

Sports

PGA GOLF



Curtis Compton/Atlanta Journal-Constitution-TNS

Rory McIlroy tees off on the 14th hole with Brooks Koepka looking on during the final round of the Tour Championship on Sunday.

McIlroy rolls to FedEx Cup, wins record \$15 million

By Doug Ferguson
AP Golf Writer

ATLANTA — Rory McIlroy marched to the 18th green Sunday at East Lake with victory in hand and \$15 million in the bank.

Even better was what he saw — and heard — behind him.

The scene was all too familiar. The gallery ducked under the ropes and rushed to encircle the green to watch the finish of a class performance in the Tour Championship. Before long, the chants began to ring out: “Rory! Rory! Rory!”

This time, McIlroy had the stage to himself.

A mere bystander last year amid the chaotic celebration of Tiger Woods’ return to victory, McIlroy soaked up the perfect ending to a solid year when he surged past Brooks Koepka, held off Xander Schauffele and captured the FedEx Cup and the richest payoff in golf.

Turning to Harry Diamond, his caddie and best friend, McIlroy told him, “This walk is a little more pleasant than last year.”

He closed with a 4-under 66 to finish four shots ahead of Schauffele, joining Woods as the only players to win the FedEx Cup twice.

“Any time you can do something that only Tiger has done, you’re doing something right,” McIlroy said.

There was so much more than \$15 million — \$14 million in cash, \$1 million deferred — to this victory.

Regardless of the new format that gave some players a head start to par depending

on their FedEx Cup ranking — McIlroy began five shots behind before the tournament started — he wanted to post the lowest score of anyone in the 30-man field.

He shot 13-under 267, the best by three shots.

And when he was paired with Koepka in the final group Sunday, it was a chance for atonement. A month ago, McIlroy laid an egg in the final group at a World Golf Championship, just like he did with Woods the year before at East Lake.

“I thought a lot about that,” McIlroy said. “I thought about the final group with Tiger last year, the final group with Brooks in Memphis a few weeks ago, and I really wanted to go out there and play well and really take it to him, and I did that.”

The final round turned on the seventh hole with a three-shot swing — McIlroy made a 25-foot birdie, while Koepka lost his tee shot in the trees and made double bogey. There were consecutive two-shot swings on the back nine, and then it was a matter of holding off Schauffele.

McIlroy was four shots ahead until back-to-back bogeys, and he was on the verge of watching his lead shrink to one when he holed an 8-foot par putt on the 16th. Schauffele had to settle for pars, and McIlroy finished with a flourish.

He was the only player to break par all four days.

Schauffele closed with a 70 to finish alone in second, which paid out \$5 million.

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NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Luck shocks NFL by retiring

By Michael Marot
AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Andrew Luck watched one last game from the sideline Saturday.

Then he said goodbye to the NFL. The Indianapolis Colts quarterback heard boos as he walked away from the field, then walked to the podium and made the surprise decision official: The off-injured star is retiring at age 29.

“I’m in pain, I’m still in pain. It’s been four years of this pain, rehab cycle,” Luck said. “It’s a myriad of issues — calf strain, posterior ankle impingement, high ankle sprain. Part of my journey going forward will be figuring out how to feel better.”

Luck wasn’t planning to make the announcement following Saturday’s 27-17 loss to the Chicago Bears. But when ESPN first reported the news during the fourth quarter, Luck changed the plan for a Sunday afternoon announcement.

Instead, he held a 25-minute impromptu news conference.

At times he sounded wistful. At others, his voice cracked with emotion.

One thing was clear: The endless barrage of injuries stripped away his joy for the game and prompted him to walk away so he could enjoy the life he wants.

“There’s no doubt when you hear him talk about the cycle of pain and injury and rehab, you can hear that,” coach Frank Reich said. “There’s a saying in football that everyone knows and everybody lives by, it’s next man up and even though this situation is unique, no one is exempt.”

That task now falls to Jacoby Brissett, a fourth-year player whom the Colts acquired in a cutdown weekend trade two years ago who has been prac-



Bob Self / FloridaTimes-Union-TNS file photo

Indianapolis Colts quarterback Andrew Luck (12) tries to elude Jacksonville Jaguars defensive end Yannick Ngakoue (91) during a game on Dec. 2, 2018.

ting with the starters since April.

He went 4-11 as a starter in the 2017 season after taking over for opening day starter Scott Tolzien.

But the Colts had already been preparing for the possibility Luck might not be ready for the Sept. 8 season opener against the Los Angeles Chargers. Luck was diagnosed with a strained left calf in March and team officials kept him out of all of the team’s offseason workouts.

He returned to limited action when training camp opened in late July. After three practices, though, the lingering pain near his ankle forced him back into rehab. He hadn’t practiced with the team since, though he did throw passes in pregame warmups before last week’s preseason game.

“I had a thought that it might be

my last time throwing at Lucas Oil as a current member of the Colts team,” Luck said. “And I wanted to make sure I could go out and enjoy it.”

It wasn’t just the leg, though.

He played with shoulder pain for most of 2015 and 2016, and his 2015 season ended when he suffered a lacerated kidney. He missed all of 2017 following shoulder surgery and then the happy-go-lucky former Stanford star dealt with more pain and more endless months of rehab.

The Colts bet big on Luck in 2012.

They cut an injured Peyton Manning to take Luck with the top overall pick, fully believing he would be their franchise quarterback for the next 10 to 15 years.

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