

COTTON STATES: Massa's clutch shots conquer the competition

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Bobby Massa went on a birdie binge in the final round to win the W.E. Cole Cotton States Invitational on Saturday.

Massa, a junior at Texas-Arlington, birdied No. 4, and was 1-up over fellow finalist Will Osborne after nine holes at Bayou DeSiard Country Club.

He caught fire with accurate approach shots and steady putting after the turn, notching birdies on No. 10, No. 11, No. 12, while Osborne could only manage par.

"I was hitting my driver well, and I was making my putts," Massa said. "... I started the day a little tight, but just took a deep breath, and I was fine after that."

The three straight birdies on the back nine put Massa 4-up. Both Massa and Osborne birdied No. 13, giving Massa his fourth consecutive birdie.

Osborne then mounted a rally. He birdied No. 14 to cut Massa's lead to 3-up. His shot off the tee on No. 15 sailed past the green. His second shot, a chip, was aligned perfectly, but the ball skipped over the cup and rolled onto the fringe. Needing par to stay alive — down three with three holes remaining — he made a 20-foot putt from the fringe to continue the match.

Osborne's clutch putt seemed to shift the pressure to Massa. Massa's tee shot on No. 16 sailed far right of the fairway, leaving a difficult shot through an array of pine trees. His second shot bounced off a low-lying tree limb.

"I was just trying to get it back to the fairway," Massa said.

He was still short of the green after his third and fourth shots.

Osborne took advantage, landing his tee shot on the fairway and scoring par to shorten Massa's lead to 2-up with two holes remaining.

That's where Osborne's rally ended. His tee shot on No. 17 landed on the uphill side of bunker, forcing him to play his second shot from one knee. He put a little too much power in the shot, leaving a long putt for par.

"It was a difficult shot," Osborne said. "I thought I hit the tee shot perfect, but it sailed into the bunker, and I couldn't make the putt after that."



Three straight birdies on the back nine put Texas-Arlington junior Bobby Massa ahead for good on Saturday. (Arelly D. Castillo/The News-Star)

Osborne and Massa both bogeyed the hole, ending the match after 17 holes.

It was Massa's third appearance in the Cotton States, and the fourth for Osborne, who is a senior at Arkansas.

Both players were strong off the tee, but it was Massa's putting and short game that made the difference. He said the course layout highlighted his strengths as a golfer.

"There are a lot of wedge shots, a lot of opportunities to place the ball. In match play it's all about making birdies," Massa said.