



## **Wu Blitzes Pinehurst No. 4 for Record 65, Leads After Day 1 of Stroke Play**

By Ron Driscoll, USGA

Brandon Wu didn't waste much time adjusting to the Sandhills of North Carolina.

Wu, 22, of Scarsdale, N.Y., completed play in the Pan American Games on Sunday in Lima, Peru, finishing in fourth place individually and helping the mixed USA Team to a gold medal in the four-day event. He flew from Lima through Miami, Fla., to Pinehurst, N.C., arriving in mid-morning on Monday, and shot 5-under-par 65 on Course No. 4 at Pinehurst Resort & Country Club for the Day 1 lead in stroke play of the 119th U.S. Amateur Championship.

Wu, who received his Stanford University diploma behind the 18th green at Pebble Beach after finishing in a tie for 35th place in the 2019 U.S. Open, set the competitive course record on Course No. 4, which reopened in 2018 after a renovation by Gil Hanse. Wu holds a one-stroke lead over Trevor Werbylo, 21, of Tucson, Ariz., a junior at the University of Arizona, and Palmer Jackson, 18, of Murrysville, Pa., an incoming freshman at the University of Notre Dame, who both shot 4-under 66. "I tried to manage my sleep as well as I could," said Wu, who is No. 8 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking. "I slept great on the two flights up here and then took a quick nap before I teed off for about two hours. I actually felt pretty good."

Wu closed with a flourish, making three consecutive birdies and an eagle on holes 14-17 to go from even par to 5 under. Wu, who helped the Cardinal to the NCAA team title in May, made a routine par 4 on No. 18 for the solo lead.

Wu was one of 27 players to better par in Monday's opening round, but only four of those under-par scores were recorded on Pinehurst No. 2, site of three U.S. Opens and the 2024 U.S. Open. At par 70, Course No. 2 played to a 77.06 stroke average, while Course No. 4 played to a 73.14 stroke average.

"No. 2 is more narrow and has more diabolical greens," said Travis Vick, 19, of Houston and an incoming freshman at the University of Texas who is competing in his third U.S. Amateur. "[On Tuesday] I play in the afternoon and I heard there's going to be a lot of wind, so it will be quite the test."

Werbylo is the nephew of former LPGA Tour player Cindy Rarick, and he also has Arizona assistant coach Chris Nallen as his caddie. Nallen was a semifinalist in the 2004 U.S. Amateur and a member of the 2003 USA Walker Cup Team.

"On the first nine holes, I wasn't hitting the ball very well, especially off the tee," said Werbylo, who is competing in his first U.S. Amateur. "But I figured something out to get the ball in the fairway on my second nine. I know if you're not hitting fairways out here eventually it's going to catch up to you." Jackson, who won the Pennsylvania Class 3A state golf championship and helped his Franklin Regional High baseball team advance to the state quarterfinals, reached the Round of 16 in last month's U.S. Junior Amateur at Inverness, defeating defending champion Michael Thorbjornsen in the Round of 32.

Brad Dalke, of Norman, Okla., the runner-up in the 2016 U.S. Amateur at Oakland Hills, was among four players at 3-under 67. The best scores on Course No. 2 were 2-under 68s by William Walker III, of Tuscaloosa, Ala.; Van Holmgren, of Plymouth, Minn.; and Julien Sale, of France. That 2-under total

was matched by eight players on Course No. 4, including 2018 semifinalist Isaiah Salinda, of South San Francisco, Calif., who like Wu graduated from Stanford this spring.

### **Notable**

Three players from host state North Carolina hit the first tee shots off the starting holes on Monday, with **John Eades** of Charlotte doing the honors on the first hole of Course No. 2 at 7:15 a.m. Scott Harvey, the 2014 U.S. Mid-Amateur champion, of Greensboro, was the first to play on the first hole of Course No. 4, and **Henry Shimp**, also of Charlotte, was the first to play from the ninth hole of Course No. 4. Shimp finished with an even-par 70. **Jason Enloe**, of Dallas, Texas, the head coach at Southern Methodist University, hit the first shot off No. 11 on Course No. 2. (For logistical purposes, players started on holes 9 and 11 rather than the traditional holes 1 and 10 starts.)

**Michael Thorbjornsen**, the 2018 U.S. Junior Amateur champion from Wellesley, Mass., made an eagle on the second hole of Course No. 4, holing out a 7-iron from 181 yards on the 523-yard par 4. But you wouldn't have guessed the outcome from his initial reaction. "I hit driver, and it went really far for some reason, and I had 181, kind of in between clubs," said Thorbjornsen, who shot 1-under 69. "The funny thing is I caught it a little thin. I dropped my club, didn't even look at where the ball went. I started walking a little bit and then everyone started yelling, saying it went in. It was a big surprise." At a **77.06 stroke average** through the Day 1 of stroke play, Pinehurst No. 2 is playing more than 7 strokes over its par of 70. The courses with the highest stroke-play average to par for 36 holes in recent U.S. Amateurs are: Chambers Bay, 2010, 8.25 over par (79.25); Southern Hills, 2009, 7.62 over par (77.62); The Olympic Club, 2007, 7.36 over par (77.36). Pinehurst No. 2 would rank as the fourth-toughest in recent U.S. Amateurs.

### **Quotable:**

"I've been playing good now for three or four weeks. I had the opportunity last week and then got in here with the exemption, and to be able to keep that rolling feels really good." – **William Buhl**, of Norway, who shot 1-under 69 on Monday. Buhl captured the Canadian Amateur by eight strokes last week in Nova Scotia to earn an exemption into the U.S. Amateur

"I feel like on these courses you just want to play really boring golf, maybe get after the easy holes and if you make bogeys on the harder ones, so be it. I did the exact opposite. Every time I was in a pretty easy spot, I made a bogey or par or whatever and I birdied some of the harder ones. So it was kind of a strange round, but the score came out OK." – **Henry Shimp**, of Charlotte, who shot even-par 70

"Putts inside 6 feet, they can look straight, but they can snap just out of nowhere. I missed probably four putts inside of 5 feet today and it's kind of frustrating, but at the same time if I can manage to sort that out, then I could go pretty low." – **Michael Thorbjornsen**, who shot 69 on Course No. 4

"You rely on past experiences that you've had. I've made match play a few times and I've missed match play by a few shots a couple times, so just lean on that and know that it's a long 36 holes. I'm not out here trying to win the stroke play, I'm just trying to get into the top 64 and have some fun in the matches." – **Garrett Rank**, of Canada, who is competing in his eighth U.S. Amateur and won the Western Amateur on Aug. 3

"He texted me, saying good luck... not many words. But he played here in the U.S. Open, so I think that I might text him tonight and see if he's got any advice for tomorrow." – **Alex Fitzpatrick**, of England, who caddied for his older brother Matt when he won the 2013 U.S. Amateur. Matt was the low amateur in the 2014 U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2