

Olson, 14, wins another championship

By Todd Phipers
Denver Post Sports Columnist

Leif Olson won the Colorado Junior Match Play Championship yesterday to add to the stroke-play title he captured last summer, and he's still about a month shy of his 15th birthday.

Olson's 2-and-1 victory over Andrew Atkinson of Montrose at Overland Golf Course gave him as many state victories as Hale Irwin and Mike Reid when they were growing up in the state, and two more than Steve Jones, who just happened to win the U.S. Open last weekend.

With four years of eligibility remaining as a junior, what does Olson do for an encore? "Just keep on trying, try my best," the modest Mullen High School sophomore-to-be said after closing out Atkinson with a matching birdie at the par-4 17th hole.

Here's one goal the Golden resident who plays out of Lakewood Country

Club might keep in mind: About this time next year, he could become the first golfer to win back-to-back junior match-play crowns since Davis Love Jr. — the late father of Davis Love III — did it in 1953-54.

Olson jumped out to a 4-up lead on the first four holes of yesterday's finale, the result of his own steady play and a faltering start by Atkinson.

"When I first started off, I felt like I was holding onto the club too long with my right hand and I kept turning everything over," said the 18-year-old Montrose High School graduate, who will play at New Mexico State. "I missed three greens real bad."

Atkinson bounced back to win the fifth and sixth holes, and Olson's lead fluctuated between 2 and 3 up most of the rest of the way. "I started out good, but then he kind of got his game going," said the winner.

"I was trying to make it a respectable match after the start," Atkinson said, "and the first time I really kind

of thought I had a chance was when I made a really good birdie on 14. Then when I hit a really good shot on 16 and Leif put it in the trap," he said of the tee shots at the 168-yard par-3, "it's pretty much favoring 1 down after that hole."

Olson put his bunker shot to a foot, however, and Atkinson missed a 15-footer for birdie that would have pulled him to one hole behind with two to play. "That was probably my best shot of the match," Olson said. "He had to win both holes to tie."

But the runnerup didn't lose hope when he halved the hole to go dormie.

"It wasn't over," Atkinson said. "I was 2 down with two (to play) and the first match I played here, I was 3 down with three to go and I finished birdie, birdie, birdie, then birdied the first playoff hole to win. So I knew I could probably pull it off. But against Leif, it's a little different."

Atkinson made a remarkable birdie at the 17th, draining a long-dis-

tance putt after being forced to hit his second shot from out of a trap behind a tree. Olson, however, almost drove the green on the short par-4 and chipped to short range.

"I thought he might make it," said the winner, whose demeanor is as cool as his Nordic name would suggest. "I wasn't too upset, because I had like a 5-footer uphill, and I knew I could make that."

He did, and the 1996 match-play title was in the books.

CGA JUNIOR MATCH PLAY CHAMPIONSHIP
At Overland Park G.C.; par 72
Semifinal round

Leif Olson def. Bret Guetz 1 up; Andrew Atkinson def. Marc Hocking 1 up.

Final rounds

Championship flight — Leif Olson, Lakewood C.C., def. Andrew Atkinson, Montrose G.C., 2 and 1; Consolation flight — Chris Schwartz, Fort Collins C.C., def. Brendan Hill, Hillcrest G.C., 4 and 2; First flight — Matt Call, Coal Creek G.C., def. Jamie McKnight, Heather Ridge C.C., 5 and 4; Second flight — John Reif, Overland Park G.C., def. Dan Goettge, Woodmoor C.C., 1 up; Third flight — Devin Asbury, Fox Hollow G.C., def. David Steinmetz, Hyland Hills G.C., 1 up; Fourth flight — Geoff Nuwash, Fort Collins C.C., def. Brady Sniffin, Coal Creek G.C., 5 and 3; Fifth flight — Shaun Casey, Foothills G.C., def. Eric Billinger, Legacy Ridge G.C.; Billinger withdrew with injury; Sixth flight — Matt Fuller def. Brian Bennett Jr., C.C. of Colorado, 4 and 3.



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Leif Olson lofts a chip shot onto the sixth green yesterday.

CGA Junior Match Play	
At Overland Park CHAMPIONSHIP SEMIFINALS	
Leif Olson def. Bret Guetz 1 up; and Andrew Atkinson def. Marc Hocking 1 up.	
FINALS ALL FLIGHTS CHAMPIONSHIP	
Leif Olson, Lakewood CC def. Andrew Atkinson, Montrose GC 2 & 1.	
CONSOLATION FLIGHT	
Chris Schwartz, Ft. Collins GC def. Brendan Hill, Hillcrest GC 4 & 2.	
FIRST FLIGHT	SECOND FLIGHT
Matt Call, Coal Creek GC def. Jamie McKnight, Heather Ridge CC 5 & 4.	John Reif, Overland Park GC def. Dan Goettge, Woodmoor CC 1 up.
	THIRD FLIGHT
	Devin Asbury, Fox Hollow GC def. David Steinmetz, Hyland Hills GC 1 up.
	FOURTH FLIGHT
	Geoff Nuwash, Ft. Collins CC def. Brady Sniffin, Coal Creek GC 5 & 3.
	FIFTH FLIGHT
	Shaun Casey, Foothills GC def. Eric Billinger, Legacy Ridge GC -- Billinger withdrew due to an injury
	SIXTH FLIGHT
	Matt Fuller def. Brian Bennett, Jr., CC of Colorado 4 & 3.