

Persons, Pittman Pluck PGA Prize

By Ed Grisamore
Staff Writer

Macon's Peter Persons and Vidalia's Drew Pittman found themselves in similar situations, but under different circumstances at the Georgia PGA Junior Sectional Wednesday at Riverside Golf and Country Club.

For Pittman, it was a day of the "Great Wait." After teeing off with one of the first groups to go out on the course Wednesday morning, the 13-year-old Pittman had to wait around the leader board afterwards to see whether his four-over-par 76 would hold down first place in the boys' 12-13 age division.

And for Persons, it was a day of the "Great Weight." After heading out with the last foursome of the day and going into the final three holes shooting one over par, the 17-year-old Stratford ace had to engineer a clutch charge toward the clubhouse to force a sudden-death playoff with two other golfers.

But both Persons and Pittman found a happy ending at the conclusion of the 36-hole junior tournament.

PERSONS BIRDIED the final three holes to fire a two-under-par 70 for a total of 144. The score forced a playoff with Griffin's Steve Pitts for the top spot in the boys' 16-17 division and with 15-year-old Chad Willis of Moultrie to determine which golfer would qualify for the National PGA Junior Tournament in August.

Pittman's string of nine-hole 3s earned him top honors in his division with two-day scorecard of 132.

In the sudden-death round, Pitts, who was not playing to qualify for the national, bowed out with a bogey on the first hole to give Persons first place in the division.

"I didn't care too much about that (the division)," said an exhausted Persons, whose 70 matched his best round ever at Riverside. "What I really wanted was to qualify for the national tournament."

And he did. After battling head-to-head with Willis for the first two holes, Persons rammed home a birdie on the par-5 third hole to

qualify for the national tournament in Palm Beach, Fla., in August. Willis's three-foot birdie putt on the last hole took a trip around the lip and rolled off.

PERSONS SPENT most of the sultry afternoon running down errant shots and wondering when his putter would start cooperating. But the Macon golfer credited his past tournament experience with his ability to pull it out down the final stretch.

"I wasn't nervous because I've been through it before," he said. "Chad (Willis) deserves a lot of credit. He had been waiting around since 12:00 (Persons finished at 6:15) and that hurt him. I had the momentum."

Pittman's first place finish wasn't nearly as dramatic as Persons's, but it was just as gratifying. The Vidalia youngster has now won all four tournaments he has entered this year.

"My chipping and putting helped me today, because I wasn't hitting my drives well," said Pittman, whose father, Andy, is the head pro at Vidalia Country Club and whose uncle, Grady, is head basketball coach at Macon's Windsor Academy.

"I'm not used to playing on a golf course with a lot of hills," he said. "I missed a lot greens because I wasn't sure about the distances."

JON LEONARD JR. of Warner Robins matched Persons's round of 70 Wednesday for a two-day total of 145, which was good for third place in the boys' 16-17. Jeff Baggatt, also of Warner Robins, shot a 130 and Eastman's Tim Moore ended up with a 131. Mike Raines of Robins Air Force Base and Dublin's Minton Hester both finished with 132s.

Tifton's Billy Bulmer was one of three golfers in the boys' 14-15 group with 133 for third place. Macon's Ben Vaughn's 76 enabled him to finish sixth with a 136.

Savannah's Ann Stacy, sister of pro Hollis Stacy, won the girls 16-17 division with a 154.

Please See PGA, 4D



Photo by William Berry

Vidalia's Drew Pittman Sinks Putt in Route to Junior Win

medals.

PGA

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Boys 16-17

1. Peter Persons (Macon) 74-70 — 144; 2. Steve Pitts (Griffin) 71-73 — 144; 3. Jon Leonard Jr. (Warner Robins) 75-70 — 145.

Boys 14-15

1. Chad Willis (Moultrie) 70-74 — 144; 2. Bill McDonald (Dalton) 78-73 — 151; 3. Billy Bulmer (Tifton) 74-79 — 153; Gary Kinna (Douglasville) 76-77 — 153; Jett Rich (Villa Rica) 76-77 — 153.

Boys 12-13

1. Drew Pittman (Vidalia) 76-76 — 152; 2. Peter Brennen (Savannah) 82-74 — 156; 3. Billy Edwards (Moultrie) 81-77 — 158; Patrick Mallard (Waycross) 80-78 — 158.

Girls 14-17

1. Ann Stacy (Savannah) 78-76 — 154.

Girls 13 and Under

1. Marcie White (Warner Robins) 100-82 — 182.