

SPORTS BRIEFS

BASEBALL

Baseball honors Jackie Robinson

Baseball took note of one of the greatest moments in its history Tuesday night with an anniversary celebration that has generated more fanfare than the actual event. Tuesday marked the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's first game in the major leagues and the baseball world fittingly paid tribute at Shea Stadium during a game between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the New York Mets. Robinson broke baseball's color barrier on April 15, 1947 by playing first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers against the Boston Braves at Ebbets Field. Only 25,623 fans showed up in the 34,000-seat park to watch Robinson go hitless in three at-bats in the Dodger's 5-3 victory. The major New York area papers virtually ignored the significance of the event with some writers skipping it entirely and others mentioning the debut only as a footnote. The scene will be different at Shea Stadium on Tuesday night. The game will be stopped after the fifth inning and President Bill Clinton and Robinson's widow, Rachel, took part in a ceremony at second base, the position where Robinson played most of his career. Acting Commissioner Bud Selig and National League President Leonard Coleman are among the dignitaries who were in attendance.

TENNIS

Top seeded Fernandez pulls out

Top seed Mary Joe Fernandez of the United States today withdrew from the \$1.1 million Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo, Japan due to lower back strain. Fernandez hurt her back last week during a quarterfinal loss to Amanda Coetzer at Amelia Island. The 1990 champion will be replaced in the draw by Annabel Ellwood of Australia as the ninth seed while a lucky loser or qualifier takes her place. The Japan Open is the fourth non-Grand slam tournament to mix the men's and women's tours. Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands is the top men's seed and is looking to rebound from a second-round loss in India last week.

Five seeds ousted

Five seeded players, including two-time finalist Sergi Bruguera of Spain, were opening-round casualties today at the \$825,000 Open Seat-Godo claycourt tournament in Barcelona, Spain. Bruguera, the 10th seed, was eliminated by Marc-Kevin Goellner, 6-4, 2-6, 6-2. Bruguera, ranked 21st in the world, has reached the finals of the Italian Indoors and Lipton Championships this year. In addition, Fernando Vicente upended number 12 Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands, 6-4, 6-3; Julian Alonso of Spain, a wild-card entry, ousted 14th seed and 1992 finalist Magnus Gustafsson of Sweden, 7-6 (8-6), 3-6, 6-3; Norway's Christian Ruud ousted number 13 Bohdan Ulihrach of the Czech Republic, 6-3, 6-4; and Austria's Gilbert Schaller stormed past 15th seed Michael Stich of Germany, 6-2, 6-2.

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SPORTS

TIGER WOODS, CALL HIM "MASTER"



Tiger dons the jacket of the elite Master's Series

It has been 50 years, almost to the day, that Jackie Robinson broke down the racial barriers in baseball. Now, a last vestige has fallen in golf, brought down in record fashion here in the middle of the Old South, by a young man of color.

Tiger Woods, 21, who is of African and Thai heritage, on Sunday became the youngest golfer in history to win the Masters at the Augusta National Golf Club. In doing so he shattered myths and broke records and again altered the face of the game.

Woods' final round of 69 gave him a total score of 18-under-par 270, the lowest in the 61-year history of the event, breaking the record held jointly by Jack Nicklaus and Raymond Floyd. His 12-stroke victory over Tom Kite, 47, was the widest margin ever in the Masters — indeed, the widest in any major championship conducted in America — and it made him the first man of African heritage to win a professional major championship.

That it was accomplished in Woods' third appearance at Augusta, and his first as a pro, comes as no surprise to anyone who has followed his career. This is the most recent in a long string of firsts. He was the first golfer to win three U.S. Junior Amateurs and the first to win three straight U.S. Amateurs.

This one, though, means the most to Woods, not merely for the remarkable way in which it was ac-

complished, but for its social significance. As the first man of color to put on the green jacket emblematic of a Masters victory, he finished what other people had started.

"It means so much," Woods said. "I'm the first, but I wasn't the pioneer. Charlie Sifford, Lee Elder, Teddy Rhodes, those guys paved the way for me to be here. I thank them. If it wasn't for them, I might not have had the chance to play here."

