

Hull scores again on Russell Vale course

By MICHAEL COX

AFTER five press-a-filled holes of sudden-death golf Katherine Hull finally prevailed to become the first two-time winner of the Australian Short Course Challenge at Russell Vale Golf Course yesterday.

Hull, the 2006 Russell Vale champion, defeated Sydney's Sarah Oh in a thrilling play-off on the club's par-three 11th hole.

The world No 35 parred the fifth play-off hole to collect the \$3000 winner's cheque.

Earlier, both players had traded brilliant approaches and clutch putts in a heart-stopping head-to-head showdown.

Hull and Oh had each shot a course record 56 around the challenging par-60 layout.

But the real drama had yet to unfold.

On the first play-off hole, both players produced stunning approach shots to within 3m, followed by tricky putts for birdie.

Hull then showed why she is ranked among the world's best with a series of amazing putts on the second and fourth extra holes.

Her 5m downhill save on the fourth hole was a beauty.

It broke severely to give her a

birdie. "That one snapped off the planet," Hull said.

"The greens are tricky out here and you've got to leave yourself below the hole," she said. "I didn't, but I got away with it."

Oh held her nerve with a 2m putt, but hit her approach on the fifth extra hole long to give Hull an opportunity.

Hull put her approach to within 2m, then calmly two-putted to secure victory while Oh could manage only a bogey.

Oh had maintained pressure on the eventual winner with solid approach shots in the play-off, but couldn't seal the win.

"She's got a great golf swing and her rhythm was fantastic during the play-off," Hull said of her opponent.

"She sunk a few clutch putts as well, so she definitely kept the pressure on me."

Sydney's Oh had a chance to win with a 2m putt on the third extra hole but pushed it wide.

The 21-year-old, who received a pre-play-off pep talk from Korean superstar Ji Yai Shin, said she would be better for the experience gained yesterday.

"It was exciting," Oh said.

"I was nervous, but it's good to have one to get your mind strong and get me ready for next time."



Thriller: Catherine Hull wins a play-off against Sarah Oh to become the first two-time Australian Short Course Challenge winner. **Picture:** GREG TOTMAN

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56 KATHERINE HULL (QLD) won after five-hole play-off - \$3000, SARAH OH (NSW) - \$2200

58 FRANCES BONDAD (NSW) - \$1700

59 WENDY DOOLAN (NSW), STACEY TATE (NZ) - \$1150

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63 JOANNE MILLS (NSW), KAREN QUINN (NSW), VIKKI TUTT (NSW) - \$280

64 SARAH KEMP (NSW), ASHLEE CLAYDON (CAN), ANGELA HAWKES (NZ), CLARE CHOI (VIC), LEANNE BOWDITCH (QLD), KATY JAROCZOWICZ (NSW), KATE COMBES (VIC), SARAH NICHOLSON (NZ), STEPHANIE NA (SA), BREE TURNBULL (WA), DONNA SOUTHAM (NSW) - \$173.27

Shin fine-tunes swing in preparation for LPGA

By MICHAEL COX

WORLD No 2 Jiyai Shin used yesterday's Australian Short Course Championship at Russell Vale to fine-tune her swing ahead of next month's LPGA Tour opener.

The South Korean shot an even par 60 to finish equal fourth, four shots behind leaders Katherine Hull and Sarah Oh.

"In the past two weeks I changed my swing a little bit while I'm here in Australia, so I'm just testing my shot," Shin said.

"It's much better now, more safe, more power. I just changed it a little, the balance."

The winner of three LPGA tournaments last year, Shin topped the season-ending money list with over \$1.8 million.

With her swing changes and the experience gained from a full year on the US tour, Shin believes she can still improve.

"Last year I played a little bit up and

down, so I want to play more consistently," she said.

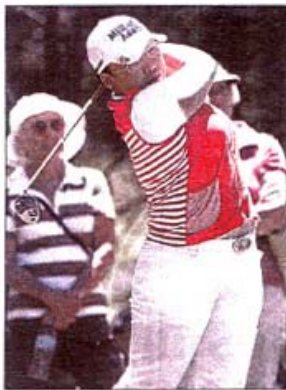
"Last year I achieved my goal - my goal was rookie of the year. But I'm not a rookie now, so I just want to play good all the time."

The 21-year-old has based herself in Queensland this year, training under the guidance of Russell Vale Pro Steve McRae. Shin has been working with the sought-after McRae since June last year and is full of praise for her mentor.

"After I met him I have played better," Shin said. "He has good eyes, he catches my mistakes. He's a really good coach and a good personality too."

Shin was a huge hit with the large galleries following her throughout the day at Russell Vale. Her infectious personality and booming drives kept fans entertained.

"I love the people, they're very kind," Shin said. "Australia is a nice place, very clean and very natural."



Teeing off: World No 2 Jiyai Shin during the Short Course Challenge yesterday at Russell Vale Golf Club. Shin is using the tournament to fine-tune changes to her golf swing. **Picture:** ROBERT PEET



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