



# A little birdie

## Nick out of rough

SIX-TIME major winner Nick Faldo reckons he has emerged from the turmoil that dogged his life on and off the golf course.

"That's all over. It's smooth sailing now," the Englishman said after firing a four-under 38 opening round.

"I've cleared up a few jobs and am finally getting close to just concentrating fully on golf again."

## Get stuck into it

IT'S not stuck into Royal Sydney was Matthew Goggin's addict to his caddy on the first tee and the aggressive attitude produced a perfect start.

The fired-up Tasmanian smashed his drive to the green at the 27th par-four opening hole and rolled in a 5m putt for an eagle.

Goggin, qualified to play on the US Tour next year, picked up more shots at the seventh, ninth and 13th before a rare blip at the last left him well placed on 68.

## Rodger, over, out

FOOTBALL medical staff would be shading their heads and telling veteran Rodger Davis, "I told you so".

Davis strained a hamstring during the pro-am in Adelaide last week and sought treatment to be ready for the summer tournament season.

But he obviously didn't rest long enough and pinged the hammy again in the opening round yesterday. He had to quit after seven holes when he was well placed as ever with the card.

## Baker's delight

WEST Australian Malcolm Baker at least enjoyed brief notoriety for the sacrifice of tumbling out of bed before dawn yesterday.

Baker had to get up at 5am to prepare to hit cirt in the first group two hours later.

His four-under 63 set a new-course record and he had far longer than 15 minutes of fame before the big guns shot down that target.

## Shark tracking

PRESTON security giant Daryl Reid will be fit and footsore by Sunday night after literally tracking Greg Norman all over Royal Sydney.

Reid has been the Shark's minder since 1994 and he shadows the star everywhere during the flying visits to Australia.

And he had the task of making sure the soccer fans didn't get too close to Brazilian ace Ronaldo in Sydney a fortnight ago before reverting to the more sedate golf scene.

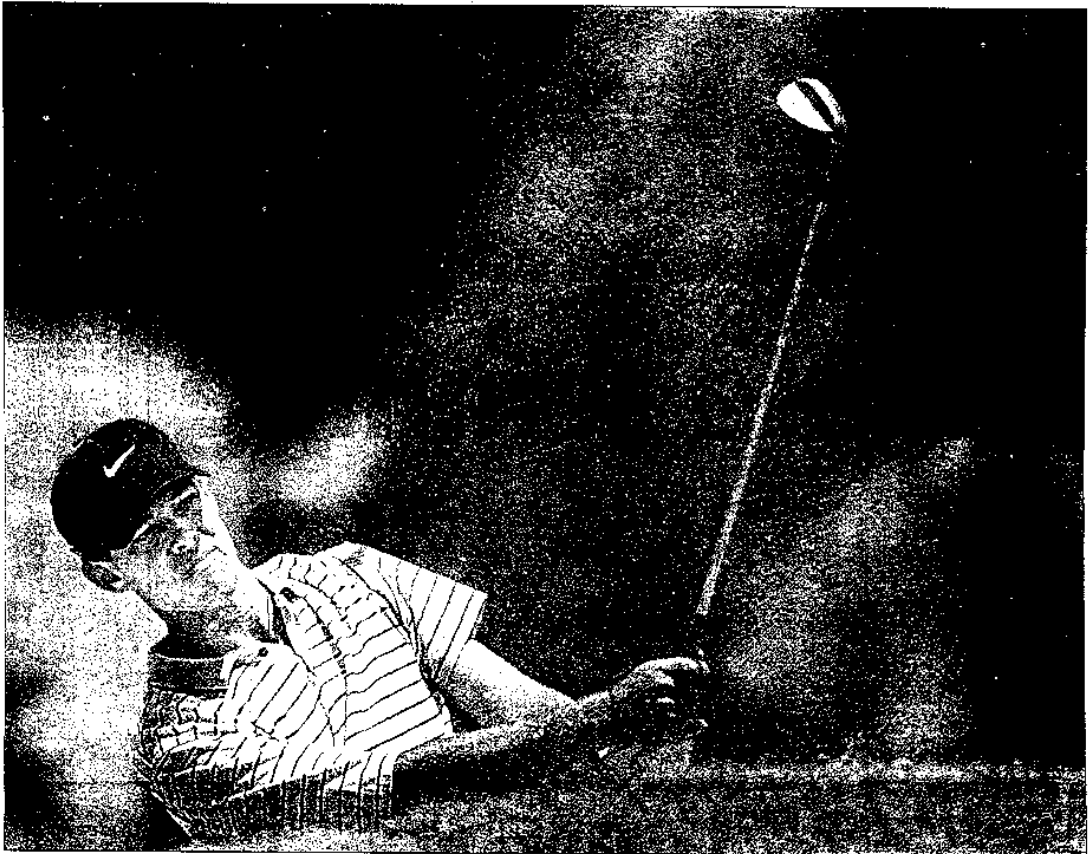
## Early birdies

ANY early bird to Royal Sydney yesterday would have been treated to an exhilarating experience following the group containing New Zealand leader Michael Campbell and Victorian Geoff Ogilvy and Aaron Baddeley.