"It was quite a difference from the first time Woods came here, when hate mail arrived at the clubhouse and when one letter in particular said to him, 'Just what we don't need, another nigger in sports.'"

This old golf course has seen displays of power and it has seen displays of finesse. But it has never seen anything like the combination of both — and the added element of mental toughness — that Woods showed this week. For starters, he played the par-5 holes in 13 under par for the week. That is the power. He held more than 70 feet of par putts during the four rounds. That is the ultimate in finesse.

And after shooting a front-nine 40 on Thursday, he played the remaining 63 holes at Augusta National in 22 under par. No one has ever done that. No one has ever played the final 54 in 200 strokes. No one has ever played the middle two rounds in 131 strokes. That is mental toughness.

"Let's face it," said Jack Nicklaus,

who, until now, has played this course better than anyone else, "it's his time now."

It surely is. It was from the time he stepped to the first tee on Sunday morning, ready to face a challenge almost as difficult as playing with a two-stroke lead.

Lined up on the porch outside the manor clubhouse to watch him tee off were at least 20 African-American employees of the club. Farther down the hill were some of the black Augusta caddies, people like Jariah Beard, who caddied for Fuzzy Zoeller back in 1979. Watching on television

were Jim Thorpe and Cal Peete and Charlie Sifford and countless other black pros.

Just before Woods teed off, right after he had worked on the chipping green, Lee Elder, the first black player to compete in the Masters, in 1975, approached him and wished him luck.

"That really reinforced what I had to accomplish," Woods said. "He was the first. It was because of people like him that I was able to turn pro, to get this opportunity."

Woods killed the first tee shot of the day, rifling it into the wind well up the hill to the left of the bunker. He hit the green and two-putted for par. "That was big, to settle down like that with two good shots and a solid par," Woods said.

He birdied the second hole and

showed no sign of nerves. His lead dropped to its lowest point — eight strokes over Costantino Rocca and Tom Watson — when he bogeyed the fifth hole, his first bogey in 37 holes. He also bogeyed the seventh after hooking his drive into the trees, punching his approach into the front bunker and failing to get up and down.

Those were the last scoring errors he made. After a birdie at the eighth hole, his lead at the turn was nine strokes, just one fewer than Seve Ballesteros had in 1980 when he ran away from the field. But Woods played the back nine much better than Ballesteros did that year.

"To me, the way Tiger played this week was really unbelievable," said

Mark O'Meara, his neighbor and playing partner from Orlando, Fla.

The cliché about the Masters is that it is not won until the back nine on Sunday. That was not the case this year. It was won on the back nine on Thursday, when Woods changed a flaw in his swing and shot a 30 coming in that set the tone for the rest of his week.

He had that security in mind on Sunday when he birdied the 11th, nearly eagled the 13th and then made a 12-footer up the hill at 14 for birdie to get to 18 under. At the 15th, after pushing his drive way right, he had to scramble for par on the hole he dominated all week. But his 7-footer for par was nearly as impressive as his driver-wedge play on the 500-yard hole had been all week.

It secured the record, if he could just get past the last three holes. It capped the coronation, and it set up one of the loudest, most raucous final walks in the event's history.

He waded through the crowd at the last hole, looking for his ball, which had hooked over to the same spot where Ian Woosnam hit his drive when he won here in 1991. A quick finger on a photographer's motor drive when Woods was at the top of his backswing caused the errant drive, but it gave Woods a chance to mingle with the gallery for the first time all week.

And as he walked down the tunnel of applause, he began to slap palms with the gallery, first one and then another, until soon they were all extending their hands toward his.

It was quite a difference from the first time Woods came here, when hate mail arrived at the clubhouse and when one letter in particular said to him, "Just what we don't need, another nigger in sports."

Woods kept that letter. And now it serves as a symbol of what he has overcome here and the way he overcame it. He was not a pioneer, but he was the first, and a most impressive first at that.

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