

U.S. OPEN SECTIONAL QUALIFYING

Valor Christian coach makes U.S. Open

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LITTLETON — Jason Preeo of Highlands Ranch shot a sizzling 7-under-par 65 in the morning round Monday and held on to tie for top honors in hot, muggy U.S. Open sectional qualifying at Columbine Country Club.



Preeo and Stephen Allan of Australia finished with a 36-hole total of 136 to secure slots in the June 17-20 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links in Monterey County, Calif.

It will be Preeo's first tournament with PGA Tour players and Allan's fifth U.S. Open.

"It will be the biggest tournament I've played in," said Preeo, 31, the golf coach at Valor Christian High School in Highlands Ranch. "You have to have pretty good perspective; it's still just a golf tournament. We'll go out there and see what happens."

Jason Preeo of Highlands Ranch, playing Monday at Columbine Country Club, survived sectional qualifying for a slot in the U.S. Open this month. "It will be the biggest tournament I've played in. We'll go out there and see what happens," said Preeo, 31, the golf coach at Valor Christian. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

Texan Tom Kite, who won the 1992 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach, finished tied for third Monday, a shot behind the winners, despite a bogey-free day. He and Zenon Brown, a former Colorado State golfer from Arvada, each had rounds of 69 and 68 to get alternate U.S. Open slots.

Kite, 60, declined to play Brown in a playoff and left the clubhouse without comment as it was scheduled to begin, giving Brown the first alternate slot.

Preeo, who was born in Stockton, Calif., and attended the University of Pacific, was the first professional to tee off and first to finish. After bogeying his final two holes, including three-putting on No. 18, he had to wait nearly two hours to find out if his late mistakes would cost him a spot.

"It would have been nice to par the last couple. It would have been safer," Preeo said. "I was just a little loose and I'm a little out of shape. I was tired, and it got pretty hot. Overall I just didn't make the putts I did the first round."

Preeo, an instructor at Englewood's MetaGolf Learning Center, never has played in a Nationwide or PGA Tour event.

"This will be fun," he said of Pebble Beach. "This will definitely be fun."

Allan, 36, played in the U.S. Open in 1998, 2004, 2005 and 2009, qualifying the last two times at the Columbine sectional. He shot a second round-low 67 on Monday. "I played good, this afternoon particularly, and I played pretty good this morning but had a little rough spell," he said. "It was nice to hit the ball well and putt well."

The top amateur was Nick Geyer of Albuquerque, who played in Preeo's twosome. Geyer shot a two-round 143 to tie for 13th in the 29-player field.

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