

## Title Defense Will Be a Grind

### CGA Match Play champ Symons will face hip surgery soon

by Gary Baines - July 3, 2009



Playing eight rounds of tournament golf in five days in July isn't exactly easy. And doing so in a walking-only event with an injured hip would only make matters more difficult.

But for defending champion Luke Symons, it would be a nice problem to have at next week's CGA Match Play Championship at Bear Creek Golf Club in west Denver.

"It's something I've thought about," Symons said this week. "You can have eight rounds in five days (if a player advances to the finals), and they can be grueling, hot days. But you

have to tough it out."

Symons, who just completed his junior season on the University of Colorado golf team, is playing this summer knowing that in late August or early September he'll undergo surgery that will keep him from hitting a golf ball for six months. The 21-year-old from Valley Country Club in Aurora found out in February that the labrum in his left hip is torn. But instead of going under the knife immediately, Symons elected to finish out the college season and then compete this summer.

Knowing he'd be sidelined from competition for a long stretch, Symons has opted to take a redshirt season at CU in 2009-10 after getting in a full summer of tournaments. Ideally, that would culminate in next month's U.S. Amateur, after which Symons would have his surgery.

"It's obviously something I can play on," he said of the injury. The hip "will hurt after playing, and maybe a little during. It's not something I try to think about too much. It's changed my swing some, but maybe it's helped me in some regards."

But it won't be easy if Symons plays the maximum eight rounds in the CGA Match Play, which runs Monday through Friday (July 6-10). After a Monday round of stroke play that sets the 64-man bracket, there will be six sessions of match play, including a 36-hole final on July 10. And this year's Match Play, unlike some in the past, will be a no-carts-allowed event for competitors, which could put an extra strain on Symons' hip.

"It hurts more on awkward lies where there's more twist and turn," Symons said. "But it's nothing like what Tiger (Woods) went through (with his knee injury at the 2008 U.S. Open). It's not too noticeable."

Symons, the low amateur at the recent San Juan Open, has long been anticipating his Match Play title defense.

"It's something obviously I've looked forward to most of the year," he said. "Anytime you defend a title, it's exciting."

"Everyone looks at past champions and expects you to go far, but anybody can win in match play. People that you underestimate can be your toughest matches. So I'm going in feeling like an underdog. I don't necessarily feel like the favorite."

Symons was considered the underdog in both the semifinal and championship matches last year. After all, he was playing arguably the top two amateurs in the state at the time -- Pat Grady and Derek Tolan, two of his CU teammates. Grady was the CGA Player of the Year in 2007 and 2008, and Tolan claimed that title in 2005. But Symons beat Grady 3 and 2 in the semis and Tolan 2 and 1 in the 36-hole final at Plum Creek. Symons was 9 under par for the 35 holes of the title match.

"That was pretty special, playing against two teammates in my last two matches," he said. "It was a different feeling, like I wasn't playing in a CGA event. It was more like a match during the school year. It was obviously fun."

Though Grady and Tolan recently turned pro, the field for next week's Match Play will be formidable. Steve Ziegler of Broomfield, who recently advanced to the fourth round of match play at the British Amateur, will be one of the top contenders. Also competing are former Match Play

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