

Janet Coles captures first LPGA tour win

ATLANTA (AP) — Janet Coles, a 23-year-old Californian who was on crutches last month, fulfilled her boyfriend's prediction.

"He wrote it down and everything, but he still was shocked," Coles said Sunday after knocking in a six-foot birdie putt on the third

hole of a playoff to capture the \$75,000 Lady Tara Golf Tournament.

It was her first victory since joining the Ladies Professional Golf Association tour 14 months ago. And it was only her third start since overcoming a kneecap injury suffered in a basketball game.

"That puts me up there where I can compete against the big ones, and that's what I want," said Coles, who had a closing 70 for an 8-under-par 211 total over the hilly, 6,353-yard Brookfield West Country Club course.

The birdie putt on the third playoff hole enabled her to dispose of veteran Gloria Ehret, who led or shared the lead each round. Defending champion Hollis Stacy also was in the playoff, but fell away on the first extra hole when she bogeyed.

The champion was quite an athlete in college, playing golf and basketball during her career at UCLA. Her boyfriend, Jeff Smith, is an assistant football coach at Santa Monica Junior College and was a free safety on UCLA's 1976 Rose Bowl team.

"Last year I got disqualified here and I wanted to do better," she said. "I was very careful at 13 this year." That's where she was disqualified last year when she made an illegal drop.

"I wanted to go out and show that I can play," she said. "My game plan was to hit every shot as well as I can."

The victory earned Coles \$11,250, just under her \$11,663 previous career earnings.

She had missed a 3-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole and a six-footer on the first hole of the playoff. Meanwhile, Ehret lipped out her three birdie putts in the playoff from 25 feet once and six feet twice.

"If you're gonna win or lose, do it with a birdie," Ehret said.

"I'm not upset about it," said Stacy, winner at Birmingham two weeks ago and a playoff loser last week at Raleigh. "I think I'm playing the best golf on tour right now."

Stacy, who had a rerod 65 Saturday, and Ehret each shot 71 Sunday.

Jan Stephenson, 72, and Pat Bradley, 71, shared fourth place at 215 and five others were grouped at 216 — Betty Burfeindt, Sally Little, Kathy Postlewait, Amy Alcott and Judy Kimball.



CELEBRATING HER WINNING PUTT
... Lady Tara champ, Janet Coles

(AP Wirephoto)