

Webb



Continues Domination of Australian Golf



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Photography by Anthony Powter and David Trend

Karrie Webb produced the sort of magic at the MFS Australian Women's Open that only true champions can produce.

Webb came from two shots behind with three holes to play at the MFS Australian Women's Open to defeat the highly talented Korean 19 year old, Shin Ji-Yai. She dug deep when she needed it most and won her own national open for the fourth time, adding that to her six ANZ Ladies Masters victories and further highlighting her domination of the local scene.

It was only as she walked to the 16th tee on the final day at the outstanding Kingston Heath layout that Webb became aware that she was two behind, Shin having picked up four birdies over her closing nine holes to move ahead.

Despite a lack of recent tournament play, Webb was able to call on all of her years of experience and determination to hole a magnificent 8 metre putt at the 16th then

add another birdie when she hit a brilliant tee shot at the lengthy par three 17th to two metres. The 33 year old walked to the tee at the 72nd hole knowing she needed a birdie to win outright or a par to force a playoff. From the middle of the fairway she hit yet another fine iron shot 7 metres past the flag. The putt was given every chance but it slid by and it would be back to the 18th tee for a playoff with the only other player in the field from the world top ten, albeit 14 years her junior, Shin.

The pair played the 18th twice before the deadlock was broken both almost equidistant with their approaches the first time round before missing 4 metre putts. At the second playoff hole, Shin found the back edge but Webb again covered the flag with her approach and after Shin had missed her



Talented 19 year old Korean, Shin Ji-Yai misses her attempt for birdie

attempt for birdie Webb studied long and hard before rolling her curling right to left 4 metre putt into the hole for the victory.

Webb had started the final day in a share of second with Shin the pair being one shot behind Albury's Lindsey Wright who was looking to win her first event in Australia having won events on the Futures Tour in the US before joining the LPGA Tour in 2005. Wright, who played collegiate golf at Pepperdine University and who finished runner up at the 2002 World Amateur Team Championship, was under pressure early, a three putt at the first losing her the lead, a slipup from which she was unable to recover. A double bogey at the last brought to an end what had been a disappointing day for the 27 year old. Wright eventually finished in a share of 5th.

Two players emerged from the pack on day four to claim finishes inside the top four and both appear to have significant futures in the game. England's Melissa Reid hardly gave an indication of things to come when she finished the first two rounds at 3 over. She added a third round of 69 to move within two of Wright's lead and in the comparatively perfect scoring conditions of day four she made the turn in four under 33 and was emerging as not only a threat for a top three finish but potentially a shot at the title. The momentum slowed a little over the back nine but she finished third at four under and having turned professional late last year, the 20 year old British Women's Stroke-play Champion, gave further indication of what lies ahead for already one of the female game's great swingers of a golf club. Without status on the Ladies European Tour, the result of wrist injury prior to the Tour School last year preventing her from playing her best, Reid will rely on invites to get her professional career established. Judging on what was witnessed at Kingston Heath there are no concerns in that regard.



Shin Ji-Yai

Two years ago, Amy Yang took the golfing world by storm when as a 16 year old she won the ANZ Ladies Masters. She has been a professional just over twelve months but has been forced to split her focus between completing her schooling in Robina on the Gold Coast and a partial professional career. Now with that behind her, the true talents of the 18 year old will again be seen and the three consecutive birdies she produced to finish her tournament was evidence of that. Her strong late rally improved her finishing position by ten places and she headed to Royal Pines for the ANZ ladies Masters with the chances of winning there again significantly enhanced.

19 year old West Australian, Kristie Smith, took out the leading amateur honours after contending for much of the 72 holes. It was an impressive display by a young lady with yet another fine golf swing and golfing pedigree to match. Her father Wayne played collegiate golf in the US before embarking on a professional career that saw him win several lesser titles in Japan and Australia. His daughter has already given the indication that she will surpass the deeds of her father. Smith's composure and skills belied her relative inexperience at this level and her fifth place finish was hard earned but well deserved.

The elevation in status of the MFS Australian Women's Open was further enhanced this year by the decision to take the tournament to one of Australia's and the world's great layouts. Kingston Heath Golf Club in Melbourne's famed 'Sandbelt Region' was universally acclaimed during tournament week by not only its strongest fans but by the many who had not previously seen this fabulous layout.

Apart from an indifferent day of weather on day one, the event was blessed by good conditions and the quality layout tested a field which, although lacking in depth of talent in terms of current stars, certainly had its share of future stars. The intriguing blend of one or two of the game's most significant achievers in Webb and Davies and the brilliant youngsters mentioned above provided this event with a formula that appeared to work in terms of public support.

As is always the case in Australian ladies tournament golf however there is still a reliance on Webb being able to perform. Fortunately for all those involved, including herself, she was again able to do so and as a result the event's resurgence continues. We now look to those who have benefited by being able to play in a tournament of this nature to take the extra steps necessary to provide contenders other than Webb herself.



Kristie Smith

Victorious Webb