

Sports

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(F18)



Unbelievable!

North passes Chen to win 2nd U.S. Open crown

By Marty Budnor
staff writer

The road to the 1985 U.S. Open championship definitely headed North. But it was a spooky highway filled with strange twists at almost every turn.

Andy North, a 12-year tour veteran from Wisconsin, survived a four-over par round of 74 yesterday in front of 37,300 fans at the demanding Oakland Hills Country Club South Course to log his second U.S. Open championship.

North's first Open victory was 1978 at Cherry Hills in Denver.

North carded a 279 for the tournament — the only golfer from the quali-

fying field of 66 players to break par — and defeated three foreign players by one stroke.

Tze-Chung Chen, who had led the tourney for three days and suddenly became a household name to golf fans across the continent, faltered terribly in the final round and finished with a disappointing 72-hole total of 280. He was tied at even par by Canadian Dave Barr and South African Denis Watson. Watson's score included a two-stroke penalty Friday for standing too long over a hanging putt.

North, 35, earned \$103,000 for his efforts to triple his season earnings. Chen, Barr and Watson pocketed \$39,185 each.

For North, who had an poor year in 1984, it certainly was a satisfying victory.

"It's hard to compare the two wins because they're both important to me," said North, whose only other tour victory was the 1977 Westchester Classic.

"The win at Cherry Hill was important because it was my first major win. This one was special because it was so long between wins.

"This is the first time in eight or nine years that I haven't had to play in pain. I've felt good about my game all year. And winning this is a step in the right direction for me.

"It's hard to make up for a \$20,000 year like I had last year," he said.

"Maybe this will take the monkey off my back."

The monkey may have left North, but the spectator left his impression on the players during final-round action.

CHEN, WHO had never won a tournament in two years as a regular tour player, had built up a seemingly insurmountable lead through the first three rounds of qualifying that started Thursday.

The 26-year-old pro from Taiwan made his presence known early with a scintillating double-eagle on the par-5, 527-yard second hole during the opening round. It was the first time in Open history that a player had registered three shots under par.

Chen assumed the lead at that point and held it until encountering an incredible streak of bad luck in the final round.

Chen's misfortunes began with a quadruple bogey on the par-4 fifth hole.

On his fourth shot of the hole he chipped the ball with a sand wedge, but in his followthrough, Chen accidentally nicked the ball again sending it back into the rough. It was ruled officially as two hits even though he took just one swing. He then two-putted on the green and went from a four-stroke lead to a tie with North.

Chen proceeded to bogey the next three holes and fell from the top of the heap for the first time. In four holes he lost seven strokes which opened the road for North, Barr and Watson.

"I just double-hit the ball coming out of the rough, then on my next shot I tried to chip the ball in the hole," said Chen, who finished the day with a 77. "But it was a rough tie."

"Golf is sometimes funny," he said. "Everything was gone. After I make double chip there, the confidence was just gone."

North, who played the final round with Chen, agreed the unusual fifth-hole double-hit turned the tournament into a wide-open race.

"T.C. opened the door for a lot of us," said North. "It's a freaky thing that sometimes happens to all of us."

"I was watching T.C. at the time but not paying close attention to him. I was lining up my putt. But you could tell by the sound that he double-hit the ball. It's a sickening feeling but you just have to adjust."

"I just told myself to keep playing and not worry about what T.C. was doing," he said.

Despite the calamity for Chen, he remained in contention as the other leaders had almost as much trouble figuring out the course which played a little longer and tighter because of the wet weather.

NORTH BOGEYED the ninth, 10th and 11th holes when he could easily have run away from the contenders.

