

Woodland's key 3 shots get him a U.S. Open win at Pebble Beach

By EDDIE PELLIS
AP National Writer

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. — Very soon, Gary Woodland will be a father of three, and odds are he'll answer the same way about the kids as he will about the three shots that cemented him as a U.S. Open champion.

Which is his favorite? They're all perfect in their own, special way.

Woodland's Father's Day at Pebble Beach included a flushed 3-wood that set up birdie to give him a two-shot cushion, a wedge clipped off the 17th green that helped him preserve it, then a 30-foot birdie putt on No. 18 that ended the tournament with a flourish — and put him in the record book, to boot.

"My whole life, I've been able to compete and win at everything I've done," he said. "It's taken a while, but it's trending in the right direction."

Straight past Tiger Woods in the record book, in fact.

Woodland, whose wife, Gabby, is expecting twins in a couple of months to join their soon-to-be-2-year-old son, Jaxson, got to 13-under-par 271 with that closing birdie, beating by one the record Woods set for a U.S. Open at Pebble Beach during his 15-shot romp to victory in 2000.

Pebble Beach played tougher that year.

But to say Woodland took the easy way to his first major title would be missing the point.

He spent the entire day holding off Brooks Koepka, who himself was shoot-

ing for history — trying to become the first player since 1905 to complete a U.S. Open three-peat.

Koepka made clear early that he was up for the challenge. He opened with four birdies over the first five holes to pull within a shot of Woodland, who was playing one hole behind.

"I thought, 'Yeah, we've got a ballgame now,'" Koepka said.

They did, except it wasn't a back-and-forth ballgame. Woodland never surrendered the lead.

It was at one shot when Woodland drove to the middle of the fairway on the par-5 14th, faced with the choice between laying up, the way most players have all week, or going for it and hoping the shot would hold on the severely sloping putting surface.

"We sat there and thought about it for a while and said, 'Let's go, we're out here to win,'" Woodland said.

The ball just cleared the bunker fronting the green, took two hops and rolled toward the collar left of the pin. A chip and a putt later, Woodland had a birdie and a two-shot lead.

"The 3-wood on 14 was what gave me the confidence to even execute the shot on 17," he said.

That shot, made while still clinging to the two-shot lead, added to Tom Watson's chip-in from the sand in 1982 and Jack Nicklaus' 1-iron off the flag 10 years before that on the growing list of history-making moments on that storied 17th green.

With his ball on the front



AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster

Gary Woodland poses with the trophy after winning the U.S. Open Championship golf tournament on Sunday in Pebble Beach, Calif.

right edge of the putting surface, but with a small hill blocking his path to the hole, Woodland took out his wedge and made pure contact, sending the ball over the hump then back onto the green, where it checked up and ran out to tap-in range for par.

"When I started to transition into golf, the short game was what was really bad, to be honest," Woodland said. "And so my whole deal was, I had to hit chips off putting greens all the time, and there were some times where superintendents weren't a huge fan of me."

He's not bad with the putter on those greens, either.

After Koepka's birdie putt on No. 18 slid just past to close his tournament at 10 under, Woodland carried a two-shot lead onto the 18th green and needed to get down in only three from 30 feet to secure the trophy.

He got down in one instead, raised his hands to the heavens, then finished with a huge fist pump.

Not bad for a guy who thought basketball would be his best sport but gave it up after a year of playing in college so he could get serious about golf.

"The question about if

I ever dreamed of making the putt on the last hole of a U.S. Open when I was a kid, no, I didn't," Woodland said. "But I hit a lot of game-winning shots on the basketball court when I was a kid."

Koepka said he wasn't upset about this weekend.

He became the fourth player — joining Lee Trevino, Lee Janzen and Rory McIlroy — to break 70 in all four rounds of the U.S. Open, but the first to not walk away with the trophy. The main reason: Minutes after Koepka finished, Woodland became the fifth player to break 70 in all four rounds.

When it was over, Woodland shared a long hug with his father, Dan, who coached him hard in every sport he played except for golf when he was growing up — made him work for his wins, made him earn everything he got.

Father's Day. A U.S. Open title. What's not to love?

"I wouldn't be where I am today without my dad and the way he treated me and the way he was hard on me," Woodland said. "And that's something that I look forward to doing with my son."

Henderson wins Meijer LPGA Classic

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Brooke Henderson won the Meijer LPGA Classic to break the Canadian record for four victories with nine.

The 21-year-old Henderson led wire-to-wire for her second victory in three years at Blytheheld Country Club, closing with a 2-under 70 in chilly conditions to hold off Lexi Thompson, Nasa Hataoka, Su Oh and Brittany Altomare by a stroke Sunday.

Henderson broke a tie with Sandra Post for the Canadian record on the LPGA Tour and also moved ahead of George Knudson and Mike Weir for the overall country mark.

Also the Lotte Championship winner in April in Hawaii, Henderson matched the tournament record of 21 under that she set in 2017 (when the course played to a par of 71) and also was tied last year by So Yeon Ryu. Henderson opened with consecutive 64s, playing 30 holes Friday after rain delayed the start Thursday, and had a 69 on Saturday to take a two-stroke lead into the final round.

Thompson followed her course-record 62 in the third round with a 68, closing with an eagle for the second straight day. The 2015 winner at Blytheheld, she was coming off a victory last week in New Jersey.

Hataoka shot 65, also making an eagle on the par-5 18th. Oh had a 66, and Altomare shot 68.

The KPMG Women's PGA Championship, the third major championship of the year, is next week at Hazeltine in Minnesota.

Web.com Tour

China's Xinjun Zhang birdied the third hole of a playoff with Dylan Wu in the Lincoln Land Championship for his second Web.com Tour victory of the season.

Zhang closed with a 6-under 65 to match Wu at

15 under at Panther Creek in Springfield, Illinois.

The 32-year-old Zhang had already wrapped up a PGA Tour card for next season. He regained the lead in the season standings, with the final top 25 earning PGA Tour cards.

Wu finished with a 63 in his second career Web.com Tour start.

Zhang also won the Dormie Network Classic in April in San Antonio.

Other tours

Grayson Sigg shot the second 59 in Mackenzie Tour-PGA Tour Canada history to finish third in the GolfBC Championship. The 24-year-old former University of Georgia player birdied the final three holes and six of the last seven at Gallagher's Canyon in Kelowna, British Columbia. Jake Knapp won for the second time in three starts this year, closing with an 8-under 63 for a one-stroke victory over Jonathan Garrick (64). Sigg finished three strokes back at 17 under. Brady Schnell had the only other 59 on the Mackenzie Tour in the 2014 ATB Financial Classic. Jason Bohn shot a 58 in 2001 on what was then the Canadian Tour. ... Jillian Hollis won The Forsyth Classic in Decatur, Illinois, for her second Symetra Tour victory of the year. She closed with a 2-under 70 for a two-stroke victory over Mind Muangkhumasakul. ... Da Yeon Lee shot a 2-under 70 for a two-stroke victory in the Korean LPGA's Korea Women's Open. Lee finished at 4-under 284. So Young Lee was second after a 77. ... Ai Suzuki won the Japan LPGA's Suntory Ladies Open, closing with a 2-under 70 for a one-stroke victory over Mamiko Hika. ... France's Cyril Bouniol won the Suzhou Open by a stroke to become the first European winner in PGA Tour China history.

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