

Summary: The Australian charges from six back for the one-shot victory

The Australian surge in golf reached out to the **Northwest Open** on Sunday at Heron Lakes Golf Course.

Steve **Rintoul**, an Australian and former University of Oregon golfer, shot a 7-under-par 65 in the final round to claim a one-stroke victory in the \$138,200 regional tournament.

Seven birdies and a 6-under 30 on the front nine, Heron Lakes' white nine, brought **Rintoul** back quickly from a six-stroke deficit. He then added a solid 35 on the tougher red nine to finish 54 holes at 7-under 209.

``My experience playing the Ben Hogan Tour helped me today," **Rintoul** said. ``I've seen guys come from six shots back in the last round several times out there."

Gerry Norquist of Portland, a co-leader after Saturday's second round, sank an 18-foot birdie putt at the 413-yard 18th hole for a 72 and finished second at 210 on the sunny, wind-free day.

Pros Keith Lienes of Tumwater Valley and Brian Mogg of Tacoma shared third at 212. Lienes had a 74 and Mogg a 73 over the 6,657-yard course.

The \$25,000 check in the G.I. Joe's/Thriftway-sponsored event was \$16,500 larger than **Rintoul**'s previous high golf payoff.

``This means so much to me, coming at this time," **Rintoul** said. ``When I turned pro in 1988, I signed a three-year deal with my sponsors. The contract is up on Sept. 15. I think this win will put my sponsors in a good frame of mind about me."

Rintoul, the 1988 Oregon Amateur champion, grew up watching and occasionally playing golf with Australians Greg Norman, Ian Baker-Finch and Wayne Grady. He lost to Baker-Finch 4-and-3 in the quarterfinals of the 1990 Australian Match Play Championship.

And **Rintoul** seemed to enjoy the situation of claiming this title at a time when Baker-Finch holds the British Open championship and Grady is getting ready to defend his PGA crown this week at Carmel, Ind.

``Those great Australian players are giving me good incentive," he said.

Rintoul was explosive right from start of his final round. He made four straight birdies before three-putting for a bogey at the 205-yard fifth. Then he added birdies at the sixth, seventh and ninth.

Five of the front-side birdies came on putts of between 12 and 15 feet.

``When Steve has his putter going, he's really tough," said Norquist, a former Oregon teammate of **Rintoul**. ``I'm not surprised at what he did. I just congratulate him."

Among other things, **Rintoul**'s 65 matched the Open's tournament record at Heron Lakes, first set by Fred Couples in 1988 and tied by Norquist on Saturday.

For awhile Sunday, it appeared there would be a photo finish. At one stage on the final nine, there was a four-way tie at 6-under among **Rintoul**, Norquist, Jerry Minor and Buzz Thomas.

Earlier, Minor, the Progress Downs pro, led at 7-under after sinking an 18-foot eagle putt at the 494-yard first hole.

Rintoul went to 7-under and took the lead alone with a 10-foot birdie at the 182-yard 15th after a 6-iron tee

shot.

Then Thomas, a pro from Gig Harbor, Wash., put birdies back-to-back at the 14th and 15th to move into a tie with **Rintoul**.

But, while **Rintoul**, who hit 17 greens in regulation or better, finished with three solid pars, his rivals stalled behind him.

Norquist three-putted for a bogey at the 525-yard 12th. Minor hit his second shot into a water hazard and took a double-bogey at the 14th.

Most painful of all was the finish of Thomas, who made double-bogeys at the 390-yard 16th and the 18th. He had bunker problems at the 16th and a drive into water at the 18th.

Finally, Minor's 74 and Thomas' 71 left them in a three-way tie for fifth at 213 with Scott Williams of Redmond, Wash. Williams closed with a struggling 75.

OPEN NOTES: An estimated 3,500 spectators watched the final round. The Open's tournament program, larger than programs at many PGA Tour stops, stunned most spectators. It had 288 pages and weighed more than two pounds.