

## **Texans take early honors; Cooper, Harvey, McKendrick qualify at Cotton States**

By Keith Prince • kprince@thenewsstar.com • June 26, 2008

A couple of young Texans — Hudson Johnson of Longview and Scott Kelly of Kingswood outside Houston — tied for medalist honors Wednesday as the W. E. Cole Cotton States Amateur Championship completed qualifying and now begins match play at Bayou DeSiard Country Club today.

Johnson, who will be a junior at Vanderbilt this fall, finished two days of qualifying at 6-under-par 137 after shooting 67-70 and tied with Kelly, who just swept all individual honors in the Southland Conference while playing for Sam Houston State.

Kelly, who shot rounds of 68-69 for his 137, won the individual conference title for the Bearcats and was named Freshman of the Year for the SLC.

Johnson started slowly Wednesday and stood 1-over-par after playing the back nine first. But he then birdied the par-5 No. 3 and followed with an eagle on par-4 No. 5 when he holed out on a 125-yard second-shot wedge. "That got me back on track and I was pretty solid the rest of the way," he said.

Kelly, like Johnson playing here for the first time, said, "I was pretty patient all day, which is what you need on this course. Just about every bogey comes from not hitting a fairway and today I drove it well and made a few putts (six birdies Wednesday and five on Tuesday)."

While appreciating all 64 talented players who have stayed alive, local fans will be especially interested in following several men with strong ties to Monroe.

Among those are 1999 champ Bob Cooper, former Monroe resident Matthew Harvey, current ULM star David McKendrick and his Warhawk coach, Chris Wilson, who rallied (76-72) to get in by a shot.

Cooper, who won last year's state senior title and will be the true veteran in the field of 64, shot 2-over 74 Wednesday to go with a 2-under 70 the first round, easily making the cut.

He said, "Yesterday was a good putting day and today was a good ball-striking round. I went about 13 straight holes without missing a green at one point.

"This day is always a little nerve racking and I think my putting got tentative, but I'm glad to get it posted and get in. I would have loved to have the low score but getting to match play was the object, so I feel good," said the ULM Hall of Famer who won consecutive national left-handed titles in the mid-1980s.

Harvey, a first-team all-WAC choice at Louisiana Tech, said his goal was to shoot even par for the two days, "and missing it by one shot wasn't bad."

Playing in his first tournament since undergoing surgery for a collapsed lung seven weeks ago, Harvey shot 72-73—145. "I hit the ball pretty well both days and I walked the full 36 holes, because I play better when I walk and I also just wanted to see if I could do it. I feel good physically, no problems at all," he said.

McKendrick, last year's Cotton States runner-up, also had no trouble making the cut. He shot 72-74 and will now try to complete a very big week — which started Monday in Alexandria when he shot 66-70 to earn the only spot available in a qualifying event for the upcoming National Publinks championship.

"I was really tired Tuesday after playing 36 on Monday, but I got a good night's rest Tuesday night and am looking forward to the rest of the tournament," said McKendrick, the Australian who has been ULM's top player the past couple of years.

Louisiana Tech's Chad Bailey of Ruston is another area player who made the cut, rallying with a 71 Tuesday after shooting 76 in the first round.

Two other Louisiana Tech golfers, Ruston's Patrick Blunt and lanky Cory Bartlett of Lake Providence, each finished at 149 and will be part of an eight-player group that vies for the 64 berth this morning at 7 a.m.

Match play is scheduled to begin at 7:30 a.m.