

SPIETH SET FOR TRIPLE CROWN



ST. ANDREWS: United States' Jordan Spieth birdies the 16th hole during the final round at the British Open Golf Championship.—AP

ST ANDREWS: Only the second Monday finish in Open history was underway at St Andrews with Jordan Spieth poised to become just the second man to win the year's first three majors, while an Irish amateur was seeking to pull off one of the greatest upsets ever.

Early indications were that it could be another day of low-scoring at the Old Course with several of the early starters getting to five- or six-under.

Phil Mickelson, Luke Donald and Brendon Todd all made charges up the leaderboards, but they knew that ultimately their efforts would be in vain. Rain was forecast to move into the area by mid-afternoon, as the leaders set off but it was not expected to be heavy enough to bother them.

The 21-year-old Texan Spieth has taken the golfing world by storm this year, winning the Masters in April and the US Open last month, and he is now on the cusp of making it three straight majors. Only Ben Hogan, 62 years ago, has managed to pull off the "Triple Crown" and even Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods came up short when both were in their prime.

It is a massive challenge and it is one that Spieth underlined on Sunday, his third round of 66 leaving him just one shot behind the leading trio. Spieth said that he is fully aware of what is at stake and he will settle for nothing less than winning. "At this point it's free rolling. I'm going to play to win, and I'm not playing for a place. I don't want to place third tomorrow. I want to win," he said.

"And so I'm going to play my game, obviously with patience, to stay in the mix, if it's not all there at the beginning, and if it is, I'm going to continue to play that way to try and get out in front. I'm going to have to play aggressive golf."

The only players in front of him are Louis Oosthuizen, the 32-year-old South African who won at St Andrews the last time the Open was held there in 2010, Australian shot-maker Jason Day, still seeking his first win in a major, and the surprise package, Irish amateur Paul Dunne.

The 22-year-old from the coastal town of Greystones, south of Dublin, had been expected to fall away from the leaderboard as many non-pros have done before him over the years.

But instead, he held firm, leading on his own at one stage before settling in for a joint share of the lead alongside Oosthuizen and Day.

Admitting to some sense of disbelief at being in such an elevated position, Dunne was nonetheless disarmingly candid about his achievement.

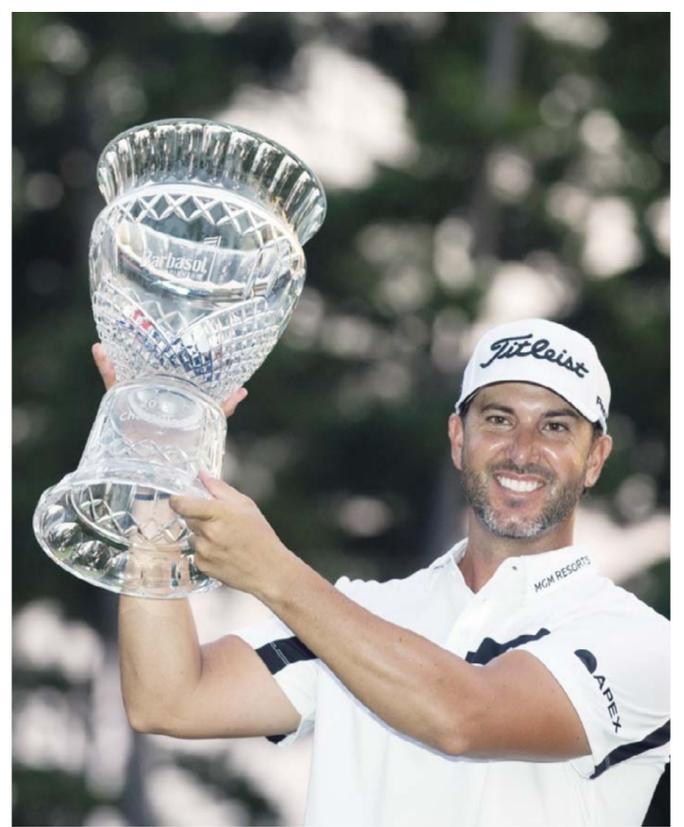
"It's surreal I'm leading The Open, but I can easily believe that I shot the three scores that I shot," he said. "If we were playing an amateur event here, I wouldn't be too surprised by the scores I shot."

"It's just lucky that it happens to be in the biggest event in the world. Hopefully I can do it again tomorrow, but whether I do or not, you know, I'll survive either way."

The last amateur to win the Open title was the legendary Bobby Jones in 1930 when amateur players were common. These days the target is usually just to make the cut.

A shot further back from Spieth is two-time former winner Padraig Harrington of Ireland, who had Sunday's second best round of 65. Nine players were grouped on nine-under, just three shots off the lead, including Sergio Garcia, Justin Rose, Retief Goosen and Adam Scott.

The last and only previous time The Open finished on a Monday in 1988 produced a thriller with Seve Ballesteros edging Nick Price and Nick Faldo. This year looks likely to produce a climax that is every bit as compelling.—AFP



OPELIKA: Scott Piercy holds up the trophy after winning the Barbasol Championship golf tournament.—AP

PIERCY BREEZES TO VICTORY

AUBURN: Scott Piercy showed why he is the highest-ranked player in the field Sunday, firing a six-under 65 to capture the Barbasol Championship for his third career win on the USPGA Tour.

The 36-year-old American finished the week at 19-under 265 to breeze to a three-stroke victory over runner-up Will Wilcox, who had a 67. "I struck it awesome. I am really excited," Piercy said. Piercy, who missed five months last season after undergoing elbow surgery, had won previously at the 2011 Reno-Tahoe Open and the 2012 Canadian Open which begins next Thursday.

