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Gates is champion at state amateur

Herky Cush | Sentinel Staff Writer

Posted June 20, 2001

DAYTONA BEACH -- Robert Gates figured he was a shot short of first place when he finished even par for the two days of work in the Florida State Golf Association's State Junior Championship Tuesday at LPGA International.

"I expected 1-under to be the winning score," Gates said. "I was surprised that even par won it."

Gates, who will be a sophomore at Gainesville Buchholz High School this fall, looked to have a lock on the tournament early on when he was 4-under par through his first 11 holes. But a double-bogey and bogey followed. He did manage to play the final five holes in 1-over-par to close with his second straight round of even-par 72.

First-day leader Curtis Elliott of Winter Park slipped to 77 on his round over the Legends golf course, and his 147 left him in a three-way tie for seventh place.

Also falling back was Matt Every of Daytona Beach. He was only a shot behind Elliott after the opening day, but slipped to 74 and was part of a four-way tie for second place at 145.

Travis Owens of Eustis bettered his score of the first day, but not by much. Owens was one over par through his first nine holes but a double-bogey and bogey on consecutive holes in the back nine saw him finish with a 78.

"I was really doing well at just one over par for about 13 holes," Owens said. "I was getting a lot of up and downs for pars when I was not hitting the greens."

"I played much better today than my score shows. But I am anything but happy with the way I played this week. I can do a lot better than this, but I have to begin working a lot harder in practice."

Owens said he will be hitting the practice sessions hard over the next two weeks as he prepares for a good showing in the Florida Junior Invitational at Mission Inn July 2-4.

"I want to play well there," Owens said. "I am going to work really hard on my game over the next two weeks, and get some help too."

Gates said he nearly holed out his second shot on his opening hole and had a tap in birdie. On the eighth hole, a par 5, he hit his second shot of 260 yards to within 15 feet of the hole and two-putted for an easy birdie. Easy birdie putts of 10 feet followed on 10 and 11 before he made his double bogey on the 12th hole.

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"But I made a great, really great par on 13," Gates said. "I was just off the in two and chunked a pair of wedge shots. Then I putted from about 30 feet for the par."

Gates said he had played the Legends course several times and really had come to enjoy it.

"The greens were just wonderful," Gates said. "The course was in great condition."

"I have played this course several times, and really have done well on it."

Joon Kim of Eustis was only four shots out of the lead heading into the second day, but he slipped back with a 80 on his second round and fell out of the top 10.

Kim was one of four players from Charlie Yoo's golf school at Black Bear to play in the tournament. Two others, who were in the junior division, did finish in the top 10.

Seok Min Lim, who is only 12, closed at 76-74 to close at 150, just four shots out of the first-place score posted by Jimmy Plank of Jacksonville. Lion Kim shot rounds of 77-79 to finish at 156.

Yoo said he will be taking several of his players to Windermere on Monday for the U.S. Junior Amateur qualifying. One of his students, Sangwoo Seo, made it to the national Amateur last year. Seo is home in South Korea for the summer.

Other area players in the tournament were Mike Vedder of Mount Dora, who had rounds of 89 and 84 and Billy Daly, who is a Mount Dora teammate of Vedder's, who shot rounds of 89 and 88.

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