

## Four advance at Cotton States

The W.E. Cole Cotton States golf tournament narrowed its field to four golfers Friday afternoon.

Local favorites like top overall seed Matt Harvey and 1999 winner Bob Cooper fell by the wayside Thursday. Then 18-year-old Ian Phillips, the last top-four seed, faltered Friday afternoon.

When all was said and done Friday, four collegiate golfers remained heading into this morning's semifinals.

"The four that are left, what stands out is that we're super competitive," Wichita State sophomore Tyler Gann said.

At least one LSU Tiger, former or future, will make this afternoon's final matchup.

Ken Looper and Josh Jones will face one another in one semifinal matchup.

Looper, who will join LSU this year as a senior after beginning his college career at the University of New Orleans, made quick work of both his Friday rounds.

The Mandeville native knocked out Troy Anderson in his morning match by taking a four-hole lead with three remaining. He finished his afternoon match well before any other golfer, sending Phillips home by climbing to a six-hole lead with five remaining.

"Whenever (Phillips) seemed to make bogey, I seemed to make par, and whenever he made par, I made birdie, so I ended up being five up after nine holes, which was pretty big," Looper said. "He got off to a bad start, so I didn't get to see the best of his game. He made a couple bogeys early, and that kind of set the tone."

Looper spent the rest of the afternoon watching his friend Jones, a former LSU golfer transferring to North Texas as a junior this season, fend off Cameron Hollek in a much tighter match.

"It's nice to have a couple friends up here and not be by yourself," Looper said. "Now I've got to play him next. I had thought we'd meet in the finals, and that'd be cooler."

Jones got behind Hollek early, trailing by two through four holes before sinking a 40-foot shot to steal hole No. 5 and eventually tying the match on hole No. 7. The two golfers battled the rest of the way until Jones clinched the two-hole victory on a missed putt by Hollek on No. 18.

"I just had to stay in it, stay calm, keep hitting good golf shots and keep being positive," Jones said. "On the last hole, obviously a lot of things are going through your head, but you just have to commit to a target and trust yourself. It sounds cliché, but that's what you have to do."

Jones said playing with golfers with whom he's familiar like Looper makes the game more enjoyable, but neither expects their morning match to be anything shy of competitive.

"I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing and try to put some pressure on him and see if I can't give him match," Jones said. "I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to the challenge. I know he's going to play real well, but I like when you have to go get it — when you have to earn it."

Jones joked that Looper's impressive victories thus far might be an advantage, because Looper has closed out his matches so quickly that he hasn't had a chance to play the course's final few holes since Wednesday's qualifying round.

"He's played really and won every match on about No. 14, so he hasn't even see the last four holes," Jones said. "Hopefully I'll get there."

Gann fended off former high school teammate Jes Schneider, a redshirt freshman at Houston, in the morning before bringing the day to a close with the only match closer than Jones' with Hollek.

Gann jumped to a three-hole lead after four holes and held the advantage until Matthew Stephens made a run on the back nine.