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FORMER U.S. MID-AMATEUR CHAMP ADVANCES TO FINALS OF STATE MATCH PLAY

PALM CITY, Fla. – Jeff Thomas, the 1993 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion, advanced to the finals of the Florida State Match Play Championship with two victories on Saturday. He will face Orlando's Matt Avril in an 18-hole final match Sunday morning at 8:00 a.m.

The championship field of 32 was narrowed eight Friday, and then down to two Saturday. Thomas qualified with a 2-over 74 and then quickly disposed of his first two opponents. In his morning round on Saturday, Thomas defeated Jacksonville's Steve Dodson on the 19th hole. He then ended the lower bracket semifinal match versus Key Biscayne's George Earle II on the 15th hole.

Thomas, who now lives in Jensen Beach, has had a remarkable amateur career. Besides winning the U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship, he has an eight-time winner of the New Jersey State Amateur Championship. He also played in the 1994 Masters.

Avril advanced to the final after defeating Lutz' Joe Alfieri, 2 and 1, in the semifinal match. Avril had qualified with an even-par 72. He won his first-round match 4 and 2, then he won 1 up in the second round. In the quarterfinals he defeated West Palm Beach's Brandon Smith, 2 and 1. Smith had defeated last year's champion, Steven Sim of Ft. Lauderdale, 3 and 2 in the 2nd round. Avril

With Alfieri losing in the semifinals, he lost his chance to win his third state championship of the year. He has teamed with Tampa's Doug LaCrosse to win both the Florida State Mid-Amateur Four-Ball Championship and the Florida State Four-Ball Championship. He also finished in second place in this year's Florida State Amateur Championship.

The finals for three other flights will also occur Sunday morning. In the first flight, Tampa's Chad Oleson will face Stuart's Shawn Hughes. Surfside's Gunnar Bennett will face Sunrise's Maris Kirschbaum in the final match for the second flight, and Vero Beach's Michael Muller faces Longwood's Greg Myer in the third flight final's match.