

Ex-Buff Zions can switch gears now

With second daughter on way, golfer takes third at Colorado Open

By Gary Baines For the Camera
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DENVER -- Matt Zions felt a little guilty the last several days as he did his best to concentrate on trying to win the HealthOne Colorado Open.

The former University of Colorado golfer came up a little short of his goal -- he tied for third on Sunday, four shots behind champion Nathan Lashley -- but now he can devote all of his attention to something really important, the impending birth of his second daughter.

"I'm very happy with how things are now," Zions said. "Now I get to hang out and have a baby in a couple of days. I'm switching off golf."

After several days of being on-call while at Green Valley Ranch Golf Club, Zions said his wife is scheduled to have a C-section on Tuesday morning.

Zions was about the only player to put any pressure on Lashley during the home stretch on Sunday, but the golfer from Scottsdale, Ariz., still had a comfortable cushion in winning his third tournament in as many weeks.

The former University of Arizona golfer captured the Wyoming Open and the Waterloo Open earlier this month, playing the combined nine rounds of golf in 47 under par.

Lashley never lost the lead on Sunday and shot a 3-under-par 68 for a 16-under 268 total, which was good for a two-shot win and the \$23,000 first prize.

Aurora's Gunner Wiebe, son of Champions Tour player Mark Wiebe, placed second for the best finish by an amateur in the Open since 1997. Wiebe, who shared the lead briefly on the front nine Sunday, closed with a 69.

Zions, former Colorado Springs resident Tom Glissmeyer and Canadian Tour player Brad Fritsch shared third place at 272. Zions shot a 3-under-par 68 in the final round, while Glissmeyer had a 67 and Fritsch a 71.

Two other ex-CU golfers, along with former Longmont resident Charlie Soule, joined Zions in the top 20 Sunday. Kenny Coakley (69-276) was 12th and Ben Portie (69-277) was 15th, while Soule (71-278) was 20th. Ex-Buff Michael Baird, who entered the final round in fourth place, dropped to 24th in the final scores after a 77 on Sunday.

Zions, who resides in Lakewood these days while playing the European Challenge Tour, picked up \$9,267 for his play at the Colorado Open. He birdied the first four holes on Sunday and stood 14 under par for the tournament in the middle of the back nine, but he bogeyed 15 and 16 and needed a 60-foot putt to save par on 18 after hitting his second shot into a hazard.

"I don't think I missed a fairway," Zions said. "Everything I did was pure, spot-on. Tee to green it feels so good. I just pick a spot in the middle of the fairway and my driver just hits it there every time.

"It's nice to keep putting myself in position to win. More often than not I'm just getting beat by guys playing better. Nate did that today."

Lashley has been doing that all of this month. That's the reason he's won \$80,000 in prize money over the course of three weeks.

"I'm just playing really well -- solid golf every round," he said. "I'm hitting it well, putting it well. Am I surprised winning three in a row? Yes. But I always knew I could do it. It's a lot of fun right now. This kind of stuff doesn't happen very often. I've

got to soak it up and enjoy it the next week or so."

Colorado Open

Green Valley Ranch GC, Denver

Par 71, 7,207 yards

Final Results

(a) denotes amateur

1. Nathan Lashley, Scottsdale, Ariz. 67-67-66-68--268
2. Gunner Wiebe (a), Aurora 68-65-68-69--270
- T3. Matt Zions, Kempsey, Australia 66-68-70-68--272
- T3. Tom Glissmeyer, Colorado Springs 72-69-64-67--272
- T3. Brad Fritsch, Holly Springs, NC 66-67-68-71--272
- T6. Tommy Medina, Thatcher, Ariz. 69-70-69-65--273
- T6. Scott Harrington, Scottsdale, Ariz. 65-71-68-69--273

Also

- T15. Ben Portie, Westminster 73-67-68-69--277
- T20. Charlie Soule, Denver 71-71-65-71--278
- T32. Pat Grady, Broomfield 74-68-67-73--282
- T50. Matt Schalk, Boulder 68-73-72-72--285
- T61. Jon Lindstrom (a), Broomfield 70-68-80-72--290

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