

Speegle's 68 Captures Bridgestone

Ringgold Golfer Edges Gaudion by One Shot

By Tom McCollister
Staff Writer

Daryll Speegle, a quiet, unassuming driving-range owner from Ringgold, stole the show and the championship Tuesday at the Bridgestone Open in Duluth.

Speegle opened with a 74 Monday and then shot 68, the tournament's only sub-70 round, to beat first-round leader Jack Gaudion Jr. by a stroke. Gaudion shot 70-73—143 over the Berkeley Hills Country Club.

Cherokee Country Club's Bill Bergin (72), Gene Matthews (70) of Columbus and Alan White (71) of the Landings in Warner Robins tied for third at 144.

Two-time defending champion Jon Hough had 73 Tuesday for 151, while Tommy Brannen, the 1985 winner, shot 75 for 150.

Speegle was a surprise winner since few of the competitors were aware of his capabilities. He's been a member of the Georgia PGA since 1985 but has competed in fewer than a half-dozen tournaments. His lone notable achievement in the state was shooting 75 and qualifying for the 1989 Atlanta Classic, where he shot 82-82 and failed to make the cut.

Speegle's Tennessee record shows he can play. A native of Sewanee, he shot 64 in 1980 to win the Capital City Open in Nashville, and in 1981 he won the Elm Hill Open in Cookeville with rounds of 68-67—135.

But Speegle has neither the time nor resources to play. He's had no high-profile, country-club pro background. Instead, he made a living with small club jobs for several years and now owns and operates Southeastern Golf Range, where he gives lessons and sells practice



MICHAEL SCHWARZ/Staff

Daryll Speegle, operator of a driving range in Ringgold, made a rare tournament appearance in winning the Bridgestone title Tuesday.

Results at a Glance

The Winner		
Daryll Speegle	74-68	142
The Others		
Jack Gaudion Jr.	70-73	143
Bill Bergin	72-72	144
Gene Matthews	74-70	144
Alan White	73-71	144
Mike Malone	71-74	145
Mike Cook	73-72	145
Jeff Gotham	73-72	145
Roger Keller	73-72	145
Ted Meier	72-73	145

balls.

"It's tough knowing you have the ability to compete but don't have the time or money to go to all the tournaments like the State Open and State PGA," Speegle said. "I'm more a businessman than a golf professional, and there's nobody to look after things when I'm not

there. Plus, it costs a lot of money to spend a week in places like Savannah [site of the State Open] and Sea Island [State PGA]."

After shooting his opening 74, Speegle gave himself little chance of winning the Bridgestone. He thought the course would yield more low scores than it did. But when he birdied two of the first three holes and two of the last three, he dared to dream.

"I never gave up," said Speegle, who practices daily but plays only once a week at courses in Dalton. "I didn't think I could win because there are so many guys here that have been much more successful than I have."

Until Speegle slipped in with his 68, Gaudion was the odds-on favorite to win. But the 28-year-old pro at Whitewater Creek in Fayetteville had a sinking feeling after bogeying his final hole.

"I thought that might really, really hurt me, and it did," he said. "I was disappointed in that."

Speegle finished his round just after noon, then sweated out the players with afternoon tee times. Sea Palms's Mike Cook, who opened with 73, moved to within one stroke after 12 holes, but made three bogeys coming in, including two of the final three holes.

"I looked at the scoreboard when I made the turn and knew what I had to do," said Cook, who lost in a playoff to Blair Lacey in 1986. "I just couldn't do it. I couldn't settle down."

The \$3,000 payday was the largest of Speegle's career, but there was no wild celebration planned.

"I think I'll sock some of this away so I can play in more tournaments," he said.

□ Scores, E8

