

Durkin rallies to win Met golf

By JOHN RUYZAM

Karen Durkin of Westchester blew an early lead but caught a second wind to beat Debbie Doniger of Connecticut's Fairview, 2 and 1, in the final of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association's 88th Match-Play Championship yesterday at the Montclair Golf Club in West Orange.

The 26-year-old Durkin, winner of the Westchester club championship last year and the Stamford City Tournament in her home state of Connecticut in 1986 and '87, lost the 3-up lead she had taken through the first 10 holes of the double-round final. However, she battled back and squared the match with a 20-foot birdie putt at the 30th hole, a 170-yard par 3.

"That was the turning point," said Durkin, whose tee shot had fallen short of the elevated green but bounced over a bunker and rolled up and onto the putting surface. "I was able to take advantage of the break."

Durkin took the 32d hole, where her 21-year-old opponent drove into the trees en route to a double bogey, and extended her lead to 2-up at the par-3 34th, where she set up a 5-foot birdie putt with an 8-iron to beat Doniger's bogey from the bunker.

"I was thinking, 'If she does this, I'll have to do that,' and so on, instead of focusing on the next shot, and went right into that bunker," said Doniger,

who played No. 1 on the women's golf team at the University of North Carolina this past spring as a junior.

At the 328-yard, par-4 35th hole, Doniger saved par from a bunker, but Durkin halved to close out.

Durkin had lost her early lead as she struggled with a 45 on the back nine of the first 18 to trail, 1 down, at the lunch break. The two halved the 19th hole with birdies, but Doniger also birdied the 20th and 21st for a 3-up advantage.

"I started out well but went astray," Durkin said. "I was way off my

Durkin tops Doniger

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game. I think it was a combination of getting too comfortable with that lead and not being aggressive.

"I don't think I played up to my potential, but I never gave up and just kept grinding it out."

Doniger helped Durkin back into the match when she lost the 22d, 23d and 25th holes. Doniger took the 24th, but her lead had shrunk to 1-up at the end of that stretch.

"I had a hard time trying to figure out the speed of the greens," said Doniger. "The pin placements were difficult, as well."

"I'm very disappointed considering how well I played this spring, but Karen and I are good friends and I'm happy for her."