Amateur Robby Shelton tied for fourth with Ricky Barnes and South Korea's Kim Whee at 270. Shelton shot a 67, Kim posted a 69 and Barnes, who was the co-leader after the third round with Piercy, shot a 70. Andrew Loupe (65), Boo Weekley (67), Austin Cooke (67) and Australia's Mark Hensby (70) shared sixth place at 271. Six players tied for 10th at 272.

There were 15 players within four shots of the leaders heading into the final round but for the first time in the last four US Tour tournaments there was no playoff to determine the winner Sunday.

Piercy is ranked 42nd in the FedEx Cup

playoffs heading into the Barbasol. His best previous finish this season was a second at the Sony Open in Hawaii. He also has two top 10 finishes at the Shriners Hospitals Open and the Houston Open.

Piercy wasted no time distancing himself from playing partner Barnes as he drained birdies on his first two holes en route to five birdies on the front nine. He sank three birdies in a four hole stretch on the back beginning at the par-five 13th.

The Las Vegas native really showed his swagger on the par-fives Sunday as he birdied all three. Piercy said he enjoyed one of his best hitting days since he turned pro in 2001.

"I hit 17 greens and almost all the par-fives in two shots. It is pretty hard to lose when you do that," he said. Wilcox was unable to catch Piercy despite sinking birdies on numbers 17 and 18. He capped his round in dramatic style by pouring in a 58-foot putt on the 72nd hole.

That touched off a fist-pumping celebration as his four-under 67 allowed him to retain his US Tour card for next season. "The fact I kept my card in 13 starts is awesome," said the 29-year-old American. "That is something I can hang my hat on."—AFP

CHOI CAPTURES LPGA TITLE

SYLVANIA: Chella Choi parred the first playoff hole to defeat fellow South Korean Jang Ha-Na Sunday for her first US LPGA Tour title at the Marathon Classic and likely send her father into retirement.

Choi forced the playoff with overnight leader Jang with a five-under par 66 that included five birdies without a bogey. "The first time win is hard, but the second and third is easier. Hopefully this is a turning point for me," said Choi. Choi's father has caddied for her since she joined the LPGA Tour seven years ago. He said he wouldn't retire until she won, and now she has. "I wanted to work with my father for my first win. So my father worked with me until now," she said. Choi finished 72 holes on 14-under 270, tied with Jang-a rookie also in search of a first LPGA title whose three-under 68 was lapped by a double-bogey six at the par-four 11th.

Jang fought back gamely with three birdies after the setback, but the 23-year-old ultimately couldn't pull off a wire-to-wire win at Highland Meadows Golf Club.

Her approach at the first playoff hole, the par-five-18th, found the rough behind the green leading to a bogey, leaving Choi to claim the trophy with a par.

Defending champion and world number two Lydia Ko birdied four of her first eight holes and led by as many as two strokes midway through the round before falling back with a bogey at 13. A birdie at 17 moved the 18-year-old New Zealand star into a tie at the top on 13-under, but both Jang and Choi birdied 17 to get to 14-under and Ko was unable to birdie the last to get into the playoff.

Ko finished with a 67 for 271, equal third with China's Feng Shanshan who also carded a 67.

South Koreans Kim Hyo-Joo and Baek Kyu-Jung and American Brittany Lang shared fifth place on 11-under 273. World number one Park In-Bee moved within two strokes of the lead with birdies at the seventh and eighth, but didn't find another birdie in a round capped by a bogey at 18.

Park settled for a one-under 70 for 274, where she was joined by Spain's Azahara Munoz and American Angela Stanford. Choi's victory after 28 prior top-10 finishes was foreshadowed by some excellent golf at last week's US Women's Open. Choi fired the lowest third-round score in US Women's Open history, a six-under 64 in which her 29 on the front nine at Lancaster Country Club was a nine-hole record for a US Women's Open.—AFP



DOUSARY CLINCHES PARALYMPICS SPOT

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi congratulated the chairman and board members of Kuwait Handicapped Shooting Club on the qualification of Shooter Atef Al-Dousary to the Paralympics. He also appreciated the efforts of the supporting team.

Al-Otaibi expressed his satisfaction at the improvement of the handicapped shooters level, as he also lauded the support of Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, for constructing a range for 10m pistol and rifle at the handicaps sports club.

Eng Al-Otaibi said the champion should hold a camp at the shooting club to prepare for the Paralympics, and there will be cooperation and coordination with the officials at the handicapped club to facilitate all the technical needs shooter Adel Al-Dousary needs.

Meanwhile, shooter Atef Al-Dousary said his qualification to the paralympics to be held in Rio de Janeiro next year, is a major achievement for him and the handicapped

sports in Kuwait. Al-Dousary who was speaking upon his return from Croatia, where he took second place in the special needs shooting World Cup tournament, said the achievement was due to the major support from the club under the chairmanship of Shafi Al-Hajri. He hoped to continue his good achievements at the local tournaments so that he can be ready for Brazil.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Handicapped Sports Club Nasser Al-Ajmi lauded the support of Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah of the shooter and removing all obstacles so that he could train at the shooting club which contributed to him having an outstanding performance despite the short period of practicing the sport.

The shooter was received at Kuwait International Airport by Assistant Secretary General Mansour Al-Sharheed, Board Member and Public Relations Committee Chairman Khaleef Al-Qahas and club official Shafi Al-Sahali.

