

Saturday 23 January 2010 – 4 pm

SWELTERING CONDITIONS PRODUCE RED HOT GOLF RECORD

Sweltering conditions produced red hot golf from overnight leader, 24-year-old Victorian Kieran Pratt, who equalled the course record with a nine-under par 63 in the third round of the Greater Building Society Lake Macquarie International golf Championships at the Belmont links today.

As the temperatures soared into the 40s and strong westerly winds blasted the course, Pratt coolly grabbed four birdies in his first nine and an eagle and three birdies in the homeward nine to take his overnight score from eight under 136 to 17 under 199 for the three rounds.

The course record was set in 2003 by Jason Day who is now a touring professional on the US circuit.

Pratt has led the field from day one after his magic seven-under par 65 on the first day followed by a 71 yesterday (Fri)

Today, with pin point accuracy from the tees, the Commonwealth Club member had birdies at the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 6th holes to go out in 32 and then sank a two metre putt for an eagle on the par 5 10th.

He followed with birdies at holes 12, 15 and 18 to come home in 31. At the hard 15th, the No. 1 on the course, he sank a 12 metre putt for the birdie three.

Pratt needs a three under on the final day tomorrow to equal the record for the event of 20 under currently shared by Danny Lee (2008) and Peter O'Malley.

"This is close to the best round I have ever had," he said as he walked off the final green. "I feel good and I'm raring to go for tomorrow."

He said he hoped to turn professional within a few years.

Local champion Brendan Smith is running second in the Championships with nine-under 207 after a 68 today.

One of the favourites for the tournament, Smith faltered today when he had a double bogey on the 9th hole.

Equal third on 208 are James Frazer, of Wales, who had a 66 today and Tommy Fleetwood, of England, who had a 68 today.

Veteran Lester Petersen, of Cardwell Valley, is in fourth spot on 209 with a 69 today.

Four players who were well out of contention were disqualified on Friday for an accidental breach of the rule covering the "time of starting and groups."

The players hit off as two groups of three but on the 12th tee, one player from each group retired and the remaining two groups of two joined up to make a four.

They were unaware of the rule governing stroke play which says competitors must remain throughout the round in the groups arranged by the committee unless the committee authorises or ratifies the changes.

Two of the best rounds today came from St Michaels player Matthew Stieger and Waverley's Jin Jeong who both had 66.

Stieger had birdies at 1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 16 and Jeong birdied 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 15 and 18. But both seem out of contention.