

BELLEVUE – In recent years, late May has provided Blaine's Jeff **Coston** the opportunity to play for one of the most coveted 50-and-over professional men's golf championships in the world – the Senior PGA Championship.

But when that tournament was scheduled a week later, it opened an old door for the longtime club professional from Semiahmoo Golf Club – to tee it up in the **Washington Open** Invitational.

For those who think a 54-year-old is past his prime competing against the youngsters, **Coston** proved talent certainly supersedes age as a few early birdies offset a couple of late miscues in capturing the 84th **Washington Open** Invitational at Glendale Country Club.

Coston closed with a 2-under-par 69 – one of the eight rounds posted in the 60s Wednesday in a driving afternoon rainstorm – to finish at 10-under 203, beating Seattle's Ryan Benzel (70) by two strokes.

Spokane's Corey Prugh (68) was in third at 206, and host professional Scott Williams (72) placed fourth at 209.

Locally, Lakewood's Chris Griffin (71) was in a group in seventh at 211 – his fifth top-10 finish since 2004.

The day belonged to **Coston**, who took home his fourth **Washington Open** Invitational title to tie Tacoma's Todd Erwin, Spokane's Al Mengert and Seattle's Emery Zimmerman for second in all-time tournament wins behind Chuck Congdon's five.

The win also marked **Coston's** 18th career major championship in the PGA Pacific Northwest Section, moving him past Portland's Bob Duden (17 wins) for most in the region.

"That's important to me – very important to me," **Coston** said. "Money is always good, but it's not as important as this."

Morning weather was calm, and **Coston** started off with back-to-back birdies to quickly move to 10-under and grab a three-stroke lead.

But Benzel, playing in the group ahead of **Coston**, chipped in for birdie at the par-3 sixth, and then two-putted from 80 feet for another one at the par-5 seventh to tie for the lead.

Coston nearly drove the green on the 285-yard, par-4 eighth to get to 11-under, then hit a nifty wedge close on the next hole for his final birdie, and he was 12-under.

As the golfers walked from the ninth green through the tunnel to the 10th tee, the sky darkened. The wind picked up. And rain fell heavily.

"It made it hard to play aggressively," said Benzel, now a two-time runner-up. "Once the weather turned, the wind really picked up. You were trying to guess correctly (on shots)."

Both golfers fell back with two back-nine bogeys, but Benzel's miscue on the 16th tee essentially cost him the tournament. His driver slipped out of his hand, and his ball hooked into a water hazard, costing him a penalty stroke – and eventually leading to a bogey.

"Went through three or four gloves today," Benzel said, "and a couple of towels."

Anything to stay dry. Or ignore the rain altogether, which is what **Coston** seemed to do.

"I'm glad it started raining, honestly," **Coston** said. "Having a caddie (to talk to) – and having wrinkles and gray

hair – I'm used to that. Other guys were in carts or carrying their own bags, so I think it was a big help.”

CHIP SHOTS

Coston's winnings were \$15,000 – or \$500 less than he took home for winning his first **Washington Open** Invitational title in 1996. ... It wasn't a good year for amateurs to not be eligible to win the tournament championship. Former University of **Washington** standout Derek Berg had 22 birdies in the pro-am format, and finished at 15-under 198 from the amateur tees, which were about 250 yards shorter. ... 2008 champion Brian Nosler was a winner again – sort of – as he and partner Vince Jimenez won the pro-am at 24-under 189. ... Allenmore assistant pro Taylor Ferris (73) finished in a tie for 32nd at 220.

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