



Tolan grabs share of Colorado Open lead

Former Buff cards 6-under 65 at Colorado Open

By Gary Baines
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DENVER — There's something about being a playing professional that suits Derek Tolan. Even he says as much.

"It feels good to be a pro -- so natural," the former University of Colorado golfer said Thursday. "It feels like this is what I'm supposed to be doing."

The results so far certainly bear that out. After turning pro less than two months ago, Tolan won the San Juan Open in late June, and on Thursday he earned a share of the first-round lead in the HealthOne Colorado Open.

The 23-year-old from Highlands Ranch, fresh off a two-win season as a CU senior, fired a 6-under-par 65 Thursday at Green Valley Ranch Golf Club. That's good for a tie for the top spot with Canadian Tour player Aaron Goldberg, a former San Diego State golfer and the son of two CU graduates.

On a day when the conditions were ideal for scoring, 45 players broke par. Chris Kamin of Phoenix, who set the course record with a 61 in Wednesday's pro-am, was part of a threesome at 66 that also includes Rob Hunt of Highlands Ranch and Vince Jewell of Wylie, Texas.

Tolan has plenty of formidable competition in the Colorado Open -- everyone from former PGA Tour players to very successful mini-tour competitors -- but he makes no bones about his expectation being to win the Colorado Open in his first try as a professional.

"Without a doubt," he said. "If I expect to win at other levels, I've got to win at this level. No matter who is in the field, I've got to do what I'm capable of doing. I've done some pretty big stuff in my life (playing in 10 USGA championships, including the 2002 U.S. Open as a 16-year-old), so knowing what I can do helps."

Tolan made an eagle on the 639-yard 18th hole (his ninth), sinking a 5-foot putt after a perfectly struck 3-wood, and he added six birdies and two bogeys.

Three other former CU golfers, plus Broomfield amateur Joe Schwark, were also among the 30 golfers who shot under 70 on Thursday.

John Douma, the 2007 Open champion and a top-two finisher each of the last four years, posted a 68 thanks to three birdies in the last five holes. Schwark, Shawn Wills and amateur Tom Gempel managed 69s.

Wills, who transferred from CU to the University of Denver in the middle of his college career, can count on one hand the number of tournament rounds he's played this year. But that didn't keep the former Broomfield resident from shooting in the 60s, even with bogeys on each of his last two holes.

Wills is now a jack of all trades at The Golf Club at Ravenna in Littleton, but spends much of his time these days taking care of his 1-year-old daughter, Ashlyn, while his wife Jennifer works in the public relations business. Wills is a two-time winner of the CGA Match Play Championship, but these days he plays a round of golf about every other week. Before qualifying for the Colorado Open on Monday, he hadn't competed in a tournament since early June.

"I don't practice nine or 10 hours a day, and live and breathe golf like I did the last couple of years," said Wills, who now lives in Centennial. "The only problem is, my mind still wants my body to do what I used to be able to do.

"I didn't finish the way I was hoping today, but at the beginning of the day if you would have given me a 69 without playing, I would have taken it."

Colorado Open At Green Valley Ranch

Derek Tolan, Highlands Ranch, 65; Aaron Goldberg, San Diego, Calif., 65; Vince Jewell, Las Cruces, N.M., 66; Chris Kamin, Phoenix, Ariz., 66; Robert Hunt, Highlands Ranch, 66; Nathan Lashley, Scottsdale, Ariz., 67; Brian Kortan, Albuquerque, N.M., 67; Steve Saunders, Albuquerque, N.M., 67; Boyd Summerhays, Farmington, Utah, 67; Scott Anderson, Great Falls, Mont., 67; Trent Leon, Dallas, Texas, 68; Charlie Beljan, Mesa, Ariz., 68; Ryan Hogue, Mesa, Ariz., 68; Brad Delman, Eagle, 68; Derek Eley, Deltona, Fla., 68; David Jackson, Scottsdale, Ariz., 68; Zen Brown, Arvada, 68; John Douma, Phoenix, Ariz., 68.

Also

a-Joseph Schwark, Broomfield, 69; Shawn Wills, Denver, 69; a-Tom Gempel, Parker, 69; Ben Portie, Westminster, 70; Kenny Coakley, Lakewood, 70; Matt Schalk, Boulder, 70; Travis Williams, Erie, 72; C.J. Ebel, Niwot, 73; a-Save Irwin, Golden, 73; a-Save Ziegler, Broomfield, 74; Pat Grady, Broomfield, 75; Scott Sommers, Longmont, 76; a-Jon Lindstrom, Broomfield, 76; Kevin Bolles, Louisville, 77; Mike Troyer, Boulder, 77; Tray Shehee, Longmont, 79.



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