

Cotton States: Down to one local as amateur tournament reaches third round

By Keith Prince • kprince@thenewsstar.com • June 27, 2008

ULM golf coach Chris Wilson will soon be seeking local support for his upcoming Warhawk-Outback Golf Classic but today you might want to show up at Bayou DeSiard Country Club to cheer Wilson on in the third round of the W. E. Cole Cotton States Amateur Invitational.

Going into Thursday's first two match play rounds, two of Wilson's top ULM golfers along with a couple of other area favorites — Bob Cooper and Louisiana Tech's Matthew Harvey — gave Monroe golf fans plenty to cheer about.

Now Wilson is the only local man standing in this morning's third round after beating Arkansas golfer Austin Berkovsky 1-up in the morning and following with a dramatic 18th hole chip-in victory over LSU All-SEC performer Andrew Loupe in the afternoon.

After a topsy-turvy afternoon match that featured just four halves in 18 holes, it appeared Loupe was primed to topple ULM's 30-year-old coach on No. 18 when he hit his approach shot to within eight feet directly below the hole after Wilson had to negotiate tree trouble and left his second shot in the rough just short of the green.

But Wilson, the Oklahoma native who is a former all-conference golfer for the Warhawks, hit a perfect pitch that rolled in for birdie. Loupe still had a chance to tie but left his birdie try short, providing Wilson with a second straight victory.

Admitting he has been working a little harder on his game this spring but still slightly surprised to still be swimming in this pool of outstanding college talent, Wilson said, "Both matches were tight all the way. This last one was amazing because we both had a lot of birdies and kept going back and forth."

Wilson, in fact, was four up after five holes before Loupe came back to win the next five holes, four with birdies, to set the stage for the exciting back nine.

Cooper, the 51-year-old insurance agent who won this tourney in 1999, provided his own support crew with plenty to cheer about all day before finally losing to Texas-Arlington ace Bobby Massa — also on a chip-in — on the second extra hole.

Cooper won his morning match over Tech golfer Chad Bailey of Ruston 4-3 and played Massa, an all-Southland Conference choice, on even terms all afternoon. In fact, the Monroe lefty led 1-up going into 17 before Massa pulled even to set up sudden death.



Chris Wilson won both matches by a 1-up score and will advance to the third round of the Cotton States. (Michael Dunlap/The News-Star)

Both men parred No. 1 and then Massa hit a delicate chip that rolled in for birdie on the second hole (No. 7 at DeSiard). Cooper's putt to tie missed the mark.

Massa, who also chipped in on No. 6 for a win, said, "Bob Cooper is a great competitor and a real gentleman. And he hit a lot of good shots. This is my third time in the Cotton States and the first time to win my second match."

This morning Massa will be squaring off with the ULM's Coach Wilson.

Cooper said, "I'm disappointed but I played pretty well. These kids are all great. The course is in great shape and the tournament, as always, is outstanding."

Harvey won his first round match 4-3 over Jamey Taylor of Friendswood, Texas, thanks largely to one stretch of three consecutive birdies but Vanderbilt's Hudson Johnson of Longview, Texas, who shared medalist honors this week, proved to be too tough in the afternoon.

"I made some mistakes and he's a super player," said Harvey.

Only 16 players remain alive in the Cotton States field and that number will be shaved down to just four after a pair of matches today at Bayou DeSiard.