

# A one and a two and sometimes 37

By Greg Peters  
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And one, and two, and three, and four... and sometimes as many as 37 times the head bobs and the club head comes up in rhythm as if held in synchronization by a tether.

But that's Great Bend's Steve Gotsche. And if he can win today in the finals of the Kansas State Amateur Golf Tournament at the Prairie Dunes Country Club, head bobbing and cross-handed putting might just become the fad in these parts. The sandy-haired figure got to the finals by beating defending champion John Sherman of Kansas City 1-up Saturday.

"It's just one of my traits," said Gotsche, who averaged between seven and 37 bobs a shot through the week. "I had a little trouble this week getting comfortable. I settled down a little today. I know it looks stupid, but it works for me."

Gotsche is not just some new phenom who has blown in from central Kansas to make a run at the 74th state amateur title. This is his seventh visit to the meet with a previous best finish of reaching the quarterfinals.

And he could be a legitimate champion. The 6-foot-3, solidly-built righthander made the quarterfinals in 1979 — the same year he graduated from high school. That same season he was the Class 6A state medalist and won the State Juniors Meet.

He played a year at Barton County Community College before transferring to the University of Nebraska. While at NU he made the all-Big Eight team in 1981 and 1983. In his last season of eligibility he helped the Huskers to a third-place showing in the conference.

Things were all as they should be when the semi-final round began Saturday morning — the bobwhites were singing in the meadows, the wind was out of the south, Gotsche was there in his red shorts and white sports shirt with Nebraska stenciled smartly on the front, and his mother Jeanne sat poised in the golf car with her Ariens visor intact

ready to caddy as she had since match play began Thursday.

Sherman had been the confident defending champion all week. While this was one of the lesser stops on a summer of big tourneys, for Gotsche this is a highlight. He spent last year working on his degree in climatology — he is still 20 hours short — and has been playing club tournaments on weekends while laboring in the oil fields for his father Irv.

"I felt it was going to be a really good match," Gotsche said. "I think we're about the same in talent but he has the edge in experience from playing in these big tournaments. I knew I'd have to play pretty well."

The two battled to within one after the front nine. Gotsche was putting well, but the shots were not falling. Sherman had to battle back to gain the lead after sinking behind by two holes early.

On 17 the match swung in favor of Gotsche and on 18 he slammed the door. Both times it was excellent putting — cross-handed and everything — that made the difference.

"I putted pretty good all day," he said. "They just didn't go in. I felt good over the ball. They may have been lucky putts, but I won't give them back."

On 17, he made a 15-foot putt that broke right to left. It was a shot he had to make or face a possible three-putt green because of the slope. Then on 18 he was trying to lag up close to the hole and the next putt went in to finish off Sherman.

"I started putting cross-handed about four years ago during my first year at Nebraska," Gotsche said. "I was a terrible putter so I thought I try it. I saw Bruce Lietzke do it on TV. I was one of the best putters in the world two years ago as I used to say. I haven't been putting that well lately."

Even if Gotsche does not win the championship today against Rocky Waitt of Wichita he has some serious considering to do about his future as a golfer. The degree may just have to wait a little bit longer.