

Spencer to miss tee time, advances at Amateur

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CHARLEVOIX — Eric Spencer is missing his scheduled tee time for an outing at Oakland Hills Country Club today, but at least he has a good excuse.

Spencer, 31, advanced to the Sweet 16 of the Michigan Amateur for the first time by defeating Holland's Doug Hoey 1-up in the second round of the 92nd Michigan Amateur on Thursday at Belvedere Golf Club.

"I told my partner that I might be able to make it, but not to count on it," said Spencer, who had never advanced past the first round of match play.

That changed Thursday when Spencer, of Bloomfield Hills, posted victories over Eric Drogosch and Hoey. In his match against Hoey, Spencer was 3-up after 10 holes, but found himself all square with the former Michigan Amateur champion going into No. 18. After playing his second shot out of the tall grass, Spencer two-putted for the victory.

"It was grueling," Spencer said. "I wasn't playing very well and I can't believe I made that shot from the hay at 18. I'm very lucky that I won the match."

Hoey was one of five former Michigan Amateur champions — along with Flint's John Lindholm, Ada's Andy Matthews, Alma's Randy Lewis and East Lansing's Korey Mahoney — in the 64-man match play field. Only Mahoney advanced to the Sweet 16.

Lindholm and Lewis were both ousted in the first round, while Matthews lost to Ovid's Jerry Gunthorpe.

Mahoney, the defending champion, advanced with victories over Jesse Riemersma of Kentwood and Brian Coffman of Ann Arbor.

Michigan State golfer Andy Ruthkoski, who shot a competitive course record 64 during the final round of medal play, opened match play with a 1-up victory over Shane Clark of Jackson and advanced to the Sweet 16 by defeating Trenton's Alex Balog 2 and 1.

Ruthkoski, the No. 1 seed and last year's runner-up, was down three holes to Clark with six to play before rallying back to win the opening match.

"I needed to make something happen because I was running out of holes," Ruthkoski said.

Ruthkoski sank a 50-foot birdie putt at No. 17 to tie the match and won it with a par on 18.

"I wasn't putting well, but that one gave me a little momentum going to 18 and into the next round," Ruthkoski said.

Eric Cowles of Perry advanced to the round of 16 for the second straight year with a 1-up victory over Livionia's Stephen Polanski. Cowles never led during the first 17 holes, but birdied No. 18 for the win.

"We went back and forth," Cowles said. "We didn't tie a lot of holes. There were just a lot of holes won and lost."