

Hip surgeries don't slow down CU's Symons

Buff senior three back, in second at home meet

By Gary Baines For the Camera
Boulder Daily Camera

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ERIE -- If there was any doubt whose college golf tournament this was, the huge buffalo painted on the 18th fairway at Colorado National Golf Club was a sure giveaway.

The Mark Simpson Colorado Invitational made its debut Monday at the University of Colorado's home course, and, appropriately enough, the Buffs held the lead after the first round. Unfortunately for them, the second round of the 36-hole day didn't go quite as well in ideal scoring conditions and CU stands in seventh place in the 14-team field going into today's final 18.

The Simpson Invitational is named in honor of Mark Simpson, a longtime CU men's golf coach who died nearly five years ago after battling cancer.

The event marks the first full-field men's intercollegiate tournament the Buffs have hosted in Colorado since the CU-Fox Acres Invitational was held in Red Feather Lakes from 1989 through 1993. Phil Mickelson won that event in 1990, and Justin Leonard finished high on the leaderboard in 1993.

"We wanted this tournament to be a rallying point for Front Range schools," CU coach Roy Edwards said. "It can really be something that, as it grows, is a good memory for coach Simpson as well as a good event to start off the year for a lot of teams in the western U.S. We feel very good that we've accomplished that." The tournament features all the Colorado-based Division I programs, and Colorado State is in second place after two rounds, while CU is seventh, Denver ninth, Air Force 10th and Northern Colorado 11th. New Mexico, with a 576 total, leads CSU by four and the Buffs by 12.

Certainly one of the bright points for CU was the play of senior Luke Symons, who has undergone two hip surgeries -- one on each side -- in the last 14 months. Before this month, Symons hadn't played a college tournament since May 2009. But you never would have known it by his performance Monday.

Symons shares second place individually, shooting rounds of 70-72 for a 2-under-par 142 total. Only San Jose State senior Mark Hubbard, a Denver resident, was better on Monday (69-70--139).

"We have a little advantage with this being at our home course, but I feel great about it," Symons said of his strong start. "This is just my second 36-hole day in over a year, so I'm still getting used to that.

"I was a little erratic in the afternoon and didn't drive it that well off the tee, but I think that has a lot to do with my legs. I don't really have my playing legs back. I was a little sore and a little stiff, but I'm expecting that to happen. I'm only just a little over four months out of surgery."

Symons, the 2008 Colorado Golf Association Match Play champion, competed in just five tournament rounds -- all non-collegiate -- in between his two hip surgeries.

"I'm glad to see him back, especially considering it was his second hip that went out just when he was getting back to playing," Edwards said. "He plays with great passion and a lot of heart and that showed through in getting two pretty good scores from him today. We're very fortunate to have him."

Of the five golfers competing for CU's team score, only Symons was in the top 25 after two rounds. Next best was junior Kevin Kring (29th after rounds of 75-73).

The tournament will conclude with a single round today, beginning with an 8 a.m. shotgun start.

Mark Simpson CU Invitational

At Par-72 Colorado National GC in Erie

Team scores -- 1. New Mexico 300-276--576; 2. Colorado State 296-284--580; 3. (tie) Kansas 296-287--583; San Jose State 296-287--583; 5. Brigham Young 295-289--584; 6. New Mexico State 296-290--586; 7. Colorado 294-294--588; 8. Texas El Paso 302-292--594; 9. Denver 300-297--597; 10. Air Force 306-293--599; 11. Northern Colorado 297-303--600; 12. Wyoming 311-291--602; 13. Utah 304-300--604; 14. Southern Utah 329-303--632.

Top individuals -- 1. Mark Hubbard, San Jose State, 69-70--139; 2. (tie) Luke Symons, Colorado, 70-72--142; Sam Chavez, New Mexico, 76-66--142; Troy Sidabras, Northern Colorado, 68-74--142; Gaston De La Torre, New Mexico State 69-73--142; 6. (tie) Jeff Bell, Kansas, 70-73--143; Kirby Pettitt, Colorado State, 74-69--143; Travis Ross, New Mexico, 74-69--143; 9. (tie) Zachary Blair, BYU, 71-73--144; Matt Hoven, San Jose State, 73-71--144.

CU scores -- 2. Luke Symons 70-72--142; 29. Kevin Kring 75-73--148; 37. Derek Fribbs, 73-76--149; 56. Sebastian Heisele 76-77--153; 63. Pat Wilson 81-73--154; Competing only as individuals: 14. Brennan Dolan 72-74--146; 29. Jason Burstyn 76-72--148; 50. Johnny Widmer 77-75--152; 56. Michael Imperato 77-76--153.

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Bufs straggling at Mark Simpson

Men's golf sitting at seventh after two days

By Michael Krumholtz on September 28, 2010

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Headed into the final day of the first-ever Mark Simpson Invitational, the men's golf team sits at seventh place.

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The tournament, a mere 12 miles east of campus, is at Colorado National Golf Club and marks the first time in nearly two decades that CU has hosted one.

The Bufs ranked first after a tightly matched Sunday round, ahead of 13 other teams.

No. 16 New Mexico is four strokes above Colorado State at the number one spot.

Senior Luke Symons is tied for second individually with a combined score of 142. He is currently three strokes behind points leader Mark Hubbard from San Jose State.

Head coach Roy Edwards is in his third year after replacing the Invitational's namesake: former CU coach Mark Simpson.

Simpson started the job in 1977 and didn't clock out until his untimely passing from lung cancer in December 2005.

"Well, it was certainly great to be competing at home for the first time since 1993," Edwards said. "We caught a bunch of wind in the middle of the morning round and did a good job of toughing it out, but in the afternoon, the conditions were much better for scoring."

After two consecutive rounds of 294, the Bufs are now 12 strokes out of first place after holding the fort for a day.

Symons pointed out the team's ability to make up the stroke differential in the last round.

"We need to take it low tomorrow," Symons said. "Every guy on the team, including myself, feels we can get a couple of shots back. If we can do that, we can make a big comeback. We're more than capable of putting a 276 on the scoreboard like New Mexico did today."

The final round is scheduled for an 8 a.m., bright and early Tuesday morning.

Contact CU Independent Staff Writer Michael Krumholtz at Michael.krumholtz@Colorado.edu.