 74-79-76-71 — 300; Jim Vaughan, Fort Pierce, 77-77-75-74 — 303.

Sixth Flight

Ed Stephens, Temple Terrace, 77-78-76-72 — 303; Don Clites, Brandon, 79-78-73-75 — 305; Eric Slovenkay, Winter Park, 75-82-73-77 — 307; M. T. McInnis, Bradenton, 76-82-72-79 — 307; Bill Spiccia, Lehigh Acres, 81-75-74-78 — 308; Gene Martin, Boca Raton, 76-79-79-74 — 308.

Seventh Flight

Chip Neptune, Sebring, 79-79-75-75 — 308; Lee Hyatt, Lehigh Acres, 80-77-75-78 — 310; Robert Beeler, Sarasota, 81-78-73-79 — 311; Vic Jacobson, Sebring, 85-75-76 — 311; Dan Vaughan, Fort Pierce, 82-80-78-77 — 311.

Eighth Flight

Al Tidrow, St. Petersburg, 78-85-77-76 — 316; Ted Dickey, Fort Myers, 86-78-80-76 — 320; Mike Hosford, Tallahassee, 86-77-79-78 — 320; David Malt, Fort Myers, 85-81-77-78 — 321; Glenn Myers, Jr., Fort Myers, 81-85-72-83 — 321.

GOLF



**betty ann
rhodes**

St. Petersburg Times
Staff Writer

180 to battle for state title

The short but tight Lehigh Acres Country Club course, spruced up by recent rains, will greet a capacity field of 180 golfers today in the first round of the Florida Men's State Amateur Golf Championship.

A new champion is to be crowned in the 58th annual event since the 1974 champion, Jerry Pate of Pensacola, remained overseas after the Walker Cup matches to play in the British Amateur.

TWO CLEARWATER golfers, both former champions, are among those highly favored to take the vacant crown: Jack Veghte, who won in 1968 and 1970 and was a fourth place finisher last year, and fellow East Bay Country Club member Bob Rankin, the 1969 winner who finished in an eighth-place tie last year.

Ben Duncan and Dallas Apelgren will be carrying the major hopes of University of Florida golfers, as Andy Bean, the 1974 runnerup and Gator golf ace, has chosen to play in a northern tournament.

THE PAR 71, 6,498-yard course outside Fort Myers is the direct opposite of the long, highly respected Grenelefe course near Haines City, where Pate and Bean battled down to a one shot margin over the 72 holes last year.

"The premium will be on position and placement," said Bill Carey, executive director of the Florida State Golf Association. "The greens will give the players some trouble, too. They are small and undulating and well bunkered."

THE SAYING at Lehigh is "hit it straight or accept your fate." Among those entered in field which must have had a handicap of five or under by March 31 is Lt. Gov. Jim Williams of Ocala.

✓ ✓ ✓
Carl Candler, St. Petersburg's top blind golfer, is back in good health, and getting ready for the National Blind Golfers Association Championship in Toledo, Ohio.

Candler and his coach, Mike Wileman, will leave Tuesday for the tournament at Belmont Country Club.

It was Wileman, now in the Navy, who coached the 49-year-old Candler to a second-place finish in 1969. He has taken a 21-day leave to help Candler get his game in shape and the two have been spending six hours a day at Seminole Lake Country Club. It is paying off. Candler, through Wileman's eyes, knocked in putts of 45, 25 and 20 feet in one day last week.

A lung abcess and resulting complications kept Candler off the course for almost a year and out of last year's national championship.

✓ ✓ ✓
Junior golf in St. Petersburg will be getting an added boost this summer from Larry Madison, head professional and manager of Airco Flite 18 Golf Club near St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport.

Madison has announced four days of free golf clinics for boys and girls between 6 and 17.

Clinics will be June 17, June 24, July 1 and July 8. Ages and hours are: 6-8, 9 to 10 a.m.; 9-11, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.; 12-14, 1 to 2 p.m., 15-17, 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

The lessons will be given by Madison, Bill Schoot, and Frank Werner and clubs will be provided for youngsters unable to bring their own.

