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Michael Kim wins his first PGA event in record-breaking style

By Mike Street

Special to The Asian Reporter

The current Professional Golf Association (PGA) season has had its share of firsts, as ten different golfers have already won their first tournament. The tenth golfer achieved that distinction last month, when Korean-American Michael Kim won the 2018 John Deere Classic (JDC). But Kim didn't just win his first tournament — he set two tournament records along the way.

If you've never heard of Michael Kim, you can be forgiven, since the just-turned-25-year-old (he celebrated his birthday during the JDC) has had a quiet PGA career to this point. He qualified for the PGA tour in 2016, after ranking 13th on the money list on the 2015 Web.com tour.

Up until the 2018 JDC, Kim's best finish on the PGA tour had been a tie for third at last season's Safeway Open. He's usually distinguished himself in other tournaments merely by making the cut, which he'd done in 41 of 57 tournaments before this season.

Though he's had a low profile in the PGA, Kim had a fine amateur career before turning pro in 2013. Born in Seoul, South Korea, Kim moved to California with his family when he was seven. A year later, his father introduced Michael and his older brother Richard to golf, and Michael grew up to become a high-school standout at Torrey Pines High.

At Torrey Pines, Kim and his golf team won the Southern California championship for his first three years before winning the state championship his senior year. Kim graduated from Torrey Pines in 2011, the same year that a remarkable group of seniors from across the country also graduated from high school, including Jordan Spieth, Justin Thomas, Daniel Berger, Xander Schauffele, and four other PGA tour members.



Spieth, Thomas, Berger, and Schauffele have all collected at least one PGA win and have much better name recognition, but Kim was as good — or better — than any of them in college. Michael Kim attended the University of California, Berkeley, earning the Jack Nicklaus Award and Fred Haskins Award, which go to the top college golfer of the year, in 2013. That same year, he played in the U.S. Open at Merrion, finishing in a tie for 17th place as the top amateur golfer.

After a season like that, it's no wonder Kim chose to go pro, forgoing his final two years at Berkeley. But it's a move that seemed foolish until his win at the JDC. Before the JDC, Kim made the cut in just eight of the 22 PGA tournaments he'd played in this season. His best finish had been a tie for 15th at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans, one of just three top-25 finishes among those eight tournaments where he made the cut.

At the 2018 JDC, Steve Wheatcroft led after the first round but Michael Kim was just a stroke behind him, having shot a career-low 63. A weather delay prevented

the field from finishing on Friday, but once they did early Saturday morning, Kim notched a 64 to vault into a three-shot lead.

When he shot another 64 on Saturday — his birthday — Kim held a five-shot lead over Bronson Borogon. Kim birdied five of his final six holes, totalling 25 birdies through the first three rounds. The day was all the more remarkable because Kim finished his previous round before shooting 18 more holes though two more weather delays. By the time he finished, he'd spent 14 hours at the course.

But on Sunday, there was no evidence of fatigue in Kim's game. He birdied the first three holes, adding two more later on a day when he did not register a bogey. That's not surprising, since he'd only bogeyed one hole in each of the previous three rounds.

At the end of the day, Kim set a tournament record by shooting 27 under par during the four-day span. He finished eight shots ahead of his nearest competitor, a margin of victory that was not only a tournament record, it tied the largest winning margin this season in the PGA.

RECORD-BREAKING WIN. The current Professional Golf Association season has had its share of firsts, as ten different golfers have already won their first tournament. The tenth golfer achieved that distinction last month, when Korean-American Michael Kim won the 2018 John Deere Classic. But Kim didn't just win his first tournament — he set two tournament records along the way. (AP Photo/Charlie Neibergall)

Best of all, his mother, father, and brother were all waiting for him on the 18th green to celebrate his first PGA win. "I teared up a little bit on the green when I saw them," Kim confessed later. It was a stroke of luck that his brother Richard could attend; he now lives in Seoul, South Korea, and happened to be in San Diego visiting their parents during the tournament.

After years of struggling, the turning point for Michael might have been a change in coaches. Kim was coached for eight years by James Oh, but recently made the difficult decision to take instruction from John Tillery, the director of instruction at Cuscowilla Golf Club in Eatonton, Georgia. Tillery made some adjustments to Kim's approach to driving, and the results have obviously paid off.

