

Schnoll, Probert reach golf final

By KARIN LONG

If anyone asks Linda Schnoll of Shackamaxon what her favorite number is — she would probably say 18.

For the third time in four matches this week, Schnoll sank a putt on the 18th hole to advance into the next round of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association's 82d Match Play Championship at the North Course of the Canoe Brook Country Club in Summit.

This time, she sank a 15-inch birdie putt to defeat Kendra Beard of Essex Fells, 2 up, in yesterday's semifinal round. Schnoll will face Ann Probert of Somerset Hills in the 36-hole final today. Probert defeated Derby Campbell of Canoe Brook, 3 and 2, in the other semifinal.

"I love that hole," said a relieved Schnoll, who had lost to Beard last year in the Garden State Women's Golf Association Round Robin Tournament. "It was real nice to step up to that tee."

Schnoll hit a five iron to the far edge of the green on her second shot, leaving an 80-foot putt just over a foot from the hole. Beard, recovering from the rough, missed her long birdie putt to set up Schnoll's stroke.

The dramatic ending was almost predictable from the beginning, when Schnoll and Beard halved the first five holes. Schnoll won the sixth when she sank her fourth shot for par.

Schnoll wasted no time in extending her lead as she took the next hole with a five-foot birdie putt on the 359-yard, par-five seventh. The two halved the eighth and ninth with pars and the 10th with double bogeys.

Beard, the qualifying medalist, evened the match by winning with pars on the next two holes and then took the lead on the 13th with another par. Even then, Schnoll felt very little pressure.

"I wasn't thinking anything right then; I was so relaxed," said Schnoll. "I guess the turning point was on the 15th hole, when I hit a chip shot to within three feet of the hole for a par."

Schnoll, who lost in the semifinal of this tournament two years ago, evened the match on the 15th, then halved the 16th, before moving ahead for good on the 17th. Schnoll won the 17th with a par after Beard hit into the rough and then missed a five-foot putt.

"I've been able to hold it together at the 17th," said Schnoll. "And at the 18th, I was real pumped up. I really didn't expect to win."

Probert, a five-time Women's New Jersey State Golf Association Stroke Play champion, jumped out to a three-hole lead after three in her match against Campbell.

Campbell won the fifth and sixth holes to pull to within one, but Probert took the eighth with a four-foot birdie shot to finish the front nine two up.

"On the whole, I'm really happy with my play," said Probert, who is looking forward to the 36-hole final. "My tee shots were going well, I hit well and I made the putts when I had to."

Probert, who lost in the final of the New Jersey State Amateur Championship at Canoe Brook three years ago, maintained her two-hole advantage until the 16th, when Campbell bogeyed and Probert parred to close out the match.