

BELLEVUE - The wind kicked up during the final round of the \$100,000 Washington **State Open**, but Todd **Erwin's** game remained calm.

As his challengers saw their games blown away down the stretch, **Erwin** put together a final round of 2-under-par 70 yesterday at **Glendale** Country Club to win by two shots.

**Erwin**, an assistant pro at Canterwood Country Club in Gig Harbor, had four birdies and two bogeys en route to a three-round total of 5-under 211 - and a first-place check of \$11,250.

Doug Hixson, of Emerald Valley in Creswell, Ore., finished second after a third-round 71 that left him at 213.

Doug Campbell (Auburn), Mark Rohde (Spokane) and Steve Rintoul (Portland) tied for third at 215.

Tumwater Valley's Keith Liedes, who shared the second-round lead with **Erwin**, shot a final-round 75 and faded to sixth.

The wind was a factor during the final round, playing havoc with shots and forcing players to use an extra club for certain shots.

But **Erwin** was so hot early, he probably didn't notice the wind.

He birdied three of his first five holes and quickly opened a four-shot lead on the field.

**Erwin** chipped in for a birdie on the 140-yard, par-3 second hole, rolled in a 12-foot birdie putt on the 408-yard, par-4 third hole, and made another birdie putt on the 356-yard, par-4 fifth hole.

"In windy conditions, it's important to get off to a

#### **ERWIN GETS WIND OF VICTORY IN STATE GOLF**

good start," **Erwin** said. "That good start really got me going."

But Hixson suddenly started making birdies. He made birdie putts on the fourth, sixth and seventh holes and was within one shot of **Erwin**.

"It was fun," Hixson said. "It was even more fun when the birdies started to fall."

Campbell and Rohde were within range of the lead, but Campbell couldn't mount a charge on the back nine and Rohde did himself in with a double-bogey 5 on the 187-yard, par-3 15th hole.

Hixson stayed close, but dropped two behind **Erwin** after a bogey at the 15th. Hixson came back, hitting a 9-iron to within inches on the 370-yard, par-4 16th hole for a birdie.

After making par on the 17th, Hixson had one final chance to catch **Erwin** on the 18th, but his 35-foot downhill putt rolled five feet past the hole. He missed the next putt, finishing with a three-putt bogey.

For **Erwin**, the tournament came down to the 17th hole, a mammoth 437-yard par-3. He hit a solid drive, but the shot rolled into the right-hand rough. His 3-iron came up 15 yards short of the green.

**Erwin's** pitch shot wound up 6 feet short of the hole. As **Erwin** stood over the putt, he recalled a similar situation in a tournament four years ago.

At the 1988 Victoria **Open**, **Erwin** faced a difficult putt for par. He made the putt and went on to win the

tournament.

"I thought about the putt I made a few years ago," **Erwin** said.

"That turned out to be my best putt of the day, just like the one I hit today."

**Erwin** was steady, making one birdie, one bogey and seven pars on the back side.

"Todd did the right thing - he got off to a quick start and then played well the rest of the round," said Lienes, who played with **Erwin** during the final round. "Todd kept recovering and saving himself down the stretch when he had to. That was a solid round."

**Erwin** had been in contention in other Northwest major events before, but hadn't won. In fact, he has tried to qualify for the PGA Tour five times but has not earned his card.

This year is different for **Erwin**, however. This year, he is winning.

He won the United States **Open** local qualifier last month and followed it with the victory in the Washington **State Open**.

And who knows, maybe he'll earn his PGA card this winter.

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