



Tait tees up quality finish in Melbourne

By **RICHARD HARVEY**

A six-week break from the game did not prevent Hervey Bay golf professional Shane Tait from being a big hit in Melbourne on Sunday.

Four under par rounds of 69, 69, 69 and 67 helped Tait finish outright fourth in the \$110,000 Victorian PGA Championship at the par 72 Sanctuary Lakes Resort.

The 37-year-old Tait, who is based at the Hervey Bay Golf Driving Range, finished five shots behind the winner, 24-year-old Victorian Marc Leishman.

Not surprisingly Tait, who moved to Hervey Bay just before Christmas, said he was happy with the way he had played in his first tournament of the year.

"It has been a long time since I hit a ball like that over four days in a tournament so that was really pleasing I can tell you.

"Saying that, and if I am honest, it (his finish) really surprised me because I had only hit some balls on the range for a couple of hours the day before I left for Melbourne – I was rusty so I was not expecting big things.

"Maybe I should keep to that routine in the future," said Tait.

While he was happy with his own ball-striking, Tait said his playing partner and a former winner of the event, Cameron Percy, had helped him out during the final round.

"He played sensational golf and carded a nine under par 63 as a result of it.

"When a player has a round like that you tend to get caught in a bit of a slip steam and I did," said Tait, who joined to play for pay ranks of professional golf in 1991.

Two other golfers with ties to the Fraser Coast also teed it up in the tournament, which is part of the Von Nida Tour.

The Brisbane-based Wayne Perske, a regular on the Japan PGA Tour, who has played in the Maryborough and Hervey Bay golf clubs pro-ams in the past, finished outright fifth, two shots behind Tait.

Former Torquay State School student Ricky Schmidt, who is now based in New South Wales, had the weekend off though after rounds 75 and 77 saw him miss the cut.



Professional performance ... Shane Tait finished fourth in the Victorian PGA Championship in Melbourne despite not playing for six weeks. Photo: VALERIE HORTON 08h201c



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Off the leash



BRADLEY GREEN

VICTORIAN PGA champion Marc Leishman believes his win at Sanctuary Lakes last weekend has shown he can be a serious contender in the bigger tournaments.

The 24-year-old beat NSW's Kurt Barnes by a shot to win his first tournament in his home state, finishing on 19-under par after firing a final round of seven-under 65.

Leishman believes he is ready to take the next step in his career.

"I am confident I can compete anywhere when I'm playing well," he said.

"I love to be playing the bigger events all the time. I'm now working just to fine-tune my game, making a few little changes.

"Getting my putting average down by one shot a round will help, too.

"I've still got a lot of work to do, but I feel like I'm ready to step up.

"I have to get my bad rounds from being a 74 to even par or even one-under."

Leishman has a busy month ahead before he goes to America to play the Nationwide Tour.

He is Sydney today attempting to qualify for this year's British Open. The 36-hole event will be played at The Lakes.

Leishman will then head across the Tasman to contest the New Zealand PGA (from February 14 to 17), is back home for the \$850,000 Moonah Classic at Moonah Links (February 21 to 24) and then flies to India for the \$1.4 million Johnnie Walker Classic (February 28 to March 2).

The first two events are co-sanctioned with the Nationwide Tour.

Leishman said his win at Sanctuary Lakes was an encouraging start to what he hopes is a successful year overseas.

"I took a month off over Christmas, so I thought I'd be a little bit rusty but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise really taking the time off," he said. "Just freshened up, because when you got tired on the course you make stupid mistakes."

'I love to be playing the bigger events all the time. I'm now working just to fine-tune my game, making a few little changes.'

— MARC LEISHMAN



Resort water shock

EXCLUSIVE

James Twining

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SANCTUARY Lakes Resort says it has been left high and dry by further delays in getting recycled water for its course and streetscapes.

The estate management is angry at City West Water for halting a plan to run a recycled water main from the Altona Treatment Plant.

The plan to pump Class A recycled water to Sanctuary Lakes and Koorringal Golf Clubs for irrigation has been on the drawing board for several years. Work was initially due to start this month and be completed in April.

But Sanctuary Lakes Residents Association was told last December that the project costs had doubled over six months and it would be delayed until summer 2008/09.

City West Water chief executive officer Geoff Gardiner confirmed with the *Leader* water would now not be available until December 2010.

Sanctuary Lakes general manager Ross Williamson feared the water main would not be up and running until summer 2011/12.

"We observe that City West Water

would possibly take that long because they will now have to design an entirely new plant, re-tender out to contractors, assess tenders, gain finance and then ultimately build the plant. In our experience that takes longer than two years," he said.

Mr Gardiner explained the Sanctuary Lakes program was being stopped in favour of a bigger project to serve a wider area which included the Altona Industrial Precinct and the two golf clubs.

"It became clear there was significant overlap of the two projects. It was more efficient in terms of construction and operation costs to integrate the two recycled-water plants into one," Mr Gardiner said.

The Sanctuary Lakes project has been riddled by delays.

This included the original firm building the pipeline being put in the hands of administrators in January 2005. By July 2007 construction costs had blown out due to worldwide demand and increased government funding was not received until last month.

Mr Gardiner admitted it was "unfortunate that delays have occurred".

"When completed the new recycled water plant will be able to supply 3.2 billion litres a year of Class A recycled water to industry

and the golf courses in the most economical way, providing a massive saving to our drinking water supplies," Mr Gardiner said.

