

Jason Day finally fulfills potential with PGA Championship victory

Aussie sets new scoring record en route to title

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

SHEBOYGAN, Wis. — In his eighth year on the PGA Tour, Jason Day reached a major pinnacle of his career by winning the PGA Championship.

And he could be sure that Tiger Woods was watching.

“Game over, very happy for Jason. Great dude and well deserved. Hats off to Jordan, incredible season. Calling it early,” Woods tweeted, adding in another tweet that he was watching from his new restaurant in South Florida. Always a commercial plug.

Day and Woods have become good friends on the golf course, but the fact Woods tuned in to the final round at Whistling Straits brought to mind Day’s rookie season when he was filled with big talent, big goals and some big talk.

Going into that year, he was asked during a conference call with Australian writers if he thought

Woods was aware of him.

“I can’t say for sure, but I think he is,” said Day, who was 20 at the time. “If I was him, I would be. I watch everyone. He watches a lot of golf. He has so much time. He played 16 events — what does he do with his time? He’d be aware of me. He’d be saying, ‘Here’s another kid coming up.’”

Now 27, he idolized the work ethic of Woods when he was growing up in Australia and honed that powerful swing under Colin Swatton, his current caddie. No one ever questioned his ability, only the trophies. It took him three years to win his first PGA Tour event at the Byron Nelson Championship, and four more years before he picked up another title at the Match Play Championship.

Along the way were more nagging injuries than he cares to remember, along with whispers that he was an underachiever.

All that has been put to rest.

This is a new Day, who has matured into one of the top three players in the world and figures to stay there.

“As long as I am healthy, I feel



AP Photo/Julio Cortez
Jason Day holds up the Wanamaker Trophy after winning the PGA Championship golf tournament Sunday.

like I’m going to be there a long time,” Day said. “I still want to accomplish that No. 1 goal of mine, which is to be the best player in the world. I’m still motivated and still very hungry for that, even after this win. Stuff like this is just the icing on top of the cake when you work so hard, and being able to achieve something like this.”

Not much in life has come easily for Day.

His father died of cancer when Day was 12, and if not for the sacrifices of his mother to get him to a golf academy, and the nurturing of Swatton, there’s no telling where he would be now. Day once shopped for used clothes at a store where for \$5 he could stuff as much as he could into a bag.

“I remember not having a hot water tank, so we had to use a kettle for hot showers,” he said. “We would put the kettle on and go have a shower, and then my mom would come bring three or four kettles in, just to heat them up. And it would take five, 10 minutes for every kettle to heat up.”

He had every reason to expect a hard road along the rugged terrain of Whistling Straits on Sunday.

Day had a share of the 54-hole lead at the U.S. Open, where he showed remarkable strength to even finish while coping with symptoms of vertigo. He faded to a 74. A month later, he shared another 54-hole at St. Andrews and missed the playoff at the British Open by one shot when he left a 30-foot

birdie attempt a foot short.

This time, he had least had a two-shot margin, along with pressure not to let another chance get away. He feared there would be emotional scars if he didn’t finish this one. And if that wasn’t enough, he was paired with Masters and U.S. Open champion Jordan Spieth, the new No. 1 player in golf.

The highest praise for Day came in the scoring trailer, when he said Spieth told him, “There’s nothing I could do.”

“It’s a good feeling when someone like Jordan, who is playing phenomenal golf right now, says that,” Day said. “Because it means that he left everything out there on the golf course and my play this week was just so much better — well, better than everyone else. And that feels good to me, because I was the last man standing.”

The Wanamaker Trophy was all he wanted. Only after it was over did Day realize he had broken a major championship record by finishing at 20 under par.

He’s not just another kid coming up. He arrived.

National Labor Relations Board overturns college athletics union decision

Flips 2014 decision in favor of athlete unions

By MICHAEL TARM
Associated Press

CHICAGO — The National Labor Relations Board on Monday blocked an effort by Northwestern University football players to form the nation’s first college athletes’ union, dealing a setback to a labor movement that could have transformed the game.

In a unanimous decision, the NLRB said the prospect of having both union and nonunion teams could lead to different standards at schools — from the amount of money players receive to the amount of time they can practice — and create competitive imbalances throughout college sports.

The ruling dismissed a March 2014 decision by a regional NLRB director in Chicago who said football players with scholarships are effectively school employees and entitled to organize. But Monday’s

decision did not directly address the question of whether the players are employees.

“Although we do not decide the issue here, we acknowledge that whether such individuals meet the board’s test for employee status is a question that does not have an obvious answer,” the board said.

The labor dispute goes to the heart of American college sports, where universities and conferences reap billions of dollars, mostly through broadcast contracts, by relying on amateurs who are not paid. In other countries, college sports are small-time club affairs, while elite youth athletes often turn pro as teens.

“Processing a petition for the scholarship players at this single institution under the circumstances presented here would not promote stability in labor relations,” the ruling said.

NLRB rules do not offer the losing side, in this case the pro-union forces, an option to appeal the board’s decision. The board did leave the door open to taking up the

college sports unionization issue again if it involves other schools or if conditions change for Northwestern football players.

Northwestern became the focal point of the labor fight in January 2014, when a handful of football players called the NCAA a “dictatorship” and announced plans to form the first U.S. labor union for college athletes. Quarterback Kain Colter appeared at a news conference for the College Athletes Players Association, flanked by leaders of the United Steelworkers union, which lent its organizing expertise and presumably helped bankroll the union drive.

Three months later, regional NLRB Director Peter Sung Ohr issued a stunning decision, saying Northwestern football players who receive scholarships fit the definition of employees under federal law and therefore should be able to unionize. A month later, football players cast secret ballots on whether to unionize. Those ballots were sealed during the appeal and will now be destroyed.

Colter said he was disappointed with the ruling but did not regard it as a “complete loss.” Rather, he said, the NLRB simply “punted the ball down the field,” preserving the possibility that the effort could be revived in the future.

University spokesman Alan K. Cabbage thanked the players for “bringing national attention to these important issues” but said collective bargaining is “not the appropriate methods to address the concerns.”

Cabbage said the university would work with the athletes to address questions about the long-term health impact of intercollegiate sports, including providing additional academic aid.

Under U.S. law, an employee is regarded as someone who, among other things, receives compensation for a service and is under the direct control of managers. In Northwestern’s case, Ohr concluded coaches are equivalent to business managers and scholarships are a form of pay.

The ruling was welcome news for the NCAA, the dominant umbrella organization for U.S.

college athletics. The NCAA has been under increasing scrutiny over its amateurism rules and has been in court fighting lawsuits from former athletes over everything from head injuries to revenue earned based on the use of their likenesses in video games.

The NCAA recently cleared the way for the five biggest conferences, including the Big Ten, to add player stipends to help athletes defray some of their expenses. Southeastern Conference schools, for example, will give some athletes \$3,000 to \$5,500 each on top of a scholarship that pays for tuition, room, board and books.

Northwestern, the Big Ten and the NCAA all argued against the unionization effort, saying that lumping college athletes into the same category as factory workers would transform amateur athletics for the worse. At one point, Northwestern administrators sent a document to players outlining potential pitfalls, noting that player strikes could lead to the spectacle of replacement players.

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