

Golf

McIlroy makes charge on back nine to win at Bay Hill

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

ORLANDO, Fla. — The loudest roars at Bay Hill were for tiger Woods. The last ones were for Rory McIlroy.

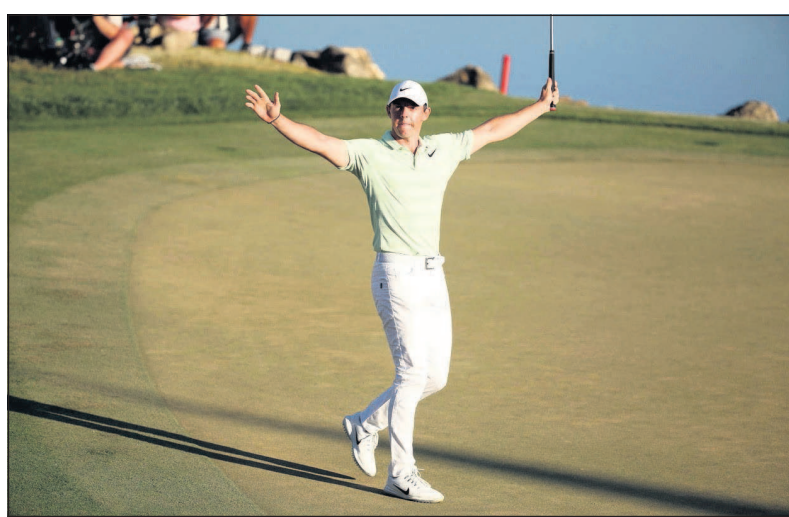
McIlroy left some indelible images of his own Sunday at the Arnold Palmer Invitational with a back-nine charge that would have made the King proud, and a final putt on the 18th green that a delirious gallery had seen for so many years from Woods.

McIlroy ran off five birdies over his last six holes and closed with an 8-under 64 for a three-shot victory. He won for the first time since the Tour Championship on Sept. 25, 2016, the day Palmer died.

"I wish I walked up that hill and got a handshake from him," McIlroy said. "But I'm so happy to put my name on that trophy."

Bay Hill was rocking all afternoon, mostly for that red shirt. Woods, who started the final round five shot behind, made three birdies in a four-hole stretch to start the back nine and was within shot of the lead as everyone behind him on the course appeared to stall.

One shot changed everything. Woods couldn't commit to a swing with his driver on the par-5 16th hole and sent it far and left — way left — over a fence and out-of-bounds, sending him to a bogey when he



Stephen M. Dowell /Orlando Sentinel via AP

Rory McIlroy celebrates after sinking a birdie putt on the 18th green to win the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill Club & Lodge in Orlando on Sunday.

couldn't afford anything less than birdie.

He finished bogey-bogey-par for a 3-under 69 and tumbled down the leaderboard into a tie for fifth.

That's about when McIlroy pulled away.

Until then, five players were separated by one shot. Before long, McIlroy was leaving everyone in his wake.

He made a 15-foot birdie putt on the 13th to take the lead over hard-luck Henrik Stenson, and then rolled one in from 20 feet on the next hole. If that wasn't enough, McIlroy chipped

in from 40 feet on the 15th hole, and then pounded a 375-yard drive on the 16th that set up a two-putt birdie.

Bryson DeChambeau made the last run at him, gouging a shot out of the rough, over the water and onto the green at No. 16 and pumping his fist when the eagle putt caught enough of the cup to drop in. That put him one shot behind.

McIlroy, however, wasn't finished. He left his putt about 25 feet above the hole on No. 18, roughly the same spot from where Woods made birdie putts to win in 2001, 2008 and 2009. Woods slammed his cap to the

ground in 2008, not realizing he had done that.

McIlroy buried the putt, raised both arms in the air and turned to slam his fist as the grandstands erupted with cheers.

"I've seen Tiger make that enough times to know what it does," McIlroy said. "So I just wanted to try and emulate that. Didn't quite give it the hat toss — I was thinking about doing it. But just to be able to create my own little bit of history on the 18th green here is pretty special."

That gave him a two-shot lead, and he was a winner for the 22nd time worldwide when DeChambeau failed to hole out from the fairway for eagle. DeChambeau made bogey from the bunker on the 18th for a 68 and finished alone in second.

Justin Rose lingered all day but was never a threat over the final hour, instead watching McIlroy put on a stunning charge.

"Rory played incredible golf and it was fun — great to see world class players do that," Rose said after a 67. "It's not great to see him make putts because he was making them against me. But when he is making putts, he's incredibly hard to beat. So it was fun to watch him play."

Stenson lost a third chance in four years to win the Arnold Palmer Invitational. He led by as many as two shots on the front nine before the putts stopped falling. Two shots behind playing the 16th, Stenson

three-putted for par and bogeyed the final hole for a 71. He finished fourth.

Woods tied for fifth with Ryan Moore (71), and now heads to the Masters with plenty of momentum — just not a victory.

