

Schutte looks forward to defending national title

by Ched Whitney

People think of golf as a relaxing, leisurely-paced game played on rolling green hills; a nice afternoon walk in the park.

But for junior Warren Schutte, playing golf means being in shape for the physical rigors of competing on the collegiate level.

"People see golfers as driving around in carts at a country club," he said. "But (at tournaments) you play 36 holes a day, 15,000 yards of walking. If you're not in shape, you won't be able to compete eight hours a day."

During the golf season Schutte spends an hour to an hour and a half in the weight room every day.

Schutte, a native of Durbin, South Africa, rose to fame this past June. With a final-round 67, he won the National Collegiate Athletic Association individual championship, upsetting Arizona State's Phil Mickelson.

Going into the par-5 18th hole, Schutte, then 3 under par, felt he had to make a birdie.

"I knew if I shot 68 (4 under par) I'd be in good shape," he said.

Schutte ended making a 20-foot putt for a 2-under-par eagle to finish at 5 under for the round.

He became the first foreign champion in the 94-year history of the tournament.

Growing up in South Africa, Schutte was an accomplished baseball player. When he was 12 he played on the junior national team. It was about this time that he picked up the game of golf, caddying for his father.

To say that he was a quick learner would be an understatement. Within two years he was playing in national pro-am tournaments; he finished second in one when he was 14.

In 1986, still at age 14, Schutte won the Junior World Championship for players under 15 in San Diego. It was here that his UNLV connection began. He got to know UNLV golf coach Dwaine Knight, at the time

the golf coach at the University of New Mexico.

Thus, when Schutte was picking a college, and had narrowed his choices to UNLV and Brigham Young, he chose the Rebels.

Schutte said the weather was also a big factor in his decision.

"When I was up there (Provo, Utah) I saw snow," he said. "I had never seen snow before. Here you can play year-round. If you don't play year-round, you'll be left behind."

"I thought athletes were looked after. But that's not the way it is," Schutte said. He stressed that school work is a main focus for Coach Knight.

"For coach, academics are really important," Schutte said. "If you don't keep up, you don't play."

"(In fact) we have to get ahead in school because when we play tournaments, we're gone for four to five days (at a time)."

Schutte said he feels that the 1991-92 Rebel golf

team is the strongest, most experienced since he's been here.

"We could have a different lineup every week," he said.

Schutte hopes to one day follow the footsteps of fellow South Africans Gary Player and David Frost and play on the Professional Golfer's Association tour.

As a South African, he said he's felt the backlash toward his country's exclusionary political system.

When the team trav-

elled to Japan for a tournament last year, Schutte could not attend because he has a South African visa. When he was 17, he was banned from the Junior World Championships.

"I was shocked. I won when I was 14 and I was banned when I was 17."

However, he feels the situation in his homeland is getting better.

Schutte will not enjoy the anonymity he had last season, but is looking forward to defending his title.



Warren Schutte

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