

Lambert strolls, Brooky battles

Transtasman rivalry continues

By MURRAY HILLS



WELLINGTON'S Lynnette Brooky and Australian Loraine Lambert travelled down contrasting paths yesterday to advance to today's 36-hole final of the New Zealand women's matchplay golf championships at the Ngamotu links, New Plymouth.

Brooky had a heart-stopping quarter-final win against fellow international Susan Farron, Manawatu, winning at the 19th and then an equally tense one-up semi-final win against another Wellingtonian Heather Barnett from the Miramar club. Lambert, from the Indooroopilly club in Brisbane, crushed Jenny Thompson, Castlecliff in Wanganui, 7 and 6 in the morning round then downed Otago's Shelley Duncan 4 and 2 in the other semi-final.

Ngamotu has a reputation of being a sleeping tiger and yesterday it exposed its claws as players had to battle both howling winds and driving rain.

Brooky sank to her knees when she holed a 2m putt for par on the last to sink Barnett.

"I prayed to God for that putt. That's why I went down on my knees when it went in," she said afterwards. The day left Brooky physically drained.

"It's one of the most stressful days I've ever had. When Heather looks so positive over a putt, it bottles you up."

And as for the prospect of meeting Lambert in the final? "My aim was to make the matchplay final and I'm really looking forward to it."

Lambert said conditions made play extremely tough although she made the par five seventh look easy in both rounds. The 21-year-old scored eagle threes both times hitting a seven iron second in both rounds. "The first one was an eight-footer and the second was a real snake. The wind was hard and the rain made it worse. And it was cold, I had four layers on."

However, she was happy with her game. "You just have to play along in those conditions. Keep the ball in play and just get it close."

As for the final and the prospect of three matchplay titles on end, "It would be nice. At least I'm there and I have a chance of winning."

Earlier in the day, Duncan escaped with a one-up win against Auckland's Kaye Godso. The pair were locked in a tight battle which Duncan won when Godso three-putted the final hole.

Barnett chipped in for a par four on the first extra hole to nose out Renee Fowler from the Springfield club in Rotorua.

Barnett hooked her tee shot left, and was still in big trouble for three on the edge of the green. But the chip was a beauty unnerving Fowler who promptly three-putted to lose the match.

Brooky had a titanic struggle with Farron. Both desperately wanted to win the match, Brooky said afterwards.

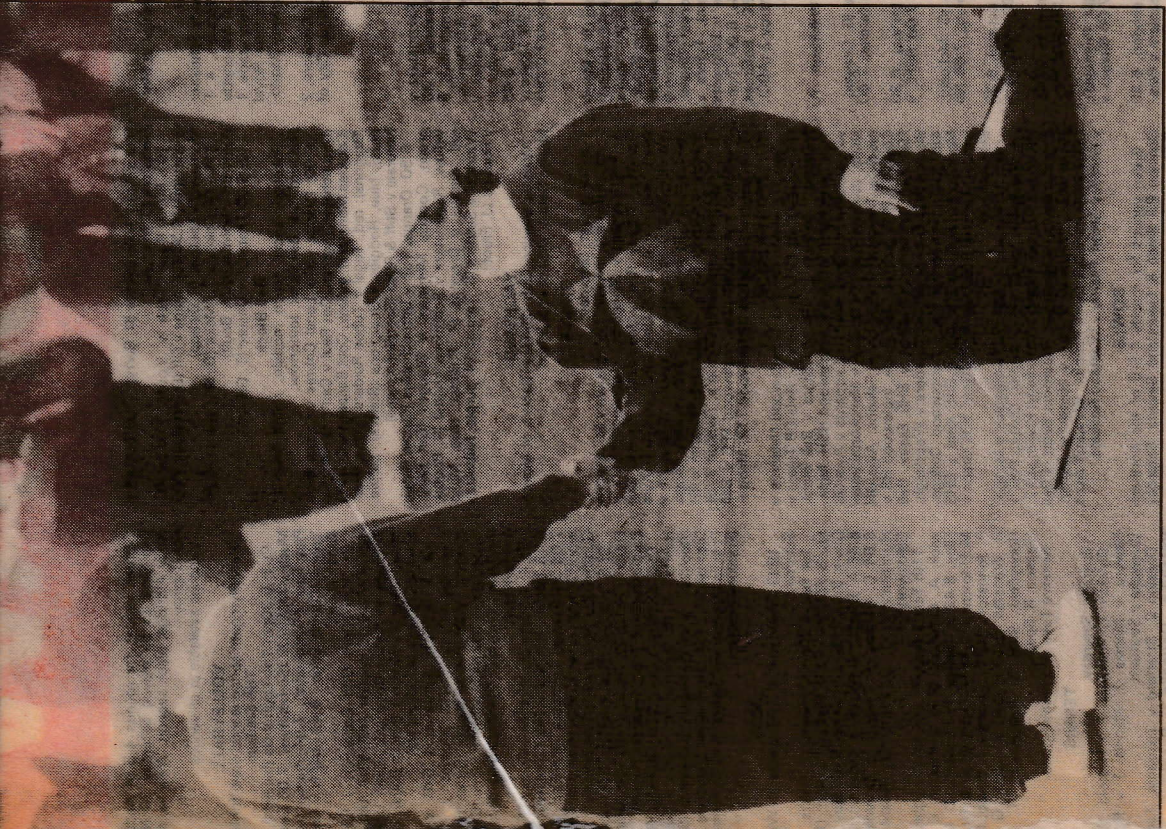
"She (Susan) really wanted to beat me and I didn't want to lose. We were both stressed out after the game."

Farron set the early pace and with six holes to play held a comfortable three-hole cushion. But then things turned sour for Farron. She went on a bogey trot dropping shots to par from the 13th to the 17th to swing the game Brooky's way.

Brooky four-putted the 18th to lose the hole and force a trip down the 19th. Farron's hopes of advancing to the final four evaporated when she bunkered and failed to get out with her first attempt. Although she nearly holed her second attempt from the sand, her five could not match Brooky's 4m birdie putt.

In the Weddell Rosebowl competition for the second 32 qualifiers, Genaea Perry (Russley, Christchurch) will play Ann Binney (Waitangi) in the final. Perry downed Te Ngutu's Debbie McCallum 3 and 2 in a semifinal match yesterday afternoon.

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E RELIEF: Lynnette Brooky, who fell to her knees after sinking a winning putt on the 18th, is congratulated by fellow Wellingtonian Barnett yesterday. Brooky plays Australian Loraine Lambert in 36-hole national women's matchplay final. Photo: MAARTEN HOLL