

BELLEVUE - The tournament was called the Ernst Washington **Open** but a more appropriate title sponsor might have been The Weather Channel.

Yesterday's final round started after a three-hour delay because of wet grounds that forced officials to shorten the **Glendale** Country Club course 755 yards. They converted two par-4s into par 3s on the back nine and took 185 yards off the par-5 seventh hole.

The afternoon meteorological highlight was a 70-minute delay after lightning flashed.

When play resumed, it was Jeff **Coston** who flashed.

The 40-year-old teaching pro from Blaine spent the rain delay thinking about the 20-foot birdie putt that awaited him on No. 12.

He sank it to go 3-under par for the tournament.

After botching a bunker shot and bogeying the par-3 15th, **Coston** turned to his caddy and declared, "I'm birdieing the last three holes. Let's get this done."

He didn't follow his script exactly but was close enough to win the tournament. **Coston** earned a first-prize check of \$11,250 and a chance to earn a bigger paycheck in the Ernst Championship against touring pros July 8-9 at Inglewood Country Club in Kenmore, where he once was a junior member.

Coston chipped in for birdie on 16, parred the shortened 17th hole, then sank an 8-foot birdie putt for a 2-under-par 66 (normal par is 71), three-round total of 206 and his first lead of the three-day tournament.

He then nervously watched the final threesome - Tom Sovay, Michael Combs and John McComish - narrowly miss chances to tie him.

Sovay, who had blown a four-stroke lead, almost sank a wedge from 70 yards, McComish missed a 25-foot putt and Combs, a Tri-Cities driving-range pro, missed a 10-footer.

Coston, who runs his academy at Semiahmoo, had blown a three-stroke lead on the final nine in last month's Giusti Memorial Invitational in Vancouver and ached for redemption.

"I really wanted to have a good week here because I was really depressed after the Giusti," he said.

Sovay, teaching pro at Harbour Pointe Golf Course in Mukilteo, knows how **Coston** felt. Sovay bogeyed three par-3 holes on the final nine and watched his lead dissolve. He missed four putts of seven feet or less on the final nine.

"The hands just get a little tighter on that putter," he said.

"It's just going to take a little time. I'll be there the next tournament."

Sovay, 34, took out his frustration with a scream after missing a four-foot putt for par on 17. He sank a four-footer on 18 for his only birdie of the day, a final-round 71 and a tie for second at 207 with his two playing partners and Tom Keating of Junction City, Ore.

Sovay began the day with a three-stroke lead.

McComish, the 6-foot-6, 265-pound pro from Independence, Ore., who for three years was the longest driver on the PGA Tour, missed three putts within eight feet on the back nine.

