

Whalen averts sure defeat by winning 3 closing holes

By **CLAY LATIMER**

Rocky Mountain News Staff Writer

MORRISON — Sixteen-year-old Charlie Whalen appeared to be headed for certain defeat yesterday during the final holes of the Colorado Golf Association Junior Boys Match Play Championship at Willow Springs Country Club.

Starting the 13th hole, the Mullen High School junior trailed 18-year-old Chris Johnson by three holes. By the 16th hole, he trailed Johnson by two holes.

Then, on No. 16, Whalen was penalized a stroke for picking up his ball after he thought Johnson had conceded the hole. But, as was the case all afternoon, Whalen didn't lose his composure. It paid off when he won Nos. 16, 17 and 18 to emerge with a surprising 1-up victory in the championship division.

"I was playing better earlier this week," said Whalen, who won medalist honors in this week's qualifying round with a 74. "Today, I wasn't playing well at all. All I was trying to do was survive.

"I NEVER PLAY too emotionally. I just try to hit the best shot and not get flustered. He seemed to be getting flustered. Maybe that was the difference, the fact I didn't get too flustered."

During the final holes, Whalen and Johnson had to contend with rain and strong winds.

Johnson, a Ranum High graduate who will attend New Mexico Junior College next fall, seemed headed for a victory when he parred the 150-yard, par-3 15th hole after Whalen hit his tee shot into the water.

On the next hole, Whalen thought Johnson had hit his tee shot out of bounds. He also thought Johnson had conceded the hole, so he picked up his ball. He was given a 1-stroke penalty.

"I'll never do that again," he said. "After 15, when I hit in the water, I thought my chances were pretty slim. But on 16, even after I got that penalty, I thought I could still win the hole if I put the ball in the middle of the green."



JOHN GORDON/Rocky Mountain News

Charlie Whalen reacts as putt drops during junior match play tournament at Willow Springs.