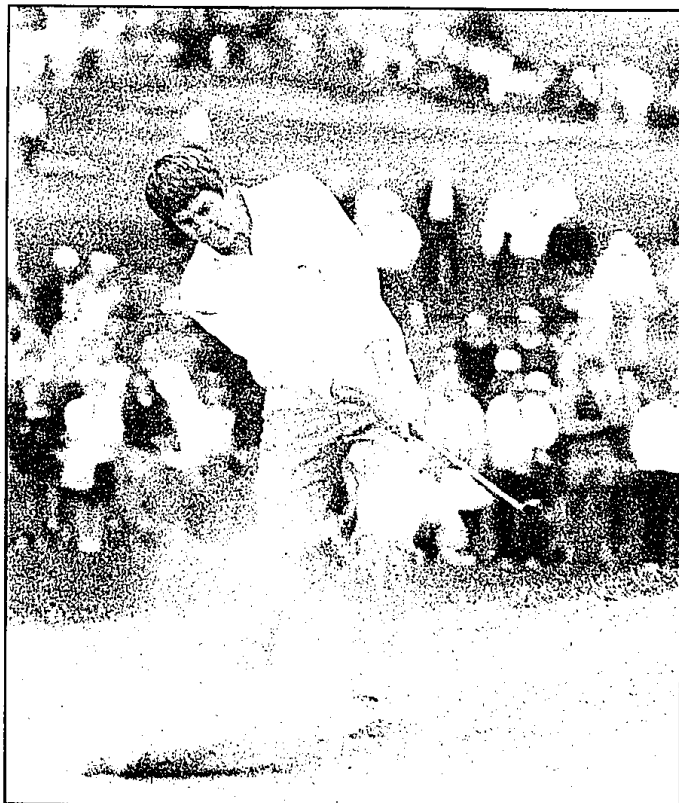
Barr, whose only tour victory was the 1981 Quad Cities Open, finished with a two-over par 72, including five bogeys. Watson, Payne Stewart and Larry Wadkins were all in contention but scored even par for the day.

North is now at the top of his class as the champion of America. He will have a year to cherish the feeling.



Tze-Chung Chen, tournament leader after the first three rounds, lost four strokes on the fifth hole when he double hit the ball (above) while playing out of the rough. Chen finished the tournament at even par 280, one stroke behind North.

Andy North	279	Scott Verplank	289
Tze-Chung Chen	280	Scott Hoch	289
Denis Watson	280	Loren Roberts	289
Cory Surr	280	Jim Thorne	289
Larry Wadkins	281	Shawnee Heath	289
Payne Stewart	281	Fred Couples	290
Sova Ballesteros	281	Larry Mize	290
Johnny Miller	282	Bill Glasson	290
Corey Pavin	283	Larry Nelson	290
Rick Fehr	283	John Mahaffey	290
Fuzzy Zoeller	283	Ronnie Black	291
Jack Sweeney	283	Danny Edwards	291
Tom Kite	284	Wayne Levi	292
Hale Irwin	285	Tim Simpson	292
Joey Sindelar	286	Frank Conner	292
Jay Haas	286	Bobby Wadkins	292
Greg Norman	286	Ed Flor	292
Scott Simpson	286	Jeff Sanders	292
Mike Reid	286	Morrie Matsushita	293
Don Pooley	286	Russell Altman	293
Tony Ellis	286	Bill Israelson	293
Mark O'Meara	286	Dick Mast	293
David Graham	287	Peter Gasparis	294
Ray Floyd	287	Brad Faxon	295
Hal Sutton	287	Lee Rinker	296
Tom Seckmann	287	Kom Matlack	296
Mike Reid	287	Glen Sauer	299
Dr. Gil Morgan	287	Bob Eastwood	299
David Frost	287	Kan Green	299
Frederick Funk	287	Jeff Grygel	300
Peter Jacobsen	288	Big Dip	302
Bruce Lietzke	288	Curt Byrum	302
Curtis Strange	288	Gregory Chapman	304



photos by GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

Andy North, the U.S. Open champion, blasts out of the bunker to save par on the 17th hole Sunday.

North shot a one-under-par 279 for the tournament and was the only golfer to break par.

Early birds catch bird's-eye view at 18th green

By Jim Hughes
staff writer

As Andy North hovered over his golf ball before sinking his putt on the 18th green to secure the U.S. Open championship Sunday, he probably had no idea what the surroundings looked like 12 hours earlier.

It wasn't even close to the scene which ABC TV captured and beamed across the world.

At 6:30 a.m., the area around the green was covered with empty potato chip bags, hot dog wrappers and paper cups, along with Michelob and Pepsi cans — ugly reminders of a day gone by.

