

SPORTS

Woods wins duel with Brown

SAN DIEGO — Tiger Woods' nine-month victory drought ended, fittingly, back home in sunny Southern California. Woods celebrates his first PGA Tour win since May.

Woods won the Buick Invitational by two shots Sunday when he sank a 15-foot eagle putt on the 18th hole at Torrey Pines South, finally putting away pesky Billy Ray Brown after the two punched and counter-punched much of the round.

Woods thrust both arms in the air after finishing at 22-under-par 266, tying George Burns' 1987 tournament record for Torrey Pines. Woods simply needed to play well here to assure that he'll keep his No. 1 spot on the Official World Golf Ranking, which will determine

the 64-man field for the \$5 million Andersen Consulting Match Play Championship at La Costa Feb. 24-28. That wasn't foremost on Woods' mind.

"I haven't won on the PGA Tour since May of last year," Woods said. "But to finally win again, that feels a lot better than any world ranking."

Woods had gone winless in 14 tournaments since his last victory, at the BellSouth Classic.

Woods, who grew up in Orange County, said winning the Buick was special not only because he was 17-under for the weekend, but that it came in front of family and friends.

"It means a lot to me to do this in front of, in a sense, a hometown crowd," he said after his round of 7-under 65, which came



Tiger Woods celebrates his win over Brown

in perfect weather on the heels of his Torrey Pines South Course record 62 on Saturday, which also happened to be his best round as a pro.

"You can't really say enough how much that really affects you, to see people that you do know, and are out there supporting you," Woods said. "You don't get to see it every week as you travel all over the world. Most of the time you're alone, you and your caddy."

Woods will have plenty of support the next two weeks,

when he plays in the Nissan Open at Riviera in Los Angeles, then at La Costa, which is just north of Torrey Pines. Brown, whose only top 10 finish in the last six years was a win at the Deposit Guaranty Golf Classic in 1997, shot a 66 Sunday to finish at 268. Bill Glasson was alone at third at 270, while Chris Perry, Omar Uresti and Kevin Sutherland tied for fourth at 273. Brown said he had a fun round until a bad second shot on 18. Brown made more than a few great shots to keep up with Woods.

Happy Birthday
 with
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The Heart of a Champion

LAS VEGAS - Oscar De La Hoya had knocked down Ike Quartey in the sixth round and his fans were in a frenzy when, suddenly, De La Hoya was dropped by left hook.

"I thought, 'Hey I'm going to get right back up and stay in the fight,'" De La Hoya said. "I'm no quitter."

"He showed tremendous heart," said Gil Clancy, De La Hoya's co-trainer. "That's what won it for him."

The WBC welterweight champion won the last three rounds on all three official cards, knocking down Quartey and almost stopping him in the 12th round, to retain the 147-pound title on a split decision Saturday night in the Thomas & Mack Center.

"I thought I won this fight," said the 29-year-old Quartey, who lost

for first time. "I did everything, he did nothing. He came to survive. That's all he did."

One judge, Larry O'Connell of Britain, scored it 115-114 for Quartey (34-1-1, 29 knockouts), John Keane of England scored it 115-113 and Ken Morita of Japan scored it 115-112 for De La Hoya (30-0, 24 knockouts).

The AP scored it 116-111 for De La Hoya.

The fight will be rebroadcast on HBO at 9:30 p.m. EST Saturday.

"I was throwing all the punches in the first nine rounds," said Quartey, a former WBA champion who was stripped of that title.

It appeared, however, that De La Hoya had the best of several close rounds simply because he was



Oscar DeLaHoya showing the heart of a champion

busier.

Asked if he thought he was in trouble after 11 rounds, the 26-year-old De La Hoya said, "Truly, I thought I was in total control. I never thought I had to come back dramatically."

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