

Seniors knocked out on countback

Norfolk were pipped on countback in the qualifier at Sheringham for the southern counties seniors' foursomes championship.

They lost in the first round to Suffolk after both teams were tied with 2½ points but they went on to win the play-off for third place.

Suffolk, who go through to the final at Gog Magog, finished strongly to edge ahead of Norfolk.

Two of their pairs won the last hole to win one match and halve another; meanwhile another pair reduced their deficit to contribute vital points to the scoreline.

"It was terribly

exciting," said Norfolk team captain Frank Boswall. "Those of us around the clubhouse knew what was happening and how the scores were adding up."

Results

First round, Norfolk 2½ Suffolk 2½ (Suffolk won on countback): Tony Lount (Royal Cromer) and Doug Gilchrist (Sheringham) lost 4/3. Graham Head (The Norfolk) & Malcolm Carr (Sheringham) halved. Roger Berwick (Sheringham) and Bill Neill (Swaffham) won 2/1. Mike Taylor (Royal Norwich) and Alan Winstanley (Sheringham) lost 1 down. Gordon Smith (The Norfolk) & Terry Norman (Gt Yarmouth & Caister) won 2/1. **Bedfordshire beat Cambridgeshire 3½-1½.**
Second round: Suffolk beat Beds 3-2. Third place play-off: Norfolk beat Cambs 3½-1½.



NORFOLK'S FINEST: Norfolk seniors (from left to right): Bill Neill, Terry Norman, Tony Lount, county president John Watson, Graham Head, Roger Berwick, Alan Winstanley, Gordon Smith, team captain Frank Boswall, Mike Taylor, Doug Gilchrist and Malcolm Carr.

Few puts leader under pressure

Weston Park's Michael Few has turned up the heat in the Norfolk PGA order of merit with a winning two-under par 69 at Richmond Park.

His score in the latest pro-am – matched by visiting professional Neil Mitchell – has narrowed the gap at the top of the order of merit table.

Few earned 12 points from his win and is now just six points behind Neil Lythgoe of Royal Norwich.

"Hopefully I'll put a bit of pressure on Neil," said Few, who has made the order of merit title a definite target for this year. "It would be nice to win and considering I don't play anywhere near as much as some of the others I am quite pleased to be second."

He made his move at Richmond Park with a bogey free round of 16 pars and two birdies. However, he came off the course regretting a hatful of missed opportunities.

"It should have

been a very good round. I missed seven putts for birdies all from inside 15ft," said Few, pictured right.

He holed only two putts of any length. A 20-footer to save par on the 2nd, where he had to drop out of a ditch under penalty; and a 10-footer for birdie on the par four 5th, where his tee shot finished about 15 yards short of the green. "I hit the ball solidly, apart from a couple of poor drives, and it was a solid round of golf. But it should have been an awful lot better, not just by one or two shots but by four, five or six shots."

The event provided another successful foray into Norfolk for Neil Mitchell, a former Feltwell professional who lives in Cambridgeshire. It's his third win in this season's pro-am series and he has also captured the Millennium Trophy, which is contested by the professionals of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Results, Professionals: 69 Michael Few (Weston Park), Neil Mitchell (unatt), 70 Ian Ellis (Royal Norwich), Lee Patterson (Royal Cromer).

Teams: 128 (14-under) Lee Patterson (Royal Cromer) with Dean Stratton, Mark Turton & Mick Waterson, Neil Lythgoe (Royal Norwich) with David Linscott, Dennis Grady & Bryce Collishaw; 129 Neil Mitchell (unatt) with Mike Thomson, John Edwards & Chris Warren; 131 Martyn Clarke (Gt Yarmouth & Caister) with Josh Brooks, Steve Bullens & Tony Cleaver. Nearest the pin on 17th: Graham Moorhouse; longest drive on 9th: Margo Verstraeten.

■ The third round results of the Kenneth Smith Trophy, the junior inter-club knock-out, are: (home clubs first): Dereham lost to King's Lynn 6 down. Sprowston Manor lost to Costessey Park 1 down. Ryston Park beat Hunstanton 1 up. Mundesley lost to Gt Yarmouth & Caister 6 down.

The semi-finals, to be played on Sunday, August 13, are: Gt Yarmouth & Caister v Ryston Park; Costessey Park v King's Lynn.



