

Record round vaults ex-Buff into lead

Houtsma notches five birdies in row to go up by two

By Gary Baines For the Camera
Boulder Daily Camera

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DENVER -- The 2010 HealthOne Colorado Women's Open boasts a field that includes five active members of the LPGA Tour, but through two rounds, they're all taking a back seat to Erin Houtsma.

Still, there's no shame in that. Houtsma is one of the most successful competitors in the history of the Women's Open. In the last nine years, she's recorded six top-10 finishes, including a win in 2005. In an equally impressive accomplishment, she made the cut last year despite being 6½ months pregnant.

Then on Thursday, the former University of Colorado golfer put together the best round in the 16-year history of the Colorado Women's Open, firing a 7-under-par 65 and establishing the women's course record at Green Valley Ranch Golf Club.

Thanks to her eight-birdie performance -- which included five straight during one stretch -- Houtsma will take a two-stroke lead into today's final round.

"I always expect to play well here," said the Denver resident. "I wasn't expecting to make five birdies in a row, but it just happened. And it was really easy."

Houtsma stands at 5-under-par 139 for two rounds. Only three other players are under par going into the final day. Australian Tamara Beckett, the 2001 champion, trails by two after making double bogey on her last hole Thursday. She, too, reeled off five straight birdies early in her second round, but settled for a 3-under-par 69 and a 141 total.

LPGA Tour player Moira Dunn (70-142) and first-round leader Lisa Ferrero (73-143) are also in red figures.

Houtsma's round was the lowest of this year's tournament by four strokes, as well as her personal best.

A low score "is there to be had" at Green Valley Ranch, Beckett said. "But 65 is a very good score."

Added Colorado Golf Hall of Famer Kent Moore, who was caddying for his wife in the same group as Houtsma, "I haven't seen many rounds of golf like that."

Golf has become even more of a family affair for Houtsma in the last year. Her father, former CU golfer Steve Kerr, the owner of Colorado National Golf Club in Erie, is caddying for Erin again this week. And there are plenty of other family members and friends in her gallery. But son Connor (9½ months) is a newcomer since last year's Women's Open.

"Golf is so different now that I'm a mom," Houtsma said. "I've been practicing a lot at Colorado National. (Connor) sits on the putting green while I hit putts. He's the best baby for that. He likes being outside and going to the driving range. He just hangs out. It's been easy to practice."

The work apparently paid off on Thursday, especially when Houtsma birdied her second through sixth holes. Houtsma said she had never before racked up five straight birdies.

"I feel really comfortable here," she said. "My husband always says if I ever made five birdies in a row I'd get something special. I can't wait to see what it is."

Houtsma already ranks No. 2 on the all-time money list for the Colorado Women's Open, and with a good finish today she'll move past Walailak Satarak into the top spot. First prize today will be \$11,000.

Meanwhile, three Longmont-area players survived the cut on Thursday, earning a spot in the final round. Pros Kelly

Jacques (75-149) and Rachel Larson (76-151) are in 19th and 29th place, respectively, while amateur Gina Larson (79-152) is 36th.

Colorado Women`s Open

At Green Valley Ranch Golf Club

6,412 yards; Par 72

Erin Houtsma, Denver 74-65--139

T. Beckett, Middle Park, Aus. 72-69--141

Moirra Dunn, Utica, NY 72-70--142

Lisa Ferrero, Lodi, CA 70-73--143

A. Whitaker (a), Melbourne, Aus. 73-71--144

S. Richdalem, Kelowna, BC 73-71--144

Katie Kempter, Albuquerque, NM 72-73--145

Kris Tamulis, Naples, FL 73-72--145

Bethany Buchner (a), Loveland 72-74--146

Also

Becca Huffer (a), Denver 75-72--147

Kelly Jacques, Longmont 74-75--149

Jill McGill, Denver 77-73--150

Sherry Smith, Castle Rock 73-78--151

Rachel Larson, Longmont 75-76--151

Gina Larson (a), Longmont 73-79--152

Melissa Martin (a), Grand Junction 77-75--152

Angela King, Westminster 78-74--152

Dede Cusimano, Basalt 76-76--152

Kasey Claussen, Fort Collins 73-81--154

Ashley Tait, Littleton 78-76--154

Lindsay Hulwick, Littleton 76-78--154

Missed Cut

Lindsay Senger, Louisville 78-78--156

Brooke Collins (a), Louisville 79-78--157

Stefanie Ferguson, Broomfield 82-80--162

Molly Dorans (a), Erie 85-83--168

Amy Hodgkinson (a), Mead 88-85--173

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