To register, telephone Airco, 576-1453. If there is enough interest, Madison may expand the program.

Arnold Blazes To Amateur Lead

By LEN HARSH

News-Press Sports Editor

"Golf is a game of concentration."

Julian Arnold of Miami made that statement Friday.

Saturday, Arnold showed exactly what he meant when he had the gray matter working and shot a sizzling seven-under-par 64 to take a three-stroke lead entering today's final 18 holes of the 58th Florida State Amateur Golf Championship at Lehigh Acres.

Playing the back nine first, Arnold made the turn at five under par with a torrid 31 and his final total of 64 was only a single shot off the course record.

Arnold lost a chance to tie the course record of 63, held by Bob Toski, when head pro Bill Vach penalized him a stroke for accidentally hitting his ball on the fifth hole. Vach said Arnold hit the ball with his putter while cleaning debris away from the ball.

Arnold caught up with 36-hole leader Jack Veghte of Clearwater on the 17th hole and took the lead on the second hole after they made the turn. A great wedge shot on the fourth hole — he put the ball less than a foot from the pin — gave Arnold a birdie and increased his lead to three strokes as Veghte took bogey on the hole.

"I was hitting the ball solid," Arnold said, "but more important I was thinking good. My putting was better today, I dropped a few long ones. It was a very good round and I'm extremely happy with it."

Arnold shared the lead after the first round with a 69 but dropped three strokes off the pace Friday when Veghte came up with 67. Arnold is now nine strokes under par with 204 while Veghte, who carded a one-under-par 70 Saturday, is six under and trails Arnold by three.

In at 209 for third place after a round of 69 was Fred Ridley of Winter Haven, a junior in the Stetson University law school. Ridley fired six birdies en

route to his 69, including a 40-foot putt from the edge of the green on No. 3.

Seven strokes back at 211 were Carter Parry of Sarasota and Ken Knox of Tallahassee. Parry fired a 69 and Knox 68 Saturday. Jack Shubert of Altamonte Springs was tied with Bob Rankin of Clearwater at 212.

Arnold, president of the Arnold Food Packaging Co. in Miami and a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, hit 15 greens in regulation and needed only 26 putts in his hot round.

His first birdie came on the 10th hole when he dropped an eight-foot putt. A 25-foot putt on the 12th gave him an eagle three. He two-putted for a birdie on the 14th and rammed home a 35-footer for a birdie on the 17th to give him five shots on par when he made the turn.

Turn To **ARNOLD**, Page 3C

Arnold Blisters Lehigh With 64

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He added three birdies on the front side, sinking an eight-footer on No. 2, getting one with his masterful wedge shot on the fourth and then dropping a 30-footer on No. 8.

Joe Hodge of Tampa, shooting a 69 Saturday, took a two-stroke lead in the first flight as the field was divided into championship and eight other flights for the final two rounds.

Skip Lujack, former Manatee High athlete from Bradenton, and Jack Rountree of Lake City share the second flight lead at 220.

Mike Yahl of Naples shares the third flight lead at 222 with Lew Smithers of Sarasota. H. O. Davis of Clearwater has a 224 total and two-stroke advantage in the fourth flight and Karl Stewart of Winter Haven leads by a stroke in the fifth flight at 225.

M. T. McInnis of Bradenton heads the sixth flight with 228, two shots ahead of Bill Spiccia of Lehigh Acres and two others. Lee Hyatt of Lehigh Acres is tied with Robert Beeler of Sarasota for the seventh flight lead with 232.

Fort Myers High golfer Glenn Myers Jr. came through with a one-over-par 72 to grab the lead in the eighth and final flight with 238, two strokes in front of Al Tidrow of St. Petersburg.

Miami Dolphin star Charlie Babb shot his second straight 78 and has a 230 for 54 holes. Ron Sellers, former Florida State All-American and pro standout, had rounds of 71-77-75 for 223.

