

Thiel overcomes bad start to lead in WMGA Match Play

By Bob Glauber

Staff Writer

A golf match is supposed to last 18 holes. But in Yvonne Thiel's case, it almost ended after just three holes Wednesday morning in the quarterfinal round of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association Match Play Championships at Elmwood Country Club in White Plains.

"I had a triple bogey on the first, a bogey on the second, and I hit two balls out of bounds on the third," said Thiel, a 25-year-old resident of Armonk who plays out of the Whippoorwill Country Club. "I didn't even bother to finish out the third hole."

Thiel can thank the match play format for saving her day. She recovered from the brutal start, and finally pulled even with Sybil Whitman of Mountain Ridge (N.J.) at the 12th hole.

A six-foot birdie putt at 17 put Thiel ahead to stay, allowing her to advance to today's semifinal round.

"I thought it would be a good match as long as both of us played well," said Thiel, who formerly played for the Byram Hills High golf team. "But as it turned out, we went out there and were hitting equally bad, but then equally great shots."

Perhaps the greatest shot in the match came on the 13th hole, a 165-yard par 3. After hitting her drive into the fringe to the right of the green, Thiel hit her second shot over the green. But she sank a 40-foot chip shot to save par and take a one-hole advantage.

“That was such a gift for that to go in,” said Thiel. “I knew I hit it well, but I never thought it would go in.”

Whitman pulled even with a par 5 on the 440-yard 14th hole, but Thiel sealed the victory with her birdie on the par 4, 285-yard 17th.

Thiel left her approach shot slightly to the left of the pin but nailed her putt to go 1-up with one hole remaining. Thiel parred the 18th hole to seal the match.

Despite the victory, Thiel said she'll have to improve her effort to reach the 36-hole final, scheduled for Friday.

“You look for the tempo,” said Thiel. “You need the timing. That's what I'm looking for. It's off to the range for me right now.”

After this week's tournament, Thiel is off to Yale, where she is studying for a doctorate in molecular chemistry. But before returning to the New Haven campus, she'll take on Linda Schnoll of Sackamaxon (N.J.) in today's semifinals. Schnoll, the runner-up in last year's tournament, defeated Harriet Hart of Silver Spring, 2 and 1, in the quarterfinals.

The other semifinal match will pit Jean Bartholomew of Garden City against Karen Noble of Morris County.

Bartholomew defeated Donna Young of Springdale, 1 up, and Noble downed Helen Aitken of Montclair, 2 and 1, in the quarterfinals.