

Hypnotherapy lifts Kauika to title win

GOLF
by Richard Crowley

Four rounds of "solid" golf and some recent work with a hypnotherapist helped Wanganui's Riki Kauika to his third Wanganui Open title at Belmont yesterday.

Played in cold, damp, windy conditions over the weekend, 23-year-old Kauika fired a closing round, two-over-par 72 to finish at five over for the tournament, eight shots clear of New Zealand's seventh-ranked golfer Daniel Pearce. Pearce's Hastings team-mate and pre-tournament favourite Nick Gillespie was another shot back in third spot.

Kauika led Gillespie by just one shot (at one under par) after the first two rounds, but opened up a six-shot lead between the seventh and 10th holes of round three yesterday morning.

A former New Zealand representative, Kauika said it was a relief to finally win a big tournament again.

"It's been a long time and it feels pretty good," he said. "I just wanted to play solid and I just felt a lot better mentally this week, and I putted pretty good."

He attributed his improved mental game to local hypnotherapist Grant Boddington, who had helped boost his confidence.

"I was having a few problems,

I'd lost a bit of confidence and I wasn't putting the best, but ever since I've seen him I've been putting awesome."

Kauika said he hadn't done anything spectacular over the four rounds and it was more a case of playing down the middle and on the green.

Kauika's next mission is the Tower interprovincial tournament in early December and beyond that he intends to head back to the New Zealand qualifying school in a bid to become a professional.

He missed out by a shot last year.

"That's my ultimate aim, to turn professional," he said.

Second on 13-over-par was Pearce who had rounds of 79 and 71 yesterday, while Gillespie fired 79 and 75 in his final two rounds.

"Everything was bad, and my putting was horrendous," Gillespie said.

Gillespie, who's part of the New Zealand elite squad, is now heading to Singapore for the Singapore amateur and Singapore Open qualifying.

Fourth equal at 15 over par was Wanganui's Carter Rohloff who had two rounds of 74 yesterday, while another local youngster, Regan Cording was disqualified after round two for accidentally signing an incorrect scorecard. He was on the leaderboard at the time.



Riki Kauika