

Probert 79 shares

Women's Met lead

By PETER WOLF

Overnight rains and early-morning showers that halted play for 70 minutes contributed to soaring scores yesterday at the Essex Fells Country Club, where only 26 of the 73 competitors on hand managed to break 90 on the first day of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association stroke play championship.

But the conditions did not prevent expected contenders like Ann Probert of Somerset Hills and Pam Darmstadt of Winged Foot in New York from serving notice they'll be in the thick of the fight when the 36-hole championship concludes today. Yesterday, each shot 79, five over par, over the 5,824-yard layout, to share the lead.

One shot behind were Helen Aitken of Montclair, Roberta Lonoff of Green Brook, Katie Farley of Echo Lake and Bea Bower of Pelham in Westchester.

Sure to be in contention is Colleen Binkiewicz of Forest Hill, the defending champion, who survived two double-bogeys on the back nine and carded 37-44-81, a score equalled by Cindy O'Connor of Spring Brook.

Darmstadt knows better than most that it is difficult not to be looking over a

shoulder at the talented Binkiewicz. Darmstadt, an 18-year-old Rollins College soph, last year had the first-day lead with a 76, only to finish runnerup, three shots behind Binkiewicz.

"I had trouble on the front—I was trying to steer the ball," Darmstadt observed. "I just said to myself, 'Swing at the ball,' and I also started making some putts.

"The course is playing tough. If you hit in front of the green, it holds and stays plugged. You have to hit right at the pin."

Darmstadt's topsyturvy round, one she called "typical," included four bogeys and three birdies going out. She also survived a triple-bogey when she caught a trap on No. 14, flew the green getting out, chipped short and two-putted.

Probert, the affable chairman of the junior WMGA, who is the reigning state women's champion, had no complaints about her play on the front.

"I loved the front nine, obviously," she said. "But then I began to realize what I could do..."

Probert made the turn at 36, one under par, on the strength of birdie-putts on the second and seventh holes.

"I was putting well on the front and not missing