Other Southwest Florida scores included Al Johns of Punta Gorda 70-76-75 — 221; Larry Cunningham, Naples, 72-72-79 — 223; Steve Wiles, Fort Myers, 75-73-77 — 225; Dan Sheffler, North Fort Myers, 72-74-79 — 225; W. E. Morris, Naples, 77-73-76

— 226; Gib Musselman, Fort Myers, 79-78-83 — 240; Bill Hoffer, Lehigh Acres, 77-87-80 — 245; Steve Kern, Fort Myers, 76-75-76 — 227; Dan Pioli, Fort Myers, 78-85-80 — 243; Howard Wright, Fort Myers, 73-75-75 — 223; John McCreary, Lehigh Acres, 83-87-83 — 253.

The top four scorers will tee off at approximately 12:30 p.m. today. A good gallery followed the leaders Saturday and more fans are expected to turn out today.

Championship Flight

Julian Arnold, Miami, 69-71-64 — 204; Jack Veghte, Clearwater, 70-67-70 — 207; Fred Ridley, Winter Haven, 72-68-69 — 209; Carter Parry, Sarasota, 70-72-69 — 211; Ken Knox, Tallahassee, 71-72-68 — 211; Jack Shubert, Altamonte Springs, 71-71-70 — 212; Bob Rankin, Clearwater, 72-68-72 — 212.

First Flight

Joe Hodge, Tampa, 75-73-69 — 217;

Ken Kotalik, Fort Lauderdale, 76-82-71 — 219; French Bolen, Maitland, 71-77-71 — 219; Mark McConnell, Tampa, 75-73-72 — 220; Mike Parrish, Rockledge, 77-71-72 — 220; Larry Rinker, Stuart, 75-73-72 — 220.

Second Flight

Skip Lujack, Bradenton, 74-75-71 — 220; Jack Rountree, Lake City, 74-75-71 — 220; Bobby Frier, Lake Harbor, 74-75-72 — 221; Kim Young, Orlando, 77-73-71 — 221; Austin Jones, Orlando, 74-75-72 — 221; Brian Hawke, Temple Terrace, 77-73-71 — 221.

Third Flight

Mike Yahl, Naples, 74-76-72 — 222; Lew Smithers, Sarasota, 74-77-71 — 222; Barry House, Fort St. Joe, 77-74-73 — 224; Gary Tomisch, Sebring, 74-76-74 — 224; Bob Bradburn, North Fort Myers, 78-73-74 — 225.

Fourth Flight

H. O. Davis, Clearwater, 77-76-71 — 225; Wayne Powers, North Fort Myers, 79-74-73 — 226; Bruce Vignetti, Orlando, 78-74-74 — 226; Steve Strube, Windmere, 77-74-76 — 227; Lance Ball, Winter Haven, 75-77-75 — 227; Rich Leckey, St. Petersburg, 73-79-75 — 227.

Fifth Flight

Karl Stewart, Winter Haven, 81-74-70 — 225; Jay Williams, Sarasota, 78-76-72 — 226; Steve Leblanc, Sarasota, 78-76-72 — 226; Charles McCormick, North Fort Myers, 81-73-74 — 228; Bill Lemke, Lakeland, 74-79-76 — 229.

Sixth Flight

M. T. McInnis, Bradenton, 76-80-72 — 228; Bill Spiccia, Lehigh Acres, 81-75-74 — 230; Don Clifes, Brandon, 79-78-73 — 230; Eric Slovenkay, Winder Park, 75-82-73 — 230; Ed Stephens, Temple Terrace, 77-78-76 — 231.

Seventh Flight

Lee Hyatt, Lehigh Acres, 80-77-75 — 232; Robert Beeler, Sarasota, 81-78-73 — 232; Chip Neptune, Sebring, 79-79-75 — 233; Eric Peters, St. Petersburg, 83-075-76 — 234; Mark McDavitt, Sebring, 78-79-77 — 234.

