

Jimenez lands in Cotton States semifinals

Texan delivers two 2-and-1 wins, now just two matches from title.

Scott Beder

June 27, 2004

Jared Jimenez opted not to defend his Texas State Public Links championship this week to participate in the W.E. Cole Cotton States. So far, that has proved to be a wise choice.

On Saturday, Jimenez won two matches - including an afternoon battle with local favorite Brandon Aydtlett - to advance to the semifinals at Bayou DeSiard Country Club.

Jimenez defeated Will Grace 2 and 1 in his morning match then followed with a victory over Aydtlett 2 and 1. He will face University of Virginia golfer Daniel McGurk, a 1-up winner over Shaun Melville.



Margaret Croft/The News-Star
Jared Jimenez, one of four semifinalists in the championship flight, plays golf at Mississippi State.

Jimenez, who battled a hot golfer in Aydtlett and a partisan crowd, finished off the match in dramatic fashion by chipping in for birdie from the bunker on the par-3 17th.

"It went in, but I don't know why," said Jimenez, who will be a senior golfer at Mississippi State. "I hit a good shot, but I didn't know it would go in."

Jimenez seized control of the match on the par-3 ninth when he drained a 20-foot par putt to go up two holes on Aydtlett.

"That gave me some fire and kept me ahead," Jimenez said. "I knew I had two holes to work with."

Work is something Jimenez is familiar with. The Allen, Texas, resident plays for the Bulldogs after trying out for two straight years and not making the team. Finally, this past year, Jimenez made the team and played in four out of seven tournaments.

It was first-year coach Clay Homan that gave Jimenez a chance.

"It was a real big deal to me," Jimenez said. "I've worked hard to try and make a golf career. I kept practicing and the new coach saw some potential and put me on the team."

The other semifinal will pit Australian Kane Streat against University of Lamar golfer Shawn Stefani.

Streat defeated Ian Rochester in 22 holes in the morning and followed with a big win over fellow Aussie Marc Leishman - the No. 1 seed in match play - 1-up in the afternoon.

Streat rallied after going three down after the first three holes. Not a good position to be in against a player of Leishman's caliber. He won his last tournament in Scotland by 10 strokes.

"I was just trying to get back in a routine after that and trying to hit some putts," said the 22-year-old Streat, who has qualified for the British Amateur. "I didn't think he would make some mistakes because he's been playing so well, but you never know in match play."

The match turned on holes 8, 9 and 10. Leishman walked to the No. 8 tee box with a two-hole

advantage. But after those three holes, he found himself down one.

"I didn't play quite as well and Kane played real well," Leishman said. "If you have to lose, I'd rather lose to one of my good mates."

Streat closed the deal on No. 18 with a perfect drive and a second shot to within 10 feet of the pin. Leishman lost his drive left then had his second shot rejected back by a tree limb. He had a 30-foot putt for par that would have forced Streat to putt, but when he failed to make the putt he conceded the hole and the match.

Stefani, an All-Southland Conference golfer, defeated Mark Perry 3 and 2 in the morning and Australian Heath D'Altera 3 and 2 in the afternoon.

"Neither one of us played that well, but he gave me some holes on some putts," Stefani said. "I struggled today after playing solid the first two, but I kept it together."

There is an interesting semifinal match in the first flight where Louisiana-Monroe golfer Bryan Vahlberg faces 15-year-old Matthew Harvey, a golfer at St. Frederick.

Vahlberg, a member of ULM's Southland Conference championship team, defeated Shawn Goodwin 2-up in the morning and knocked off LSU golfer Garrett Runion 4 and 3 in the afternoon.

Harvey, who has created quite a buzz this week, defeated Andre Metzger 5 and 4 in the morning and Trey Rowe 3 and 2 in the afternoon.

*©The News-Star
June 27, 2004*