

SPORTS

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GOLF

Paschal ends drought, wins Bridgestone

By Tom McCollister

Staff writer

The three-year hiatus of Jimmy Paschal ended Tuesday as the Country Club of the South head professional won the \$30,000 Bridgestone Open at Berkeley Hills Country Club.

Paschal, 41, shot his second consecutive 69 for a 6-under 138 to take a two-stroke victory over 1989 champion Darryl Speegle, who had a 70. Speegle operates a driving range in Ringgold.

Dunwoody assistant and reigning Georgia PGA champion

Stephen Keppler slumped to 73 after an opening 69 and finished third. Defending champion Gregg Wolff, who shot 72, was fourth at 143.

First-round leader Rusty Strawn soared to 79 and had to settle for low amateur at 147.

It was Paschal's first significant victory since 1988, when he won the Georgia PGA Match Play title, was low pro in the Perry Classic and Michelob Open and was named Georgia PGA player of the year.

"When I took over at Country Club of the South [in 1989], I had

to cut back on tournament play and didn't play well when I did," Paschal said. "I decided this year to play a little more and see what happened. I'm close to playing real well again."

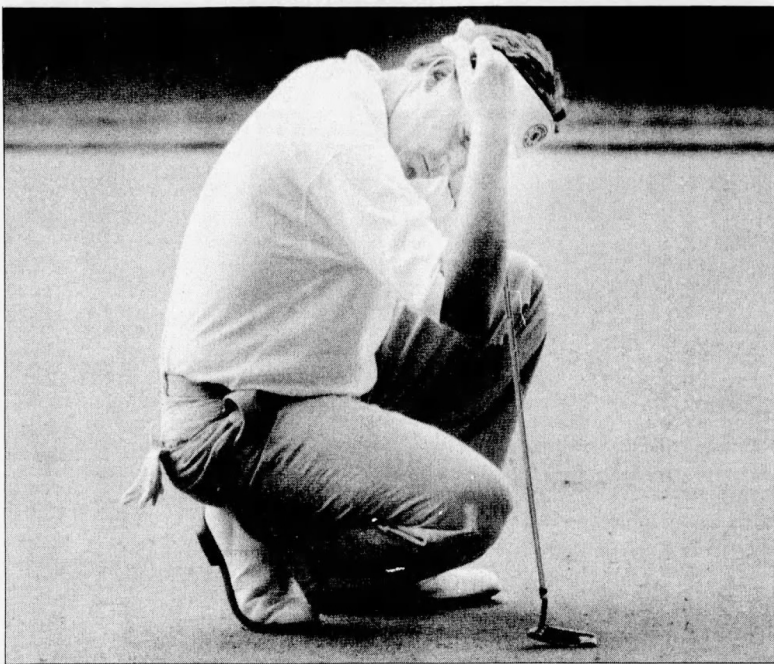
He may be more than just close. This year, Paschal has won the PineIsle Invitational, finished fourth in the MacGregor Invitational Pro-Am in France and won the Arvida Cup at Eagle Watch by six shots.

Tuesday he had to fight off a stubborn Speegle over the final three holes to prove he's all the way back.

Speegle stayed tied for the lead with Paschal until he three-putted No. 16 for bogey. Paschal took a two-shot lead with a 15-foot birdie putt at No. 17.

"It's hard to beat a guy who won't help you," Speegle said. "Jimmy was solid all day and when he had to scramble, he did. He made a lot of big putts. Heck, I'm not disappointed. I'm tickled just to have had the chance."

Paschal was never more than one shot out of the lead and never comfortable until he birdied No. 17.



Eric Williams/Staff

The eyes have it: Jimmy Paschal ponders a putt Tuesday on the way to victory at the Bridgestone Atlanta Open.

Norris bags bragging rights

By Tom McCollister
Staff writer

Berkeley Hills Country Club member Dwight Norris had three goals — two realistic, one iffy at best — entering Tuesday's second round of the Bridgestone Atlanta Open, and was one for three.

After shooting a 1-over 73 in Monday's first round, the 48-year-old former coach considered himself an outside chance to win it all and 50-50 to finish low amateur, and desperately wanted to be low Berkeley Hills.

Low Berkeley Hills it was. Norris added a 5-over 77 on his home course for a 36-hole total of 150, three shots in front of Jim Pritchard (80-73) and Ed Duval (75-78), and 12 behind tournament champion Jimmy Paschal, head pro at the Country Club of the South.

"Pleased, but not satisfied," said Norris, who ran afoul of a couple of bad breaks and Berkeley Hills' slick

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greens. "This is a game where you have to hit it from where you hit it and I had it in a couple of tough spots today. But everybody plays the same game. Some days you get the good breaks, some days the bad ones. I can handle that."

"Low Berkeley Hills was a goal. At least I can walk up there [pointing to the clubhouse] with something."

The way Norris sees it, he let any other accolades get away in the first round.

"I was 10 feet or less 12 times Monday," said the 1-handicapper. "I made two birdies in two days. I should have scored better, but this course has a way of shutting the door on you."

A couple of Gwinnett County

pros finished with mixed emotions.

Atlanta Golf Center's Danny Elkins was frustrated after tying for seventh and vowed, "If they keep playing this thing here, I'm going to win it. It's a course I should play well."

Elkins had a couple of scrambling 73s.

On the other end was Duluth's Tommy Brannen, head pro at the Atlanta Athletic Club. He shot 74-73 — 147, tied for 10th and couldn't wait to get home to his wife Melanie, 2-year-old son Chandler and 2-week-old son Barrett.

A couple of weeks ago, Brannen and Chandler won the 7-and-under father-son tournament, playing alternate shots. He was still beaming over that victory.

"Funny how your priorities change," said Brannen. "I used to agonize over this, but hey, I made \$500 or so and that'll pay for a lot of diapers."