



MEN'S GREATER HOUSTON CITY AMATEUR

Pocknall in the hunt with 68

By RICHARD DEAN Copyright 2008 Houston Chronicle

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David Pocknall has won the club championship at Falcon Point six times. Now, the Katy resident is taking aim at the 2008 Men's Greater Houston City Amateur Championship.

On Friday at Memorial Park Golf Course, Pocknall shot a 2-under-par 68. That's good for a three-way share of second place after the first round, and only one stroke behind leader Nick Kondra of West Columbia.

"It's a good start," said Pocknall, who shares second with Chad Harris of Humble and Sandy Pierce of Houston. "This is a long event and you can shoot yourself out of it the first day. It's always good to start with a good, low number. There's a lot of good golfers in this city."

Originally from New Zealand, Pocknall moved to Katy in the 1990s. He learned quickly about the quality of amateur golfers in the Houston area.

"I always remembered when we moved here. I think Bob Kearney won the tournament and I pick up the newspaper on the Monday morning and I read where this guy had shot two 65s to win the city amateur," said Pocknall. "I thought, you got to be that good to play in a city like this?"

Pocknall, 55, was pretty good Friday after a shaky start.

"Generally speaking, I hit it pretty well," said Pocknall, a geologist. "I hadn't been feeling that well. I flew to Peru on Sunday night, came back Monday night and I've got a stifling cold and haven't been feeling that great."

Playing in his ninth city amateur this year, Pocknall tied for third last year in this 72-hole event.

“It’s a great golf course,” Pocknall said. “If you hit the ball straight, you get rewarded.”

Six golfers share fifth place at 69, including Andy Cooper of The Woodlands, who won the Carlton Woods Invitational in May. Also shooting 69s were Mike Westrum of Baytown, Owen Joyner of Montgomery, James Dalthorp III of Houston, Jason Ellis of The Woodlands and Titus Harris of Houston.

Buzz Baker, who led after every round in last year’s tournament before losing a four-hole playoff to Kip Guidry, opened with a 71 and shares 14th with 10 others.

“I’ve been in that situation a lot more than I have been leading it,” Baker said. “I thought how nice it would have been (to lead). I wish I were in the lead. My goal is to get back in the lead come Sunday.

“I progressed all through the day. So I feel good about it.”

Guidry opened with a 75.