

Recap: The Memorial

Written by {ga=mitch}

Sunday, June 03 2007 7:00 PM -

South Korean K.J. Choi overcame the largest deficit of any winner this year on the PGA Tour, rallying from five strokes down at the start of the final round to win The Memorial by one stroke over Ryan Moore. It was Choi's fifth victory on the Tour, and quite possibly his most satisfactory ... as Choi won the event hosted by his idol Jack Nicklaus. Mitch recaps the event.



South Korean K.J. Choi overcame the largest deficit of any winner this year on the PGA Tour, rallying from five strokes down at the start of the final round to win The Memorial by one stroke over Ryan Moore. Moore also pulled an exceptional comeback, shooting birdies on five consecutive holes on the back nine to leapfrog over the entire final grouping of Sean O'Hair, Adam Scott, and third round leader Rod Pampling.

It was Choi's fifth victory on the Tour, and quite possibly his most satisfactory. As a prep school student, Choi was given a copy (translated) of Jack Nicklaus' book "Golf My Way", which became instrumental in the development of the young golfer. To win Jack's tournament was especially satisfying for the 37 year old. "I just feel very honored and very happy to be living in the same age, same period of time as Jack is living, and to win his tournament is so meaningful to me. I can only think this was meant to be."

For most of the tournament, it appeared that an Australian was meant to win the tournament. Adam Scott blistered a 62 in the second round to grab the lead going into Saturday, but Scott struggled during the rain delayed third round with a 72, and fellow Aussie Pampling took the lead going into the final day with countrymen Aaron Baddeley and Geoff Ogilvy close behind.

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Weather once again played a part, as it had in 19 of the last 31 tournaments. The starting times were moved up, players went off in threesomes, and some of the field started off the back nine to ensure a Sunday finish. Consequently, if you were watching it on TV, you were seeing a tape delay of earlier events. Additionally, the players were able to employ lift-clean-and-place for balls hit in the fairway due to the damp conditions (or, as Tiger Woods likes to say, "lift, clean, and cheat").

Speaking of Tiger, the anticipated duel between him and Phil Mickelson never came close to fruition. Phil withdrew on the 12th tee in the first round due to a wrist injury, a result of numerous practice shots out of the gnarly rough at Oakmont Country Club, the site of the U.S. Open. Tiger had no such excuse, just poor execution in his putting, which led to him spending most of the tournament towards the back of the pack. He did shoot the last two rounds in seven under, taking some sting out of the weekend.

Scott, Pampling, and O'Hair will take no solace out of their final day, however. None of them were able to mount a charge on Sunday, and on a day when 18 rounds below 70 were recorded, none of them were from the three leaders. The back nine was particularly brutal. While Moore was scorching the final nine in 31 to rocket up the leaderboard, Pampling and Scott were still in a position to tie Choi, who had already posted his final total of 271, thanks particularly to three straight par saves after poor approach shots on the final three holes. An eagle by Pampling on the par five 15th, and a birdie by Scott on the par 3 16th left both men one shot off the lead with two holes remaining. But both responded with bogeys on the tough par four 17

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, and then when neither could hole out from over 190 yards for an eagle on the 18

th
, Choi's victory was assured.

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Choi may soon be seeing his idol Nicklaus again, as this win may have cemented his place on the President's Cup team that will compete against the Americans, under the captainship of golf's most legendary hero.