

ORONDO – As one of his playing partners, Mark Rohde, dropped to his knees and leaned over backward after missing a birdie putt on the 17th hole, Rick **Acton** shook his head.

"It's painful just watching that," **Acton** said to the gallery. "I'll leave that to the younger guys."

What the 47-year-old **Acton**, whose body resembles that of Homer Simpson, will leave to the "younger guys" has boundaries.

Like winning golf tournaments.

The head professional at the Sahalee Country Club in Redmond shot a 4-under-par 68 Wednesday to earn a one-stroke victory in the \$100,000 **Northwest Open** at the Desert Canyon Golf Resort.

**Acton** birdied the 16th and 17th holes to finish at 7-under 209. PGA Tour player Rick Fehr, representing the host club, finished alone in second place at 210.

"I hit it about as good as I could," said **Acton**, who shot a course-record 66 during Tuesday's second round.

It was the third **Northwest Open** title for **Acton**, but his first since 1978. That marks the longest period between victories in the history of the tournament, which dates to 1901.

**Acton**, who played on the PGA Tour from 1973-1980, continued his domination of the Pacific Northwest Golf Association regional tournaments.

Of the five major tourneys in the Pacific Northwest, **Acton** has won the Washington State PGA five times, the Oregon Open five times, the Pacific Northwest PGA four times, the **Northwest Open** three times and the Washington State Open twice.

For **Acton**, each and every victory is special. His PGA Tour career was cut short by an automobile accident in which he suffered knee and chest injuries, broke his jaw in six places and required 250 stitches in his face. He's been working at Sahalee for the past decade.

Wednesday's victory snapped a slump for **Acton**, who hadn't won a PNWGA major in five years.

"I expect a lot out of myself, probably more than I should considering how much I get to practice. I have a big job at a big club," **Acton** said. "It gets frustrating when I don't play as well as I'm capable of. The last couple of days is the way I expect to play."

**Acton**, a natural left-hander who plays right-handed and putts left-handed, said he had "three completely different rounds" in the 54-hole tourney.

"The first round wasn't much fun. I hit it decent, but I putted poorly," he said of his 75 on opening day. "Then (Tuesday), I had only 25 putts and nine birdies."

Nine different players had at least a share of the lead during some point in the final round. **Acton's** 20-foot birdie putt on the par-3 16th broke a four-way tie for first with Fehr, Scott Williams and Greg Whisman.

Whisman, of Everett, who has played two PGA Tour events this season and spent most of the year on the Nike Tour, finished in a tie for third at 211 with Williams of the Redwood Golf Center.

Fehr, 31st on the PGA Tour money list with \$384,829 in earnings this season, seemed almost relieved not to win.

"It's a little awkward. I feel like I'm taking something away from these guys," Fehr said of the field, comprised mainly of golf professionals who work at clubs and public courses. "This is the golf professionals' tournament. On the other hand, the organizers feel like they need to bring in some tour professionals.

"It's not a level playing field. They work 70 hours a week and don't get much of a chance to practice."

But in the end, it was the pro from perhaps the most prestigious club in the state that earned the victory.

And he didn't seem to mind the attention given to his age.

As Desert Canyon designer Jack Frei said while presenting the first-place check of \$9,250, "It's a great pleasure to see some of the old guys win anymore."

And as **Acton** was walking to his car following the round, Whisman jokingly yelled after him, "Why don't you leave it to the younger guys?"

**Acton** kept walking. And smiled.

## **Northwest Open**

Final results

{6,904-yard, par-72 Desert Canyon}

Rick **Acton**, \$9,250/q75-66-68\_209

Rick Fehr, \$5,900/q70-72-68\_210

Scott Williams, \$3,400/q71-70-70\_211

Greg Whisman, \$3,400/q68-75-68\_211

Chris Mitchell, \$2,168/q71-69-73\_213

Mark Rohde, \$2,168/q69-72-72\_213

Walt Porterfield, \$2,168/q69-74-70\_213

John McComish, \$2,168/q72-72-69\_213

a-Byron Patton/q69-71-74\_214

Mike Barnett, \$1,646/q69-71-75\_215

Pat Fitzsimons, \$1,646/q70-72-73\_215

Rob Gibbons, \$1,646/q72-72-71\_215

Doug Hood, \$1,646/q69-76-70\_215

NCW entries

a-Kevin Pom-Arleau/q77-70-76\_223

Bob Janes, \$150/q79-70-75\_224

Ed Paine, \$150/q74-77-73\_224

Dan Heater, \$150/q73-78-77\_228

#a-denotes amateur

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