**Wu Leads Way as Weather Halts Stroke Play at Pinehurst**

By Ron Driscoll, USGA

Brandon Wu, 22, of Scarsdale, N.Y., backed up an opening round of 5-under-par 65 on Monday with a 2-over 72 on Tuesday to virtually assure himself of earning medalist honors in the weather-delayed 119th U.S. Amateur Championship at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club.

Wu, who helped Stanford University to the 2019 NCAA team championship in May, had flown overnight from Lima, Peru, to Pinehurst after helping the USA capture the mixed-team title in the Pan American Games on Sunday, along with fellow U.S. Amateur competitor Stewart Hagestad. His Monday round of 65 broke the competitive course record on Course No. 4 at Pinehurst, which reopened in 2018 after a renovation by course architect Gil Hanse.

On Tuesday morning on Pinehurst’s renowned Course No. 2, which is playing more than 3 shots tougher by stroke average than No. 4, Wu made 16 pars and two bogeys to back up his Monday effort, which was accomplished without benefit of the practice rounds most other players had on Saturday and Sunday.

“Towards the back nine today was definitely tough, just because No. 2 is such a mental grind, as well,” said Wu, who received his Stanford diploma in June, just after completing the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach, where he tied for 35th place. “You’re trying to hit perfect shots on every hole just to maybe have a look at birdie, so that was kind of wearing down, and it was getting hot towards the end, too. Luckily I was able to finish it off, but I was definitely pretty tired.”

Wu’s 3-under 137 total was one better than six players, all of whom completed their rounds. The second round of stroke play was delayed by 1 hour, 21 minutes in the late afternoon, which kept 50 players from finishing their rounds. The second round will resume on Wednesday morning at 7:20 a.m., with players jockeying for position to advance in the championship. A total of 66 players were at 4 over or better as those remaining players seek to lock in spots in the 64-player match play field. The closest player to Wu who had not completed play was Spencer Ralston, of Gainesville, Ga., at 1 over with two holes to play.

Among the six players to finish at 2-under 138 is Ricky Castillo, 18, of Yorba Linda, Calif., a stroke-play co-medalist last month in the 2019 U.S. Junior Amateur at Inverness, and Cooper Dossey, 21, of Austin, Texas, who won the North & South Amateur on Pinehurst No. 2 in late June. The group also includes Jacob Solomon, 22, of Auburn, Ala.; Shiryu (Leo) Oyo, 20, of Japan; Tom Sloman, 23, of England; and Philip Barbaree, 22, of Shreveport, La., the 2015 U.S. Junior Amateur champion.

Only 11 players completed 36 holes at even-par 140 or better.

**What’s Next**

Round 2 will be completed, beginning at 7:20 a.m. on Wednesday, with a possible playoff for the final match-play spots beginning after the completion of the round, from the first hole of Course No. 4. The Round of 64 is scheduled to begin on Course No. 2 at approximately 10 a.m.

**Notable**

**Karl Vilips**, 17, of Australia, who is competing in his third U.S. Amateur, improved by 12 strokes from Monday to Tuesday, shooting a bogey-free, 5-under 65 on Course No. 4 after a 7-over 77 on Monday. Vilips completed two rounds at 2-over 142 and easily qualified for match play.

Pinehurst No. 2 is playing as one of the toughest courses in recent U.S. Amateurs. The course, which is playing to 7,414 yards and a par of 70, is averaging more than 7 strokes over par at 77.04. That is just behind three other courses since 2007: Chambers Bay in 2010 was 8.25 over par; Southern Hills in 2009 was 7.62 over par; and The Olympic Club in 2007 was 7.36 over par. At 7,246 yards, Pinehurst No. 4 is playing to a 73.32 stroke average, nearly four strokes easier than No. 2.

The past two U.S. Junior Amateur champions both failed to make match play. Reigning champion **Preston Summerhays**, who won last month at Inverness, shot 77-73 to finish at 10-over 150, while 2018 champion **Michael Thorbjornsen** shot 69-78 to finish at 7-over 147. **Akshay Bhatia**, of Wake Forest, N.C., who was runner-up to Thorbjornsen last year and is No. 5 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking, is likely to make match play after rounds of 72-72.

The longest playoff in recent memory in the U.S. Amateur was nine holes in 1993, in which it is believed 24 players were competing for 13 spots. Playoffs in 2002 (16 players for 12 spots) and in 2016 (23 players for 8 spots) each took seven holes.

**Quotable**

“I’m really excited to get into match play. It’s my very favorite format in golf. It’s been good to me in the past, so hopefully it’ll be good to me this week. I’m feeling really good about my game and I like where it stacks up right now.” – **Philip Barbaree**, the 2015 U.S. Junior Amateur champion, after rounds of 71-67

“It was a really cool experience. I would say more than half the field was professionals, and the American team was only amateurs. It was such a cool experience playing for Team USA, and we ended up coming out on top.” – **Brandon Wu**, who joined Stewart Hagestad, Emilia Migliaccio and Rose Zhang in winning the Pan Am Games mixed team gold on Sunday

“I think one thing I’ve done better this year than in other years is I’m a little bit more at peace with myself and I’m a little bit more patient. I got a little bit more frustrated [before], and quick to get upset and be negative on myself.” – **Stewart Hagestad**, No. 7 in the WAGR, who shot 73-68 to easily make match play after competing in the Pan Am Games last week

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