

Tie for two

Streat, McGurk forced to share Cotton States title

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A tournament with a rich history added another unique chapter on Sunday.

The 53rd W.E. Cole Cotton States Invitational will be remembered for the rain and, for the first time ever, co-champions.

Daniel McGurk and Kane Streat were declared co-champions after rain - followed by lightning - ended their championship match after just two holes. Tournament officials called everyone in at 1:50 p.m., seconds after Streat had hit his third shot onto the green of the par-5 No. 3 hole.

After a wait of 40 minutes, and more rain, the tournament was called.

"You can't really control the weather," McGurk said. "You've got two deserving guys, so it's just as well."

McGurk, a sophomore-to-be at the University of Virginia, had won the first two holes with a birdie and par and was 2-up. It was the continuation of the strong play that brought McGurk into the championship match.

McGurk easily cruised to victory in two of his three matches, with the only close call coming Saturday with a 1-up win over Shaun Melville. In that match, McGurk found himself down one with three to play.

"It was back and forth," McGurk said. "I birdied 16 and 17. It was kind of fun."

On Sunday morning, he dispatched Jared Jimenez 5 and 3 to reach the championship.

McGurk, 19, is a former AJGA Junior All-American and led The Woodlands (Texas) High School team to the Class 5A state title in 2003. This past season he was the No. 2 player at Virginia where his best finish was ninth in the Turtle Bay Invitational.

"I got to travel a lot and played in some great tournaments," said McGurk, who played baseball until he was 14. "The golf courses were a lot harder than the junior golf courses I played on. The ACC was pretty competitive and playing in tournaments against guys who are the best in the country helps."

Streat was one of four Australian golfers who made a big splash at the tournament. He reached the finals by beating fellow Aussie Marc Leishman on Saturday afternoon and knocking out Lamar golfer Shawn Stefani 3 and 2 Sunday morning.

Streat credited fellow Aussie Heath D'Altera, who was eliminated on Saturday afternoon, but caddied for him Sunday morning, helping him read putts.

"I was pretty ready to go after the morning round," Streat said. "I was two down after two holes but I wasn't worried because I was three down after three to Leishman."

Streat had success during the week with an accurate driver, staying away from the ultra-high



Margaret Croft/The News-Star
Kane Streat, above, and Daniel McGurk only managed to play two holes of their Cotton States final before rain and lightning ended their days.

rough that couldn't be cut because of the wet conditions. During the first two days of qualifying, players were allowed to lift, clean and place their ball in the fairway and rough. Once match play started, it was in the fairway only.

"I was driving it straight and kept it in play and out of the rough," Streat said. "The course was three to four shots harder with the rough in play."

This was the first trip to the United States for the 20-year-old Streat, who will play this week at the Dogwood Invitational in Atlanta.

"I'm very happy," said Streat the 2000 Victorian Junior champion. "Coming from Australia, you think America is bigger and better and it's good to see the Australians play well all week."

Louisiana-Monroe golfer Bryan Vahlberg and Michael Douthit were named co-champions of the first flight.

Vahlberg defeated St. Frederick sophomore Matthew Harvey 2-up in the morning, while Douthit advanced with a 3 and 2 win over Ryan Henry.

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