Eighth Flight

Glenn Myers Jr., Fort Myers, 81-85-72 — 238; Al Tidrow, St. Petersburg, 78-85-77 — 240; Larry Froemming, Apopka, 82-81-78 — 241; Mike Hosford, Tallahassee, 86-77-79 — 242; Dan Pioli, Fort Myers, 78-85-80 — 243; David Malt, Fort Myers, 85-81-77 — 243; Ted Dickev, Fort Myers, 86-78-80 — 244.



News-Press Photos By AL SPICER

Football Stars Charlie Babb, Left, And Ron Sellers Are Tough On the Golf Course, Too

11 Shatter Par At Lehigh Acres

Sellers Collects 7C

By LEN HARSH

News-Press Sports Editor

Charlie Babb couldn't putt. Ron Sellers couldn't control his driver.

But Bill Adams and Julian Arnold put it all together and fired two-under-par 69s Thursday to capture the first round lead of the Florida State Amateur Golf Championship at the Lehigh Acres Country Club. Babb, defensive standout for the

Miami Dolphins, and Sellers, former Florida State All-American who retired last season, didn't have everything going but both scored well and with a good effort today can make the championship flight. Sellers shot an even par 71 and Babb came in with 74.

Adams, from Starke, and Arnold, playing out of Miami, held only a one-stroke lead over nine other golfers in the 72-hole tournament for golfers with handicaps of five or less.

Among those in the tie for second with 70 was Al Johns, the Punta Gorda amateur who is getting his game back together after a back operation sidelined him for some time.

"I had a disc removed but my back doesn't bother me at all now," Johns said. "If I don't play well, I have no excuses, I'm swinging as good as I ever have."

Others in the 70 bracket were Jack Veghte of Clearwater, a former champion, Marcus Beck of Tallahassee, Bill Benton of Fort Lauderdale, Chic Curley of Orlando, University of Florida golfer Ben Duncan of Gainesville, John Jones of Tampa, Carter Parry of Sarasota and John Pratt of Winter Park.

Larry Cunningham of Naples was

one of those tied with Sellers at even par 71. Others were Dallas Appelgren of North Palm Beach, Kenny Knox of Tallahassee, George DeSear of Bradenton, Bob Michael of Sarasota, William Geisler of Maitland, Jack Shubert of Altamonte Springs and French Bolen of Maitland.

Sellers took to the practice tee after he finished his round to work on his driver.

"I used my driver four times and I was over par on three of the holes," Sellers said as he dug in a bucket and teed up for a practice shot.

Babb didn't play that bad, either. "I just couldn't sink a putt all day," the Dolphin star said. "I don't think I sank but one or two over four or five feet the whole round."

Players escaped the usual afternoon rainstorm, much to the delight of Lehigh Acres pro Bill Vach.

"Things went real smooth and we didn't get behind but a few minutes," Vach said. "The fellows found some of the holes pretty tough shooting from the blue tees. You're firing down a chute on some of the holes and you are in trouble if you get off line."

Turn To TWO, Page 7C

Inside Today's Sports

Outdoors

- SNOOK FISHING should be the best of the year with the first spring tide period in June starting this weekend 4C

Golf

- RAY FLOYD fires a 65 to take the first-round lead in the \$250,000 Kemper Open Tournament 5C

Tennis

- DEFENDING CHAMPION Chris Evert easily advances in the French Championships 7C

Two Tie For Lead At Lehigh

From Page 1C

One of those who found it a bit exasperating was Lehigh Acres' Bill Spiccia. One of the better golfers at his club, Spiccia seldom shoots over 75 and is often par or under. But Thursday was a different story.