Young Baddeley set a cracking pace with four birdies in the first five holes and his playing partners quickly responded.

Campbell, who won the Johnnie Walker Classic in Taipei two weeks ago, showed the teenager he could perform tricks too with an eagle at the 55th second hole, by the seventh tee, the two had collected eight birdies and that eagle.

BRUCE MATTHEWS



In contention: Aaron Baddeley fires cut of a bunker during his five-under round at Royal Sydney yesterday. Picture: GREGG PORTEOUS

# Prodigy shares No. 1's secret

By TREVOR GRANT in Sydney



WITH their graphite-shafted, turbo-steel metal drivers, 89-degree wedges and their swing gurus at their elbows, you might have thought that there was nothing more modern-day golfers could do to gain an advantage over a golf course.

However, when 19-year-old Victorian amateur Aaron Baddeley stepped onto the tee to start his challenge for the Holden Australian Open at Royal Sydney yesterday, few people realised that the driver in his hands was more than just another metallic grey monster.

It looks like any other modern driver, but it's what you can't see that holds the secret: a secret he now shares with none other than world No. 1 Tiger Woods.

Baddeley's club has been treated with what is literally space-age technology.

Given that it is claimed it could bring another 15-20 metres to his drives, it's enough to frighten the life out of golf club administrators whose courses are being rendered more obsolete every year by equipment developments.

Before he came to Royal Sydney, Baddeley, following Woods' lead, put his driver through the revolutionary "Coldfire" process.

It is a treatment in which the club is deep-frozen to -255 degrees in a cryogenic chamber and then heated to 204 deg.

This process alters the molecular structure of the metal and strengthens it to the point that it is claimed you can get 15-20m extra distance on well-struck shots, while off-centre shots will go straighter.

According to James Harrison, chief executive of the Melbourne-based Coldfire Australasia, the idea originated at Cape Canaveral, where NASA scientists working on strengthening the metal in their rockets decided to see how it might work on their clubs.

Although there is always a good deal of scepticism about such claims, Baddeley reckoned it was worthwhile, especially when he learned recently that Woods had "Coldfired" his clubs, from driver through to putter.

"I can't say for sure yet that it brings the extra distance, but so far I think it helps

## COLDFIRE TECHNIQUE

As used on clubs belonging to Tiger Woods and Aaron Baddeley

**CLUBS** are placed in a cryogenic chamber. Temperature is gradually reduced with liquid nitrogen, which is placed in to the chamber. The temperature drops to minus 159 degrees for several hours.

**LATER**, in the same chamber, the clubs are gradually brought back to room temperature and then heated to 200 degrees.

The ultra-freeze "followed by the "stress relief" heat cycle causes molecular changes in the metal. The atoms in the metal bond together, which vastly improves its strength, durability and efficiency.

The stronger metal heads mean there is less vibration when hitting shots, because energy is not dissipating up the shaft but going out totally through the clubhead to the ball.

TREATMENT of clubs conforms to the rules of golf.

straighten up the off-centre shots," Baddeley said yesterday, after a superb five-under 67 put him firmly into Open contention, three strokes from first-round leader Paul Gow.

Whatever merit there is in the claims, Baddeley's driver yesterday was simply smoking.

On the par-five 51st seventh hole, he smashed it almost 90m, allowing him to get home easily in two to set up the fifth of the seven birdies he logged in the first nine holes.

Australia has a magnificent pedigree in amateur golf but if ever there was one who stood out in his formative years, it is this talented young man from the outer Melbourne suburb of Croydon.

But as much as people agree he should be allowed to develop quietly, he keeps raising the excitement and expectation levels every time he steps out in a major event.

Indeed, it was impossible to ignore him yesterday morning as he became the first name to be posted at the head on the leaders' board.

He did it by compiling an outward half of 20, a breathtaking burst of scoring even allowing for the fact that the course was ripe for the picking.

He looked very much at home in the environment of a major golf tournament. He may have been sitting in an exam room only three weeks ago completing his VCE, but his age belies his innate control and self-assurance.

He already walks and talks as if he belongs out there, cragging shots with Greg Norman, Craig Parry and Stuart Appleby.

But there is not a hint of arrogance or teenage swagger about him. He is an articulate, well-mannered, young man who simply knows where he's going in life.

Yesterday there was not the slightest change in his emotional barometer, as might have been the case with any other young amateur making such an early charge before coming back to earth.

Whether he was in tearaway form on the front nine, or being reeled in after a couple of errant shots on the back nine, he presented the same calm, collected face.

Indeed, he and his caddy and friend, Dion Kipping, were so relaxed that they started singing a few tunes to each other, the favorite being one by Australian band Tadrade.

It's something they have been doing for some time, most recently during the Victorian PGA at Albert Park last month.

"We started slowly and he (Kipping) said 'You know what we aren't doing? We aren't singing.' So we started singing and went birdie-birdie," he said.

But for now he plans to stick to his day job.

"I have been told by Dale Lynch (his coach) that I play off a handicap of 45 when it comes to singing," he said.

While it's clearly a voice you'd prefer to kill rather than kill for, he does play sweet music with a golf club in his hand.

Listen for the tune on Sunday. It could be something special.