

Noble wins, 3 and 1, gains 36-hole final

COLUMBIA, S.C. — New Jersey's Karen Noble of the Morris County Golf Club in Convent Station birdied her way into today's 36-hole match-play final of the 59th Women's Trans National Golf Championship when she ousted California's Amy Fruwirth, 3 and 1, yesterday at the Columbia Country Club.

The 21-year-old Noble, who advanced into last year's final of the U.S. Amateur before losing to Arizona State's Pearl Sinn, won six holes with

birdies, including the final three after Fruwirth evened the match on 14.

Her final-round opponent will be 17-year-old Brandie Burton of Rialto, Calif., a 2 and 1 winner over Florida's Katie Peterson in the other semifinal match. Ironically, Burton will be entering her freshman year at Arizona State next month.

Noble, who was graduated from Wake Forest University this past spring, lost the 14th hole when Fruwirth sank a birdie. But the New Jersey star then won the next three holes with birdie putts to close out the match.

After losing the third hole to Fruwirth's birdie, Noble birdied the eighth and ninth to go 1 up at the turn. Noble lost the 10th hole to a par, but regained the lead with a birdie at 11 before Fruwirth retaliated with a birdie on 14.

Burton, who was 1 down to Peterson at the turn, captured the 11th and 14th holes with pars and went 2 up with a birdie putt at 15. After halving the 16th hole with a birdie, Burton closed out the match when each golfer halved the 17th with pars.

Although only 17, Burton is far from being an inexperienced player. She not only qualified, but made the cut in the 1988 U.S. Women's Open, won the 1988 PGA National Junior Championship and also participated on the Girls American Cup Team en route to earn honors as the 1988 Rolex Junior Player of the Year.

***Noble captures
crown, 5 and 3,***

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Karen Noble of the Morris County Golf Club in Convent Station became the first New Jerseyan to capture the Women's Trans National Golf Championship yesterday when she scored an impressive 5 and 3 victory over California's Brandie Burton in the 59th staging of the event at the Columbia Country Club.

The 21-year-old Noble, a runnerup in last year's U.S. Amateur, never trailed in the scheduled 36-hole match against the 17-year-old but experienced Burton, a runnerup in last week's U.S. Amateur.

"Last year I was upset about losing in the final of the U.S. Amateur," said Noble, "I told myself that if I ever got a chance to win something that big again, I wouldn't let it happen twice. I got beat in the first round last week (in the U.S. Amateur) and this just proves that being a finalist in last year's Amateur wasn't a fluke and that I can play with the best amateurs in the country."

Noble, a two-time and current Women's Metropolitan Match-Play champion and two-time Women's New Jersey State Amateur titleholder, was 2 up after the morning round. The margin would have been greater if Burton

hadn't sank a 60-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole.

"Although it would have been nice to have held a 3-up lead going into the afternoon round," explained the 5-4 Noble, "I was still comfortable about leading by two. I just tried to keep my mind on hitting the greens in regulation and keep firing at the flags."

Noble, who was graduated from Wake Forest University in May, and Burton, who will be entering her freshman year at Arizona State next month, each won two holes on the front nine during the afternoon round which enabled Noble to remain 2 up.

"I felt really confident at that point," added Noble, who hit 25 of the 33 greens in regulation during the final "but I had to maintain my composure and continue striking the ball well. Consistency was what got me there so I just wanted to keep it up."

The petite shotmaker extended her lead to 4-up when she won 10 and 12 with pars. She dropped a hole when she bogeyed 13, but sank a four-foot birdie putt on 14.

Burton hit her second shot on the par five, 15th hole into the trees and punched out into a bunker en route to a bogey, while Noble reached the green in regulation and needed just a routine two-putt par to win the match.

"I didn't want to think about what she was doing on the last hole," said Noble. "I just wanted to make my par and get it over with.

"This was a great week after coming off a first-round loss in the Amateur," she added. "I really got my confidence back and ended my summer on a good note."

Noble plans on staying in the amateur ranks at least until the end of next summer.

"I am hoping to land a job in a Florida pro shop this winter and work on my game as much as possible and, hopefully, I'll get chosen to play on the U.S. Curtis Cup Team that will play at Somerset Hills (Country Club in Bernardsville, N.J.) next July. Then maybe I'll turn professional, but right now I'm just happy about winning this tournament."