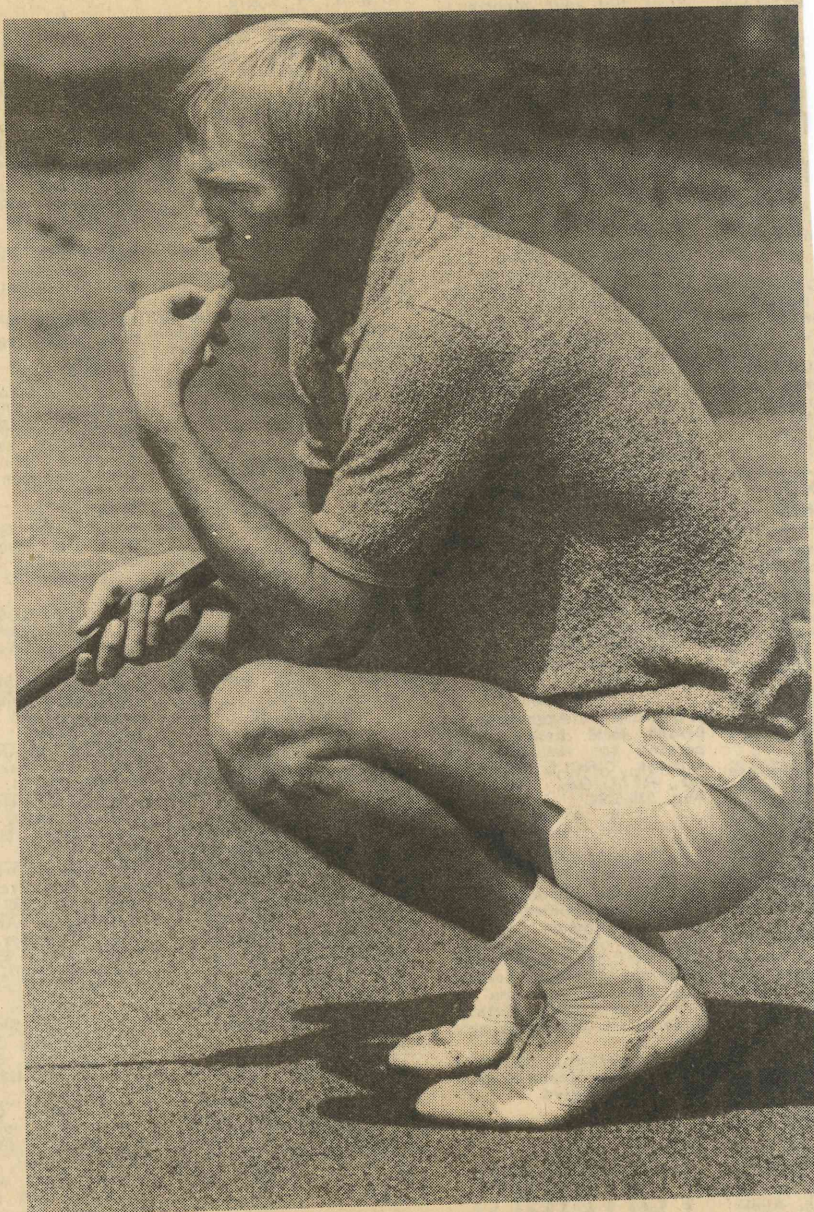
"I got the chokes," Spiccia said as he grasped his throat and smiled as he told Vach about his round which he described as "simply horrible."

Norton Harris of Key West, oldest player in the field at 64, fired a hole-in-one on the 150-yard 18th hole with a four iron as he came in with 77.

Harris' round was baffling as he carded 41-36. The par 36 on the back side included the hole-in-one, an eagle and three birdies.

Among the Southwest Florida area scorers, Dan Sheffler carded 72, Howard Wright 73, Jay Williams 74, Mike Yahl of Naples 74, young Steve Wiles 74, Gib Musselman 79, Charlie McCormick 81, R. T. Bradburn 78, Glenn Myers 81, Nigel Miller of Clewiston 82 and David Malt 85.

Following today's play the field of 180 golfers will be divided into flights with the low 32 and ties going into the championship flight. All other flights will have 16 players.



News-Press Photo By AL SPICER

'JINGLE JOINTS' STUDIES A LONG PUTT
... Ex-FSU great Ron Sellers opens tourney with par

Even Par Doesn't Satisfy Ex-Seminole Ron Sellers

BY LEN HARSH

News-Press Sports Editor

The tall insurance salesman with the mod haircut stepped up to the tee and whacked the ball some 285 yards.