GOLF: Irwin finishes with five straight birdies to mount Loch Lomond challenge

American veteran upstages leaders

Scot David Drysdale and Sweden's Johan Edfors shared the lead after the first round of the Barclays Scottish Open at Loch Lomond yesterday – but then Edfors said that a 61-year-old might beat them both to the title this week.

Edfors, chasing a third victory of the season, returned a six under par 65, but marvelled at the performance of his playing partner, three-time US Open champion Hale Irwin.

The American, who decided to play the event rather than one of the US Seniors Tour majors, was two over with five to play, but then birdied them all for a 68.

Irwin is a staggering 13 years older than the oldest winner in European Tour history – Irishman Des Smyth – but Edfors said: "He can still win this. "I don't think I've ever seen a better display with long irons and fairway woods. He's getting shorter off the tee, but every shot was straight at the flag. It was pretty impressive."

Irwin won his first US Open way back in 1974 before Edfors was even born and captured the last of them in 1990 when he was 45. He remains the oldest winner of that trophy and since then has earned a record £16million in seniors golf.

As for Edfors, he had never done a thing really on the European Tour until this year. But what a year it is turning out to be. The 30-year-old, who entering 2006 was 410th on the world rankings and had just made his seventh visit to the qualifying school, captured the TCL Classic in China in March and two months ago added the British Masters at The Belfry. Aside from those two wins he has not had a top 10 finish, but the £400,000 first prize on Sunday could take him to 10th in the Ryder Cup table.

Drysdale has no Ryder Cup thoughts. He is not even on the European Tour at the moment and is ranked 293rd in the world.

At the end of last season the 31-year-old from Dunbar agonisingly lost his card by less than £400 – to the man who took his place in the Dunhill links championship when he had to pull out of it.



ON THE BONNIE, BONNIE BANKS: Darren Clarke extracts himself from a bunker during the opening round of the Barclays Scottish Open at Loch Lomond. He went on to shoot 66 to take an early lead.

LEADING SCORES

65 J Edfors (Swe), D Drysdale
 66 D Clarke, M Tunnick
 67 J M Olazabal (Spa), R Russell, D Bransdon (Aus), A Butterfield
 68 J Randhawa (Ind), S O'Hara, J Lima (Por), D McGrane, J Lara (Spa), G Houston, R Jacquelin (Fra), L Donald, C Pettersson (Swe), J Donaldson, C Schwartzel (Rsa), W Ormsby (Aus), H Irwin (USA), B Lane
 69 D Howell, G Clark, S Khan, T Lehman (USA), M Siem (Ger), G Fernandez-Castano (Spa), T

Clark (Rsa), G Havret (Fra), J Lomas, P McGinley, P Broadhurst, L Westwood, B Dredge, N Colsaerts (Bel)
 70 M Foster, S Henderson, S Gallacher, J Milkha Singh (Ind), R Goosen (Rsa), I Poulter, P Lawrie, R Sterne (Rsa), D Lynn, S Jeppesen (Swe), J Kingston (Rsa), R Derksen (Ned), S Dyson, E Els (Rsa), J McCreadie, S Wakefield, D Griffiths, Sam Little, S Kjeldsen (Den), J Spence, P O'Malley (Aus), R Finch, D Carter, D Vancsik (Arg)

He received an invitation to play this week and, after a bogey-free round, said: "I thought I'd be sticking to the Challenge Tour, so to get in here is a big bonus. Now to be leading is fantastic - I am over the moon.

There are some huge stars of the game chasing him now. Darren Clarke is just one behind and Jose Maria Olazabal among those two back on four under.

Luke Donald is alongside Irwin on

68. David Howell, Lee Westwood, Tom Lehman and defending champion Tim Clark shot 69s and two more former winners, Ernie Els and Retief Goosen, stand one under.

Sergio Garcia has six strokes to make up and Colin Montgomerie seven after a 72 in which his only two birdies came on par fives.

Clarke, who shared third spot with England's Miles Tunnick, has won somewhere in the world every year since 1997, but his last tour victory actually on European soil was four years ago.

Norfolk's Andrew Marshall faces a battle to qualify for the weekend after opening with a two over par round of 73 yesterday.

Picture: PA