He finished one shot behind last week at Innisbrook. He was one-shot behind with three holes to play at Bay Hill, though it would have needed more than just a few birdies the way McIlroy played.

Even so, Woods finished among the top 12 in all three events in the Florida Swing. His next stop is the Masters, where he will be a favorite to win his fifth green jacket. And to think that just over six months ago, Woods hadn't been cleared by his doctors to hit balls after fusion surgery on his lower back, his fourth back surgery dating to the spring of 2014.

"If you would have asked me at the beginning of the year that I would have had a chance to win two golf tournaments, I would have taken that in a heartbeat," he said.

McIlroy was relieved for other reasons. He went through an injury-plagued 2017 and failed to win anywhere in the world. He was coming off a missed cut a week ago in the Valspar Championship. And now he's a winner again, with the Masters looming. McIlroy needs only a green jacket to complete the career Grand Slam.

NCAA Men's Tournament

Sweet 16 has unexpected field after many favorites ousted

By AARON BEARD
AP Basketball Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — After little went according to plan in the opening weekend of the NCAA Tournament, the bracket has a wildly different look for the Sweet 16 than many expected.

Out: Two 1-seeds (Virginia and Xavier) and a pair of 2-seeds (North Carolina and Cincinnati).

In: Two No. 11 seeds (Syracuse and Loyola-Chicago).

There are only seven of the top 16 seeds still alive for the regional rounds.

The Cavaliers' historic loss to 16-seed UMBC took out the top overall seed and thrust Villanova into the role of favorite, while preseason No. 1 Duke was dominant in its two tournament wins.

Despite all the bracket turmoil, the power conferences managed to get 12 teams into the Sweet 16, with four coming from both the Atlantic Coast Conference and the Big 12.

Here's a look at the updated Final Four paths for the top remaining seeds:

EAST

This is the region that came closest to following the script. Four of the top five seeds

survived: No. 1 Villanova, No. 2 Purdue, No. 3 Texas Tech and No. 5 West Virginia. And the Wildcats (32-4) will have the shortest travel (about 315 miles) by heading to Boston as they pursue a second national title in three seasons.

"My good vibes are coming from how this team's playing, how unselfishly they play," Villanova coach Jay Wright said after Saturday's win against Alabama.

"Honestly, we don't care where we play. Boston is a great town, old Big East town like Pittsburgh. We stir up old Big East feelings. We like that."

Villanova meets the Mountaineers (26-10) in one semifinal Friday, while the Boilermakers (30-6) face the Red Raiders (26-9) in the other.

One storyline to watch: the status of 7-foot-2 Purdue center Isaac Haas, who broke his elbow in the first-round win against Cal State Fullerton. Haas warmed up before Sunday's win against Butler but an official said shortly before tipoff that the big man's brace hadn't been approved for competition.

MIDWEST

Consider this one an ACC Invitational.



AP Photo/Mark Humphrey

Nevada guard Hallice Cooke (13) and forward Elijah Foster (12) celebrate at the end of the second half of a second-round game against Cincinnati, in the NCAA college basketball tournament in Nashville, Tenn. on Sunday. Nevada defeated Cincinnati 75-73.

Three of the four teams to advance to Omaha, Nebraska, are from the ACC: No. 2 Duke, No. 5 Clemson and No. 11 Syracuse. They'll join top-seeded Kansas, with regional semifinals set for Friday.

The Jayhawks (29-7) are trying to return to the Final Four for the first time since 2012 after two straight regional-final losses. They'll face the Tigers (25-9), who are in their first NCAA Tournament since 2011 and their first Sweet 16 since 1997.

The Blue Devils (28-7) meet the Orange (23-13), who took out third-seeded Michigan State on Sunday.

Duke and Syracuse met in Cameron Indoor Stadium on Feb. 24, with the Blue Devils holding the Orange to 32 percent shooting in a 60-44 win. The rematch will mark the second NCAA Tournament matchup between Hall of Famers Mike Krzyzewski and Jim Boeheim, with Coach K's Blue Devils winning one in the Sweet 16 in 1998.

WEST

SCOREBOARD

Local slate

PREP BASEBALL			
Tuesday	DeSales (WA) at Mac-Hi, 4 p.m.	La Grande at Pendleton, 4 p.m.	Weston-McEwen at Dufur, 4 p.m.
Wednesday	Heppner at Pilot Rock, 4 p.m.		
Thursday	Stanfield at White Salmon (WA), 4 p.m.		
Friday	Umatilla vs. Bonanza (at John Day), 12 p.m.		
Saturday	Union at Heppner (DH), 1 p.m.		
Sunday	Lakeridge at Hermiston, 3 p.m.		
Monday	Irrigon at Walla Walla (WA), 3 p.m.		
Tuesday	Riverside at Tri Cities Prep (WA), 3 p.m.		
Wednesday	Stanfield at White Salmon (WA), 4 p.m.		
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