

BY GODFREY ROBERT

OH DANNY BOY, THE PUTTS WEREN'T FALLING

FANS RUE MISSED CUTS BY TIGER AND PHIL, BUT REAL SYMPATHY SHOULD GO TO LEE WHO FACED DISASTER ON 18TH GREEN



Kiwi golfer Danny Lee ends up in a fix after this "six".

Winged Foot gave hopeful New Zealander Danny Lee and fan favourites Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson a brutal beating last week.

For the first time at the same US Open, the two legends missed the cut after suffering a Mammaroneck mauling last Friday as a first-time Major winner Bryson DeChambeau, 27, on eve of tournament, and young guns (runner-up Matthew Wolff is 21 and sixth-placed Will Zalatoris is 24) shot to fame in the 120th edition of the Major.

Woods, 44, who missed the cut at the 2006 US Open at the same venue, posted a seven-over 77 for a 36-hole total of 150, missing the cut by

four and raised doubts about his focus for the Masters title defence in November.

And on a disastrous day when only three of the 143 players in the field played sub-par rounds, Mickelson shot a 74, to add his opening 79 to take the early flight home.

Five-time Major champion Mickelson, 50, was haunted before the event by his unfortunate flameout in 2006 at the same venue when he flared a wild slice off the 72nd tee and lost his chance for a play-off and settled for second place a record five times in the US Open.

Then the left-hander, whose drive bounced off a hospitality tent into deep rough found his second shot

hit a tree, his third left him chipping for par from the back of the green. The chip ran across the green into the collar on the opposite side and he failed to hole the chip back and settled for a double-bogey that left Australian Geoff Ogilvy to claim the title.

MISSED THE CUT

It was not the first time though that both Woods and Mickelson have missed the cut in the same Major. Last year at the Open Championship at Royal Portrush both fell out, the first reminder that the pair are not getting any younger.

"Well, it's frustrating that I'm not going to be here for the weekend", said a dejected Woods after the round. "It

THE US OPEN WEBSITE FLASHED THESE STATISTICS WHICH LEFT FANS DUMBFUNDED:

- PUTT 1: 4 feet
- PUTT 2: 5 feet, 7 inches
- PUTT 3: 5 feet, 10 inches
- PUTT 4: 6 feet, 11 inches
- PUTT 5: 3 feet, 9 inches
- PUTT 6: 7 feet, 7 inches

Incredibly, Lee actually made the longest of the six putts. Lee ended up with a 9 on the hole to touch off a 78 from a round ried by 39 putts.

He then withdrew, claiming a wrist injury, that apparently, going by the official prize-money list, left him without a cheque. The CBS Sports money list leaves his name out and states that 61st-placed Shugo Imahira won US\$24,725.

feels like the way the golf course is changing, is turning, that anybody who makes the cut has the opportunity to win this championship. I didn't get myself that opportunity."

Finding the fairway is mandatory for success at the

challenging Winged Foot and Woods had a problem with that. The final five holes of his opening nine were played to five over, no thanks to double-bogeys on both Nos. 16 and 18.

Sentimentalists rued the absence of Woods and Mick-

elson during the weekend, but the saddest story of this year's US Open was that of New Zealander Danny Lee's flake-out in his sixth appearance in a Major.

The Mark H McCormack medal winner in 2008 – for the leading amateur in world golf rankings – who turned pro the following year, withdrew from the US Open in bizarre circumstances.

After rounds of 70 and 75 that gave him weekend play, he had a shocking quintuple-bogey on the 18th hole in the third round on Saturday with a putting disaster after first only staring at a par from a mere four-foot putt.

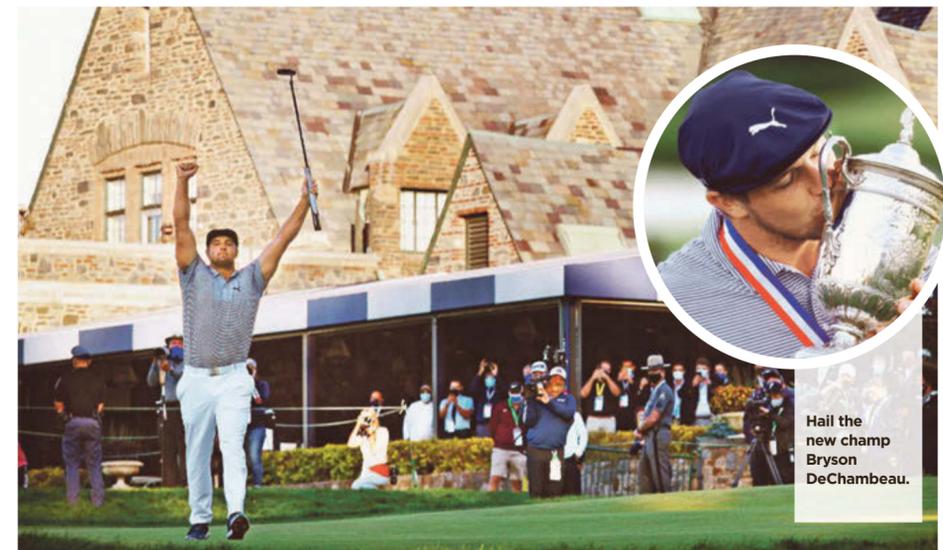
Then he pulled his first putt to the left of the hole. He reset himself, took a deep breath, then pulled the next putt to the left of the hole again. Then he lost it. Lee smacked at the putt, missing right again and leaving himself a longer putt than his first two. He angrily walked down the hill, then smacked the ball up without even setting his feet. He missed again, his fourth putt of the series, then missed another time before finally getting lucky and holing out to end the nightmare.