Others at the tournament weren't surprised by Kim's victory, either. Zach Johnson, who won the JDC in 2012 and has been one of Kim's mentors, said of Kim, "He's had some struggles and shouldn't, because he's really, really, really, really, really good. I've played him in practice rounds. What you're seeing is just everything culminating for the better."

Now that the word is out about how good Kim is, even more eyes will be on him. This breakout victory qualifies him for the British Open and the Open Championship, and gives him a two-year tournament exemption, ensuring we will see much more of this young Asian-American golfer in the seasons to come. And it sounds like he can definitely handle the pressure.

World gazes at total lunar eclipse, longest of this century

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what they saw above. Then clouds rolled in.

"Dem yelebesech chereka," some murmured — Amharic for "blood moon."

"The reason that the moon turns red is because atmospheric scattering causes red light to pass through the atmosphere and the composition of the atmosphere can change if volcanic eruptions or forest fires occur," said Tom Kerss, an astronomer with the Royal Observatory Greenwich.

"And the density of dust increasing in the atmosphere can cause the moon to appear a particularly deep red, and indeed it has the same effect on our sunsets and sunrises."

In a special treat last month, Mars was also at its closest approach to Earth since 2003, making it appear bigger and brighter.

Excited skywatchers on social media shared photos of the bright planet just to the right of the moon.

North America missed out on the lunar eclipse, but can look forward to the next one on January 21, 2019, according to NASA.

Associated Press writers Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Abdi Guled in Mogadishu, Somalia, and Sam Mednick in Juba, South Sudan contributed to this report.

Tokyo company debuts Mobile Mosque ahead of 2020 Olympics

By Nicola Shannon

The Associated Press

TOKYO — A large white and blue truck pulls up outside a stadium in central Japan and slowly expands into a place of worship.

Welcome to the Mobile Mosque.

As Japan prepares to host visitors from around the world for the 2020 Summer Olympics, a Tokyo sports and cultural events company has created a mosque on wheels that its head hopes will make Muslim visitors feel at home.

Yasuharu Inoue, the CEO of Yasu Project, said the possibility that there might not be enough mosques for Muslim visitors in 2020 is alarming for a country that considers itself part of the international community. His Mobile Mosques could travel to different Olympic venues as needed.

"As an open and hospitable country, we want to share the idea of *omotenashi* (Japanese hospitality) with Muslim people," he said in a recent interview.

The first Mobile Mosque was unveiled outside Toyota Stadium, a J-League soccer venue in Toyota city, which is also the headquarters of the car company with the same name.

The back of the modified 25-ton truck flipped up to reveal an entrance and then the side slid out, doubling the width of the truck. The 515-square-foot room can accommodate 50 people.

Muslim guests prayed inside the mosque, which includes outdoor taps and a washing area for pre-worship cleansing.

Indonesian students who were victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami also



MOBILE MOSQUE. A staff member operates the Mobile Mosque during an unveiling event for the mosque on wheels that has a capacity of up to 50 people, at Toyota Stadium in Toyota, western Japan. As Japan prepares to host visitors from around the world for the Summer Olympics in 2020, a Tokyo sports and cultural events company has created a mosque on wheels that its head hopes will make Muslim visitors feel at home. (Mobile Mosque Executive Committee via AP)

participated in the debut ceremony.

"The Mobile Mosque is very important to Muslim people such as Japanese people or tourists, Muslim tourists who visit Japan," said 14-year-old Nur Azizah. "I want to show my friends."

An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 Muslims live in Japan.

Tatsuya Sakaguchi, a Japanese guest, expressed hope that the Mobile Mosque would help open people's minds worldwide.

"Looking in from the outside at the people in the mosque, they looked very happy," said Sakaguchi, the representa-

tive director of an Osaka retail company.

Inoue said the inspiration for the project came to him on a trip to Qatar four years ago.

Initially, the project organizers plan to target international sporting events both in Japan and overseas. Inoue said he hopes the project will do more than fill a gap in religious infrastructure.

"Going forward, I would be so happy if people from Indonesia, Malaysia, Africa, the Middle East, and, for example, refugees who are coming from Syria are able to use the mosque as a tool to promote world peace," he said.

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