

It is probably a good thing that Kiwi Michael Hendry got injured while playing cricket in England years ago, otherwise he might not be in contention at the Australian Masters this week.

The 33-year-old represented his country at Under-19 level and travelled overseas to take up a contract in England, only to injure his shoulder while bowling for his county side.

That injury led Hendry to give up on a promising cricket career and instead decide to become a professional golfer in 2005, and only now is that move starting to pay dividends.

The world number 420 carded a round of 69 at Kingston Heath on Friday to find himself just two shots off the pace in one of Australia's biggest tournaments.

But it was his time as a promising cricketer that drew the most interest from a healthy Australian media contingent on Friday as Hendry was asked about his former sporting exploits and whether he had made the correct call to turn pro as a golfer.

"I injured my shoulder at a pretty inopportune time," Hendry, who classified himself as a bowling all-rounder, recalled.

"But even so, my career was kind of stagnating and I think to be perfectly honest, at best, I might have been a fringe Black Cap.

"I wouldn't have been a stalwart that's for sure, so I would have been fighting for a position all the time.

"So I think I made the right decision at the end of the day."

Hendry said he still keeps in touch with many of his old team-mates from his days as a cricketer, with the Auckland-born golfer adding he remains friends with former New Zealand Test players Reece Young and Lou Vincent.

But it's all about golf now for Hendry as he looks to build on his fourth-placed finish behind American Bo Van Pelt at the Perth International last month.

"I'm playing really well, I think mostly because I'm putting it well," he said.

"I'm hitting my irons fairly well, but I'm driving the ball pretty poorly so I need to get out there and work on that.

"But the thing about Kingston Heath is you don't have to have a lot of drivers.

"The irons have been going close enough to the hole that I can make a few birdies."

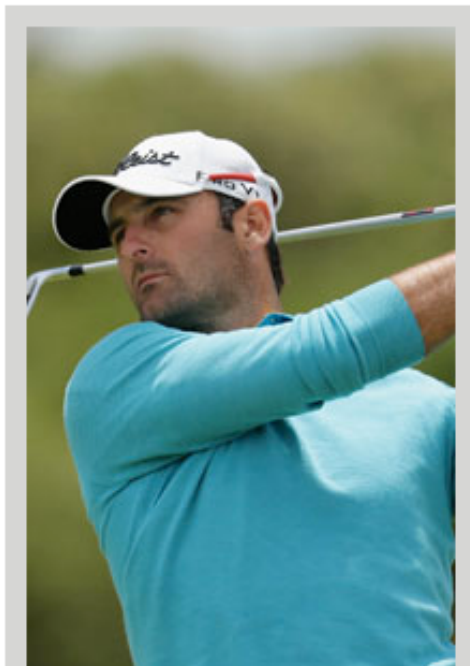
Hendry has already tasted success this year, having claimed the inaugural New Zealand PGA Pro-Am title in April by two strokes.

But he said it was too early to be thinking about a second triumph for 2012 and is merely trying to focus on being in with a chance of victory on Sunday.

"Winning's funny, you can try all you want but sometimes it just doesn't happen," he said.

"Sometimes it's just not your week even if you play well.

"As long as I give myself a chance on Sunday, I'll be happy."



Michael Hendry