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THOMASVILLE - As Southwestern Randolph High School's Caleb Abernethy saw his long putt sail past the 18th hole and land well off the green in the second sudden-death playoff hole during the SportsTone Shootout Thursday at The Colonial Country Club, he thought there was no way he would win the individual title.



But golf can be a funny game.

Abernethy chipped in a 45-foot shot and then watched as Uwharrie Charter Academy's Coen Branson missed a putt that would have sent the pair to a third playoff hole, to claim the individual title in the tournament that featured seven of the eight high school golf teams in Randolph County.

While Abernethy and Branson finished the 18-hole tournament deadlocked with 78s and then went to a second sudden-death playoff hole, the team competition was just as close as Uwharrie Charter Academy recorded a team total of 330 to defeat Asheboro High School by just one stroke. SWR was third (353), Wheatmore fourth (355), Providence Grove fifth (362) and Eastern Randolph and Randleman tied for sixth with 367s.

The individual title came down to the second playoff hole when Abernethy recovered from his off-the-green putt to win the title.



Caleb Abernethy reacting to his final shot (insert) and with the individual match trophy.

"I'm excited," he said moments after capturing the championship. "I was like it's over. I putted it off the green and I was like, dude, because I didn't see it was going downhill that much and it just kept rolling. I went and got my wedge out of my bag. I seen it, it wasn't breaking any. Just sat up and chipped it in. I did not expect to come out here and win this. I was going to play the best golf I could, but I did not expect to be here."

Six straight pars on the back nine allowed Abernethy to force a playoff, including sinking an eight-foot putt after shooting out of a bunker on the final regulation hole.

Branson was able to rebound from a rough start to make it to the playoff holes.

"I played alright, didn't do nothing crazy," Branson said. "I started with two doubles in the first five holes and I think I was six over after six. I stopped caring. I told my coach I was going to break every club in my bag. Then I told the other coach I promise I would go even over the last 12 holes. I think I was one over."

Abernethy said he wasn't thrilled with his first nine holes, but felt okay with the 41.

"I double-bogeyed and parred some in the front nine, but I didn't think about it," he said. "It really didn't bother me. Forty-one isn't bad. I just had to clear my head."

As Abernethy's chip fell in the hole, he raised his arms up high.

"It won't bother me too much," Branson said of the setback. "If I lose, a chip-in is the way to lose. I hit good shots, I just missed putts."

While Abernethy and Branson fought for the title, a number of other golfers fared very well. There was a five-stroke difference between first and sixth place. Asheboro's Brayden Davis was third with a 79, ER's Tyler Gee fourth with an 80, UCA's Andrew Stover was fifth with an 82 and AHS' Lee Hooker was sixth with an 83.

"Had a pretty solid front nine, started losing some steam on the back, but finished with a 79," Davis said. "I never played this course before. Front, I was just trying to put it close and make some pars and got lucky and rolled some birdie putts in."

Gee, who hadn't seen the back nine, blistered the front nine, finishing with a 37.

"It was good to get out there and play 18 holes and get ready for regionals and the conference tournament," Gee said. "It was a nice course to play."

Stover said he enjoyed his day as well.

"I started off pretty rough," said Stover, a freshman. "Had a few three-putts in the first few holes. Eventually started getting going. Had a lip-out eagle on three, tap-in birdie and that got me back going. I got it figured out toward the end."

The top four individual scorers were used to determine the team total. UCA's Branson (78), Stover (82), Evan Morin (85) and Jaxon Gallimore (85) were just enough to edge AHS' Davis (79), Hooker (83), Charlie Knott (84) and Will Tucker (85).

"We couldn't have asked for anything better," said AHS Nick Goard, who helped put the tournament together. "Had a playoff win. A one-shot victory for the team. Five shots separating one through six. A great day. Great competition."

For those wishing to watch the interviews with the players and for some exciting final-hole footage, check out the [SportsTone.net](https://www.sportstone.net) YouTube page.



2026 SportsTone Shootout Team Champion Uwharrie Charter Academy Eagles.