

COTTON STATES: All four semifinalists hail from Texas

By Keith Prince • kprince@thenewsstar.com • June 28, 2008

When the W.E. Cole Cotton States Invitational concludes today at Bayou DeSiard Country, a young gun from Texas will walk away with the title.

That is a lock because all four semifinalists are from the Lone Star State, two representing Texas universities and the other two playing collegiately out of state.

Bobby Massa of Texas-Arlington will face Ryan Haselden of Vanderbilt in one semis while Michael Smith of Stephen F. Austin takes on Will Osborne of the University of Arkansas in the second morning match. The title match is expected to begin around 12:30 p.m.

Local fans may be best able to identify with Massa, a birdie machine from Grand Prairie, Texas, because it was he who ousted local veteran Bob Cooper on Thursday and then derailed ULM coach Chris Wilson on Friday morning.

Ironically, his final and most deadly blows against both local golfers were chip-ins. After getting Cooper on their second playoff hole, Massa chipped in on No. 17 against Wilson to end their match, 3-1.

“I just didn’t play well enough,” said Wilson. “I had some early bogies that were costly and even though I birdied 13 and 14 to get within a shot, I couldn’t climb all the way back.”

Still, Massa actually saved his move impressive performance thus far for his Friday afternoon battle against Cotton States co-medalist Hudson Johnson of Vanderbilt, yet another Texan by way of Longview.

With many already labeling Johnson as the man-to-beat after his earlier efforts, Massa totally dominated their match from the outset as he birdied Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9. By the turn he was 6-up and he then birdied No. 10 to go 7-up.

Massa eventually won 4-3 after Johnson rallied with wins on 12, 13 and 14. Afterward, Massa said he felt good about the win “but actually I am disappointed that I didn’t close him out earlier. I had a chance on 11 and didn’t capitalize and then I hit it out of bounds on No. 13, so I wasn’t all that good on the back side.”



Ryan Haselden from Vanderbilt University advanced to today’s semifinals with a 1-up win over Rob Laird of Tulsa in the Cotton States Golf Tournament at Bayou DeSiard Country Club on Friday. (Arelly D. Castillo/The News-Star)

Massa will go against Haselden, a Houston product, in one semi this morning after Haselden defeated Tulsa's Rob Laird 1-up in a quarterfinal match.

Haselden also had an impressive front nine in the afternoon match, grabbing a 4-up lead after No. 10 only to see Laird rally with birdies on 11, 12 and 15. "I was still 2-up after 16 before he won 17. But I was able to close him out with a par on 18. I'm happy about reaching the semifinals," said Haselden.

Actually, Haselden is happy to just be on his feet after coming down with fever of 102.7 following a practice round on Monday. His dad, Pat, who is caddying for Ryan, said, "We were about to drop out when we were told the players could ride in carts. That's the only way he was able to play," said his father.

Still weak, Haselden didn't do anything special during qualifying, shooting 73-75 to barely gain a spot in the match play. "But I've been getting better each day and I feel fine now," said the redhead.

This morning's other semi-final match pits Smith, a product of Cedar Park, Texas, just north of Austin, against Osborne, a Wichita Falls, Texas golfer. Smith, beat Jamie Marshall of Arkansas 3&2 and then nipped Lamar's Leroux Ferreira 1-up in the quarters.

Osborne advanced by stopping LSU golfer John Peterson 1-up and then over-powering Louisiana Tech recruit Cody Santone of Haughton, 7&6. "I played steady and he made some mistakes," Osborne said of his quarter-final win. "But the morning match was really something special. I shot 67 and he shot 68. It was a heck of a match.

This marks Osborne's fourth year to play in the Cotton States. "I had never gotten past my second match before, so I'm excited about being in the semifinals," he said.