HARD TO WATCH

It was hard to watch the sequence on YouTube for anyone. It makes even his dissenters' stomachs churn for it was unquestionably unbelievable.

No doubt, the 18th hole has been a nightmare for golfers at Winged Foot this week, with the difficult, undulating green leading to high scores across the board. Still, I didn't think it would be responsible for a golfer having to withdraw from the tournament.

It did just that, with a series that's hard to watch. Here's hoping Lee gets his head right and can move past this awful showing.



BREAKING BRYSON, THAT'S THE NEW MANTRA

2020 US OPEN CHAMPION
DECHAMBEAU'S POWER-DRIVE
IS SEQUEL TO TIGER-PROOFING

When overnight leader by two, Matthew Wolff lined up his first putt on the 18th hole on the final day, it seemed a perfunctory tap.

It was a five-foot downhill putt at the Winged Foot Golf Club, and Wolff already knew that his 2020 US Open runner-up position was secure as he held a two-shot lead over third-placed Louis Oosthuizen, sitting in the clubhouse.

The American missed, then made it on his second attempt to eventually finish six shots behind his countryman Bryson DeChambeau, who won his first Major last Sunday.

But he could have joined DeChambeau as the only two players to go sub-par in total on a treacherous course where the rough seems unplayable and the undulating greens torrid.

So DeChambeau not only achieved that feat, but was also the only golfer not to go over-par on all four rounds of the par-70 layout that brought many champi-

ons, including 15-time Major winner Tiger Woods and five-time victorious Phil Mickelson to their knees. Now that the new champion has dismantled Winged Foot, the much-aiored talk about subject of Tiger-proofing surfaced again. And it surrounds ways and means towards a new label: "Breaking Bryson".

With the Masters and Augusta looming in just over a month's time, officials are wondering how they can stop, or rather check, the power of the only man among 144 players to have tamed Winged Foot last week with rounds of 69-68-70-67 for a six-under 274 total.

DeChambeau emerged victorious on a course with suffocating fairways and strangling rough, so will the forgiving Augusta where the fairways are tame and rough virtually non-existent be a victim to the American's "bomb-away" style?

And USGA officials would likely shudder at the threatening reaction from the new champion who said after his victory: "I beat the golf course. I dominated it. I'm not going to stop."

"Next week, I'm going to be trying a 48-inch driver. We're going to be messing with some head designs and do some amazing things with Cobra to make it feasible to hit these drives maybe 360, 370, maybe even farther."

Then the powerful long-hitter, who added 30 pounds of muscle to his frame with his high-calorie diet and extensive gym work in the past 10 months, added: "I'm 230 to 235, right now. I think I can get to 245."

Distance is a big advantage in golf, namely at Augusta. And Woods confirmed that when he turned fabled Augusta National into a pitch-and-putt course, en route to winning by 12 shots at a record 19-under par in 1997.

The phrase "Tiger-proofing" was coined then to stop Woods as Augusta officials began to modify the course, lengthening it and adding trees to tighten it up. But DeChambeau re-

BRYSON IN 2017

- Weight: 195lbs (88kg)
- Clubhead speed: 117mph
- Driving distance: 299 yards
- Career PGA wins: 1
- Career Majors: 0

BRYSON IN 2020

- Weight: 235lbs (106kg)
- Clubhead speed: 125mph
- Driving distance: 322 yards
- Career PGA wins: 7
- Career Majors: 1

plied: "It's tough to rein in athleticism. We're always going to be trying to get fitter, stronger, more athletic. Tiger inspired this whole generation to do this, and we're going to keep going after it. I don't think it's going to stop. Will they rein it back? I'm sure."

"I'm sure something might happen. But I don't know what it will be. I just know that length is always going to be an advantage."

And the power-driver, who averaged 325 yards off the tee at Winged Foot, is now planning to try out a 48-inch driver – almost 3 inches above the average driver – next week.

Golfing rivals, beware!
— GODFREY ROBERT