Rain-soaked newspapers draped the grandstands. The papers, useless now, were purposeful for the optimists who forgot umbrellas Saturday.

A short while later, groundskeepers from the Oakland Hills Country Club swept through the area armed with garbage bags to dispose of the litter. The place was desolate.

Faint sounds of lawn mowers were heard from a distance as fans slowly trickled onto the grounds around 7 a.m., a time when most people are either sleeping, perusing the morning newspaper and drinking coffee or attending a Sunday service.

BUT THE DIEHARD golf fans were beginning to encompass the 18th green. Diehard is an accurate moniker for these people because of the wait they'd endure just to get a

glimpse of a golfer. First tee time was 9:47 a.m., which meant the first two were — Greg Chapman and Curt Byrum — wouldn't get to 18 until sometime after 1 p.m.

But the wait was well worth it for Paul Ehlers and Al Onstad. They were the first fans to stake territory at the 18th. They'd been in Oakland County since the first practice round Monday, and they were within a chip shot of North when he sank the winning putt.

Ehlers and Onstad were rewarded for their patience. They drove 8 1/2 hours from Wisconsin, the homeland of the 1985 Open champ.

"We had to make sure we got a good seat by 18," said Ehlers, who hails from Menasha, near Green Bay. "We did the same thing yesterday (Saturday) at 17. We're driving back tonight, so I hope it doesn't go too long. If there's a playoff, we'll stick around."

"It's worth it because Andy's still in contention. He hasn't done anything since 1978 (when he won the Open), so I'm hoping he comes through for us."

Onstad, from Appleton, Wis., said he's accustomed to the wait.

"It doesn't bother me. I've been here all week, so I'm used to waiting."

THE SECOND group to arrive to 18 were, ironically, natives of Japan, near the homeland of Taiwan's Tze-Chung Chen, who was paired with North the last round.

Chen ended the tournament at even par, tied for second place.

M. Minamiyama and K. Yamagata, who ordered tickets six months ago, lived in Japan before moving to Ann Arbor two years ago.

"Because the U.S. Open is so famous, it would be very difficult to get a good seat," Minamiyama explained of his early arrival.

"But 7 a.m.? That has to be a bother."

"Yeah, yeah," Minamiyama said. "I had to get up at 5 a.m."

Jeffrey Brent, whose brother Sterling is an Oakland Hills member and a Birmingham resident, put the whole thing into perspective.

"To get a good seat, you have to get here early," said Brent, who came from Tennessee with his wife for the tournament. "If you're an avid golfer, you're used to waiting. You have to wait to get on the course, and you have to wait when you're on the course. I'd rather wait here than in traffic."

"If you want to watch golf, you're better off at home watching it on TV. It's more comfortable and the beer's cheaper. But if you want to be part of the excitement, you have to be here. Plus, it makes a good conversation piece saying you were at the U.S. Open. You become the envy of the neighborhood, especially if you're from Tennessee."

ANOTHER COUPLE accustomed to waiting was John

and Jill Hoffman of Trenton. Their daughter was a high school volleyball standout at Trenton High and currently is on the squad at Central Michigan University.

"We've sat at volleyball tournaments for 16 hours in a day, so we're used to waiting," Jill said.

"It couldn't be any worse than that," John added. "There's only one place to be, and that's at the finish. You can come later and take a chance at being someone else, but we got here early to be at the finishing hole."

Don Miller came from Connecticut to watch his fourth straight Open, so he's a veteran of the game.

"I plan my vacations around this," he said. "I really enjoy golf, and this is the best golf to see. If you wait on Sunday, at about 1:30 the place is so mobbed you can't see at all. It's so disappointing to be here all week and not be able to see this all happening."

Carolyn Blackford and Gene Day came from Fort Wayne, Ind., and both had similar reasons for arriving so early.

"I want a good seat on 18 so I can see all those gorgeous pros walk right by me," said Blackford, a true-blue Fuzzy Zoeller fan.

"I'm here because I'm with her," Day explained. "For those who did arrive early, they had a close view of the golfers as they finished. It was agreed by all that the wait was well worth the agony of disrupting sleep."

But for Ehlers and Onstad, it made heading "North" back to Wisconsin much more enjoyable.