Sanctuary Lakes, which hosted the Victorian Professional Golf Association Championships last week, spent \$250,000 in extending its storage dam for the recycled water.

It says this was done on the understanding it would be supplied with recycled water by April.

Club captain Allan Smith said not being connected to a permanent recycled-water supply could have detrimental effects on the lush course during dry weather.

"We are back to square one, back to the situation of having to transport water - if it gets bad - from the other side of the city. The cost is substantial," he said.

The Sanctuary Lakes estate is home to about 2500 residents, all automatically golf club members.

Leader

Should Sanctuary Lakes have to wait so long for water? Write a Letter to the Editor. Log on to our website and follow the links.

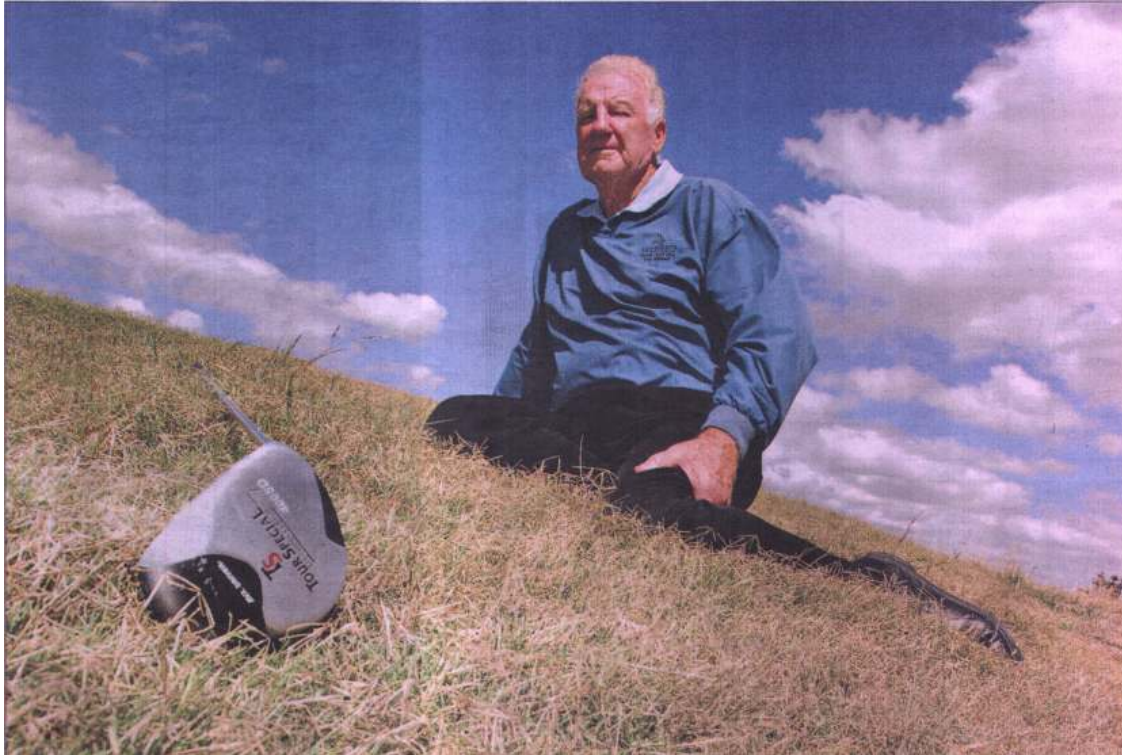


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Sanctuary Lakes Golf Club captain Allan Smith near the dam that was supposed to be filled with recycled water by April. The club fears the water now might not come until 2011.

Picture: ADAM ELWOOD N32WB115



Interstater net cheap housing

James Twining

WERRIBEE and Hoppers Crossing have maintained their status as the best suburbs in Melbourne to find a bargain home.

And it appears the secret is out.

Sales consultant with Professionals TriWest Real Estate David Koers says a growing number of investors from other states are muscling their way into the local market.

He said they were falling over themselves to buy house and land packages close to Melbourne for under \$250,000.

"We are seeing a lot of properties go to outside investors in other states. They haven't even seen the properties. They've just seen the photos on the internet and get a building inspection," Mr Koers said.

"Investors from all around can't believe in a suburb 30km away from the city - with a train line - you can buy real estate for \$230,000."

Real Estate Institute of Victoria data for the 2007 December quarter released last month ranked Werribee and Hoppers Crossing in the top 10 for home affordability.

Werribee is the second-cheapest suburb with a median house price of \$224,500.

First-homebuyers can still get a place in Melton for under \$200,000, giving it a first-place ranking.

Hoppers Crossing placed eighth with an average price of \$265,000 but also recorded one of the biggest quarterly price jumps.

Its average price last September was \$238,000, which increased by 11.3 per cent by December.

House prices in Sanctuary Lakes went up 13.5 per cent (\$455,000 to \$505,000) on average in the space of three months.

Point Cook had Melbourne's second-highest turnover of houses with an average price tag of \$385,000. Hoppers Crossing was ranked 10th.

Mr Koers said prices in Werribee and Hoppers Crossing were steadily increasing but would not skyrocket immediately.

He expected value to increase locally by \$30,000-\$40,000 during the next 12 months.

Mr Koers said the average sale time for houses priced \$190,000 to \$250,000 in Werribee was two weeks. Houses in the range of \$250,000-\$300,000 are snapped up within four to eight weeks.

□ See today's Property section, starting on Page 15.