

Bekker takes top Cotton seed

South African shoots 65 in round two

By Matthew Reynolds

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The 36-hole qualifying for the 56th W.E. (Winnie) Cole Cotton States finished late Wednesday at Bayou Desiard Country Club with South African native Oliver Bekker earning the No. 1 seed of the 64 players.

Bekker, a member of the No. 3 nationally ranked Lamar Cardinals, shot rounds of 66 and 65 for the two day score of 13 under to claim the top seed as match play begins today. Bekker is an honorable mention All-American and is ranked in the top 30 golfers by the NCAA.

"I had the putter rolling and was hitting the wedge nicely today", said Bekker. "I hit my driver pretty well all day, which left me with a lot of wedge shots."

Bekker squares off against Future Masters and Alabama State Champion, Thomas Lowery, in his first match today. Lowery, a Georgia signee, had rounds of 75 and 73 and earned the No. 64 seed in a playoff.

The 64-player field now has the opportunity of playing six matches over the next three days to earn the prestigious title — starting with two matches today.



Henry Cole blasts out of a sand trap during the Cotton States tournament on Wednesday.

This year's field had 145 players that were 23-years-old or younger, but ULM coach Chris Wilson hung in with the youngsters. Wilson shot rounds of 74 and 71 for a two under total in the qualifying.

"Most of these guys hit it much better than me," said Wilson. "I was just able to make a lot of birdies today and stayed scrappy throughout the round."

Wilson will be joined in the match play portion of the competition by two of his Warhawk golfers. Senior David McKendrick, who scored an impressive four under 68 on Tuesday, came back from a rough start on Wednesday to shoot a one-over 73.

"I had a double-bogey on the first hole that kind of put me behind the eight ball", said the Australian native. "I got it together after that and ended up birdying 16 and 17 to get a couple shots back."

Along with McKendrick, Warhawk senior David Hene put together two impressive rounds of 72 and 73.

"I just hung in there", said Hene. "I was able to stay close even though I missed a lot of greens today."

ULM signee Jeremy Cross, who is one of the newest members of the Australian-Warhawk connection, shot 76 on Tuesday before firing a one under 71 on Wednesday earning him the No. 52 seed.

"The course in good shape and the greens are rolling pure," said Cross. "I'm happy with the round today."

Cross recently qualified for the Australian Open with the lowest qualifying score.

When asked on the transition from the stroke play qualifying format to the match play format, many of the players were quick to show their excitement about match play.

"It's a little different strategy-wise since you are playing an opponent heads up instead of just trying to post a low score," said ULL product Michael Smith, who made a double-eagle on the par-5 third hole on Wednesday.

"It gives you more room for error and that's always a good thing," Smith said.

Another area player that qualified for the match play portion of this event was Matthew Harvey, a Louisiana Tech player from Georgetown, Texas. Harvey shot a four-over 76 on Tuesday, before posting a three-under 69 Wednesday — earning him the No. 33 seed.

The first of the today's matches begin at 7:30 this morning and afternoon matches will follow.

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