

Sorenstam shoots two clear with 69

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■ GOLF

WORLD No 1 Annika Sorenstam carded a one-under-par 69 to surge two shots clear of her closest challengers after the third round of the US\$3 million (NZ\$6.25 million) US Women's Open in Kansas yesterday.

Wellingtonian Lynnette Brooky matched that score for a three-round total of 215, seven back and in a share of seventh.

The 31-year-old Swede Sorenstam, bidding to win the title for the third time, is the only player in the field below par as she returned a two-under total of 208. Americans Juli Inkster (71) and Jill McGill (69) shared second on 210.

Australia's Shani Waugh (71) was a further stroke adrift on 211 at the Prairie Dunes Country Club.

On another day of gusting winds and over one of the toughest courses the players encounter, Sorenstam compiled three birdies as she stepped up her attempt to clinch her eighth worldwide victory this year.

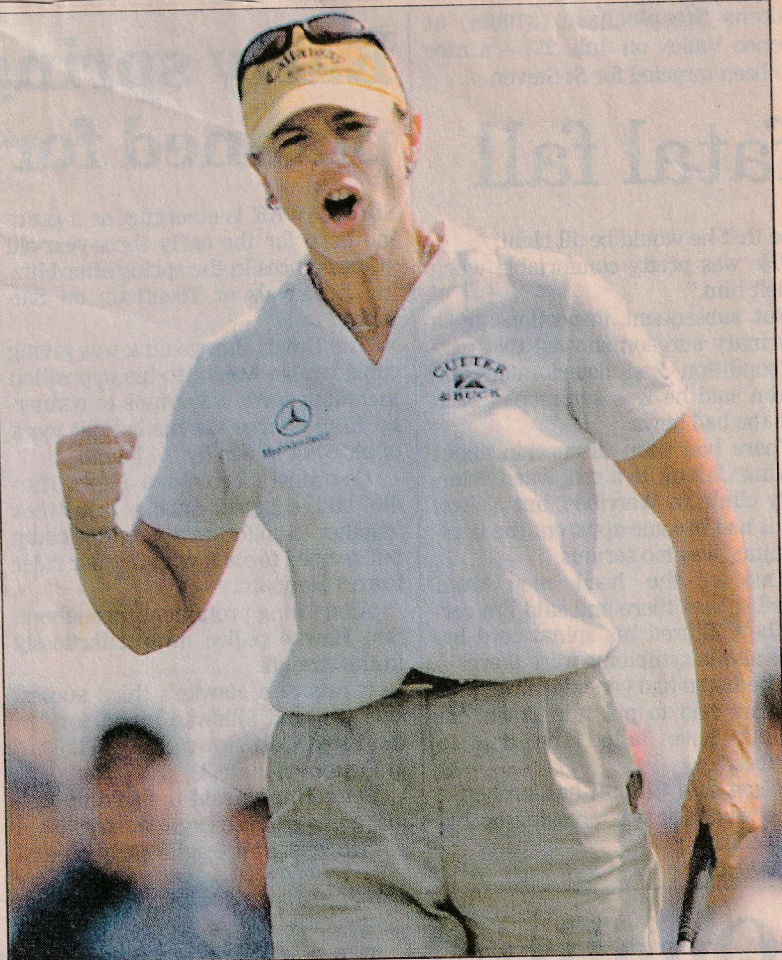
Inkster would have been alone in second place but for a dropped shot at the last.

The 42-year-old American, who won the title in 1999 and is a member of the LPGA Hall of Fame, said Sorenstam would be tough to catch.

"I tried my hardest out there but it didn't go very well," said Inkster.

"Annika is not going to give anything away and I know I'll have to play a lot better to even have a chance of beating her."

Sorenstam, smiling and relaxed and reflecting the attitude of some-



Powering away: Sweden's Annika Sorenstam celebrates nailing another birdie during the third round of the US Women's Open yesterday.

Picture: REUTERS

one in total control of her game, was delighted with her performance. But she also struck a note of caution.

"I did a lot of things right out there," she said. "But this is a very tough golf course and lots of things can happen."

If Sorenstam does lift the title, it will continue a dazzling run this season. Apart from her seven wins, she has only once been outside the top seven in 13 starts.

She also won on her previous two outings, at the Evian Masters in France three weeks ago and at the

ShopRite LPGA Classic in Atlantic City last weekend.

For McGill, 30, the aim is to win her first tournament in six years on the LPGA Tour.

"This week, I'm playing the way I know I can," said McGill. "Hopefully, this could be an important stepping stone."

Former champions Laura Davies of Britain and South Korean Pak Se Ri produced yesterday's best rounds with matching 68s.

Davies was tied for 10th place on 216. Pak was on 217. — Reuters