

Atlanta Open tied; lightning halts play

By **J.J. Cooper**

STAFF WRITER

Lightning postponed play Tuesday in the Bridgestone Atlanta Open with Don Shirey Jr. of Rome and Mike Cook of St. Simons tied for the lead at 2 under par and 10 golfers still on the course.

The co-leaders were preparing to tee off on the 17th hole when play was suspended at 6:09 p.m. Tournament officials decided to resume the play this morning at 9 a.m., when the 10 golfers will pick up where they left off.

"Nobody likes to be inconvenienced, but nobody wants to be inconveniently dead," Shirey said.

When the tournament was postponed, Cook and Shirey were

one stroke ahead of Marietta's Craig Stevens and ACC pro Tommy Brannen. Brannen was lining up a birdie putt on the 17th green when the storm arrived.

In the amateur division, Spence Sappington of Norcross and Paul Sorel of Duluth tied for the championship with two day totals of 1-over par 145.

Briefly . . .

Wendi Patterson of Atlanta was tied for first in the girls division of the Greater Greensboro Junior golf tournament despite an opening round of 7-over-par 79 at Bryan Park and Golf Club in Brown Summit, N.C. Patterson was tied with **Kathryn Loy** of Hilton Head, S.C., in the three-round tournament. **Will Garner** of Augusta shot 69 and was second in the boys tournament, one shot behind **Robert Dean** of Raleigh, N.C.

Atlanta Open

► **Where:** Atlanta Athletic Club, Duluth.

► **Leaders:** After first round: Don Shirey Jr., Craig Stevens, and Mike Cook were tied at three-under par 69.

► **Update:** When play was suspended on Tuesday, Shirey and Cook were tied for the lead at 2-under par as they prepared to tee off on No. 17. Stevens, also teeing off at 17, was tied with Tommas Brannen at 1-under par. Brannen was putting for birdie on the 17th green. Play will resume today at 9 a.m..

► **Amateur champions:** Paul Sorel and Spence Sappington tied for the championship at one-over par 145.

Atlanta Open

Wednesday, at Atlanta

FINAL RESULTS

Don Shirey Jr. (Rome, \$4,000) 69-72—141;
Craig Stevens (Marietta, \$3,000) 69-73—
142; Thomas Brannen (Duluth, \$2,000) 70-
73—143; Mike Cook (St. Simons Island) 69-
75—144; Spence Sappington (Norcross)
73-72—145; Paul Nolen (Savannah) 72-
73—145; Paul Sorel (Duluth) 75-70—145;
Stephen Keppler (Suwanee) 70-76—146;
Matt Robbins (Alpharetta) 75-71—146; Brad
Nycum (Cartersville) 74-73—147.

RTS

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GOLF

Rome's Shirey wins Atlanta Open

By J.J. Cooper
STAFF WRITER

Don Shirey Jr. and Mike Cook had plenty of time to think about their tee shots to the next-to-last hole in the Bridgestone Atlanta Open — 186 yards, downhill, over a water hazard to a small green.

When lightning postponed play Tuesday at Atlanta Athletic Club in Duluth, Shirey of Rome and Cook of St. Simons Island were tied for the lead at two under par as they stood on the 17th tee. They were among 10 golfers forced to mark their positions and return Wednesday.

"I was scared," Shirey said. "That tee shot on 17 is a scary sight; especially when you have 14 hours to think about it."

A few minutes later, however, Shirey's tee shot was safely on the green, Cook's in the water. Shirey made par to Cook's double bogey, then birdied the final hole to take a one-shot victory over Craig Stevens of Marietta.

Stevens, playing in the final group with Shirey and Cook and trailing them by a stroke going to 17, teed off last. "It was a little nerve-racking having to hit it over the water," he said. "I felt fortunate to be hitting last."

He hit his tee shot within 30 feet of the hole, but missed the birdie putt. So he went to 18, a 507-yard par-5, still trailing Shirey by one.

Shirey's 20-foot birdie putt caught the hole, rolled around and dropped to avert a playoff.

"[The putt] was going pretty good," Shirey said. "It would have rolled by the hole."

Shirey, who won the top prize of \$4,000, finished the 36-hole event with a 72 for a total of 141, three under par on AAC's Highlands Course. Stevens closed with a 73 to finish one shot ahead of host pro Tommy Brannen of AAC, who also finished with a 73. Stevens won \$3,000, Brannen \$2,000.

For Shirey, a former PGA

Tour pro, it was his first Atlanta Open victory and first Georgia State Golf Association-affiliated tournament championship.

Earlier, Norcross's Spence Sappington defeated Duluth's Paul Sorel in a playoff to determine the amateur championship. Sorel sent his tee shot on the first playoff hole into the water en route to a triple bogey. Sappington, playing it safe, bogeyed No. 17 for the victory.

Briefly ...

Eleanor Walker and Kirsten Johnstone, both of Alpharetta, were declared co-champions of the Greater Atlanta Women's Championship Wednesday when rain prevented a playoff after 54 holes. Walker, who finished with a 78, and Johnstone, who closed with an 80, tied at 230. Janet Oip of Atlanta, a five-time Women's State Amateur champion, was third at 232 after finishing with a 76. It was Walker's second co-championship in this event in three years. She shared the title with Ginetta Spinucci in 1990.