When the ball angled off to the rough, he stomped a size 12 foot on the ground and muttered to himself.

It wasn't an auspicious start but Ron Sellers didn't let it bother him as he went on to match par for 18 holes in the Florida State Amateur Championship at Lehigh Acres Country Club Thursday.

Right there with the leaders, Sellers wasn't at all happy.

"It should have been no more than 69," Sellers said as he munched on the first of three cheeseburgers following the round.

A par for 18 holes is most satisfying for most golfers.

But Ron Sellers has never been satisfied to settle for par in any sport. That's why he was an All-American receiver in football for the Florida State Seminoles and a standout receiver in the pro ranks for several years. He is one who has to excel in anything he does.

Sellers hung up his cleats last season after being released by the Miami Dolphins and he says the cleats will stay there.

"I'm through with football," Sellers said "It was good to me and I accomplished many things, but now it ZC

i over. I have had no serious thoughts about going back.

"I'm selling insurance now and doing pretty well," Sellers added. "I really love it and am happy in my work."

Sellers is a scratch golfer and admits he has been playing quite a bit.

Playing in the foursome behind Sellers Thursday was another pro football star, the Dolphins' Charlie Babb.

Babb was cornered on the third hole and after following him for a few strokes, he took a bogey on the third, he suggested that the photographer and writer go on ahead and "bother" Sellers.

"We have a little \$2 Nassau going," Babb said with a big grin. "He's got me right now and I need some help. Maybe you'll bring him the same kind of luck you brought me."

"Charlie bogeyed the hole?" Sellers said when told of Babb's remarks. "That's good."

"A two dollar Nassau? Boy, doesn't Charlie wish it was only a two dollar one," Sellers quipped.

His second shot on the fourth hole was on the green some 20 feet from the hole. He putted about five feet by the pin and again the size 12 spiked shoe hit the ground with a thud. But he sank the return putt for a par.

Sellers then went on to finish the 18 holes with an even par.

And picked up the Nassau that Babb "wished was only two dollars."

From 3 strokes ahead to 3 behind for Veghte

• Scores, 2-C

By BETTY ANN RHODES
St. Petersburg Times Staff Writer

LEHIGH ACRES — Jack Veghte's three-stroke lead in the State Amateur Golf Championship was wiped out Saturday by the birdie barrage of Julian Arnold of Miami, who finished with a 64 and 54-hole total of 204.

The 50-year-old Arnold, playing in only his second state championship, is nine under par for the 72-hole tournament which ends today on the short but tight Lehigh Acres Country Club course.

The tables have turned for Veghte, the Clearwater insurance man who won this tournament in 1968 and 1970. His one-under-par 70 — 207 total — leaves him in second place now three shots behind the leader.

"THE DIFFERENCE was in putting," said Veghte. "The putts Julian holed totaled 145 feet. The ones I holed totaled only 41 feet."

Actually, one of Arnold's strokes was under dispute or he would have tied the course record of 63.

After Arnold and his foursome of Veghte, Bob Rankin and Fred Ridley completed play on

the par-three fifth hole (their 14th because they started on the back nine), Lehigh Country Club professional Bill Vach said Arnold had taken an additional stroke on the hole.

Most of the gallery, Arnold and his foursome believed the Miamian had a par — on the fringe and two putts.

Vach said no. "He was cleaning house on the green (flicking away leaves and twigs with his putter). He carelessly let the putter swing back. He didn't intend to, but he backhanded the ball about six or seven inches. When he looked down again the ball had stopped rolling."

VACH SAID ARNOLD should take a bogey four on the hole.

Arnold, who resumed tournament play last year after a 25 year layoff, maintained that if he had hit the ball he was not aware of it. "I did not see it move," he said.

The grey-haired Arnold told Bill Carey, executive director of the Florida State Golf Association, "He (Vach) wouldn't lie to me and I wouldn't lie to him. Tell me what to do and I'll do it."

Only three of about 60 persons in the gallery said they saw the ball move. In the end, Arnold was charged with an extra shot.