

ILLINOIS GOLFER THE OPENING 9

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Cantlay's the coolest man in golf

REPORTING FROM WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

1 Patrick Cantlay isn't called Patty Ice for nothing. You could fire off an M-80 in his background and he wouldn't flinch.

Sunday, there were opportunities for him to flinch. His bogeys on the eighth and 10th holes that dropped him from the lead. The fine play of **Scott Stallings** in the group ahead that moved him into the lead. The ever-present threat from **Scottie Scheffler** and **Xander Schauffele**.

Finally, his tee shot on the 18th hole, which floated to the right and landed in a fairway bunker, overhanging tree branches blocking a direct path to the hole, tucked in the upper right corner of the green, on the uphill trip home.

"The ball was above my feet and I'm 160 yards out," Cantlay said. "I tried to slice an 8-iron as hard as I could."

Lesser players would have felt their throat tighten. Cantlay found a way. That big lower shelf on the left side of the green was the perfect target.

Cantlay hit it with his approach, then ran a brilliant 46 foot-7 inch lag putt up the ledge to five inches and tapped in for his second BMW Championship title in a row before nearly 30,000 lobsters at sun-baked Wilmington Country Club.

He's the first player since **Nick Price** to win the historically-named Western Open back-to-back – Price did so at Cog Hill in 1993 and 1994 – and the first to do so in any playoff extravaganza since they commenced in 2007.

His 2-under 69 for 14-under 270 beat Stallings by a stroke and Scheffler and Schauffele by three. And as much as the save at the last, the stroke that mattered wasn't in saving par, but making the birdie on the hole before that shoved him ahead of Stallings, who had never been close to or in the lead in a playoff tournament or a major previously, and who never went away.

Cantlay's drive on the par-4 hole



Tim Cronin / Illinois Golfer

CHAMPION AGAIN Patrick Cantlay with perfect form on his tee shot on the second hole Sunday.

landed in the jungle-thick rough and bounced over a bunker back into the fairway. From there, he carved a wedge to 5 feet 7 inches and sank the putt for a birdie.

"Maybe one of the best breaks I've gotten coming down the stretch, and when you get a break like that you need to pay it off, and fortunately I did," Cantlay said.

His unflappable nature served him well in last year's six-hole sudden-death playoff at Caves Valley with **Bryson DeChambeau**, and did so again this year, when he led most of the way rather than trailed.

For that matter, it also served him well in the Tour Championship, where, thanks to the handicap start, he started 10 strokes ahead of much of the field. Not particularly liking the concept, he realized

he still had to play golf.

"I remember last year just trying to stay really in the moment, day after day," Cantlay explained. "I'll be two behind (Scheffler) this year, just trying to shoot under par each day and not losing sight of that."

The prize for winning the BMW was \$2.7 million. Next week's prize for taking the playoff title is \$15 million. Cantlay would like to go back-to-back in that too.

2 Stallings was in somewhat uncharted territory on Sunday. He'd never contended in a major or playoff tournament despite being a three-time winner on Tour. He held up in the heat, with four birdies and two bogeys, including a bird on the par-5 14th with a 50-foot two-putt after a bogey the hole before.

And at the last, needing a birdie to tie Cantlay, he dropped his approach nine feet from the cup.

The putt just didn't go in, sliding by on the high side, mimicking his birdie attempt on the penultimate hole.

"Man, we read it exactly," Stallings said of his and his caddie's collaboration. "It did what exactly we thought it was going to do, it just did it behind the hole. Man, I hit a great putt on 17 and a great putt on 18 exactly where we read it, just kind of a later break."

"Had a great game plan kind of all week and it kind of goes without saying, but I would have hit the exact same putt," Stallings said. "In the moment the ball rolled end over end, ended up right behind the hole on 17 and 18. There's really not much else you can do. Thrilled for the opportunity to go. Excited to go see my kids and my wife here in just a

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little bit and head down to Atlanta at some point tomorrow.”

Stallings qualified easily, placing 12th in the season standings after entering the week 46th.

3 World No. 1 Scheffler played himself out of contention with a pair of early bogeys, then played himself back in with four birdies from the eighth to 16th holes. But he needed a birdie-birdie finish to really shake things up, and went par-bogey instead to finish three back. Errant tee shots were the cause.

“Obviously I would have liked to have had a few shots back today, but ultimately I didn’t play my best golf today, and I was still able to give myself a chance there coming down the stretch,” Scheffler said. “It would have been a little different story if I could hit the fairway on 17 or 18 and give myself some more opportunities, but overall still a solid week.”

Scheffler goes into East Lake with the 10-stroke bonus. He said the thing to do is not to dwell on the bonus.

“Just the same as every other week, just go out there and try and do my best,” Scheffler said. “This is the only week of the year where you actually get strokes on the field, but I think I’ll be best suited if I just ignore that and just go out there and play my game and do my best.”

4 As for Schauffele, he was a par machine down the stretch when birdies were needed.

5 Sahith Theegala was on golf’s tight-rope Sunday. He needed to play well to make the Tour Championship’s elite field of 30. He just didn’t know how well.

Coming into the week 27th, he was above and below the magic number for four days, the background fluctuating between red and green. It could drive someone mad, considering how easy the stats are for a player to spot on the sideboards dotting the course.

“I had a little bit of the shakes warming up,” Theegala said. “I couldn’t hold my hands still. I felt great mindset-wise, but just body-wise I knew something big was on the line. Once I got a few shots -- I birdied the first hole, which really settled the nerves. But that was a wild ride.”

How wild? Theegala hit one fairway on Sunday and only 14 of 56 for the week.

“I think I’m dead last in the field in strokes gained off the tee by like five,” Theegala said. “It’s going to be funny looking at the stat. That was such a grind.”

Theegala said he was happy with how hard he played whether he got in or not. He finished 28th and goes to Atlanta.

6 The race to East Lake for the Tour Championship saw Stallings, **K.H. Lee**, **Adam Scott** and **Aaron Wise** climb from below the top 30 to grab a spot, replacing **J.J. Spaun**, **Joohyung Kim**, **Davis Riley** and **Kevin Kisner**.

7 Viktor Hovland was thrilled to make a hole-in-one on Sunday, then even more thrilled to find out the bonus coming from it. When his 203-yard 6-iron on the second hole found the bottom of the cup, that triggered the BMW bonus.

The auto concern that sponsors the tournament kicks in an additional \$125,000 for an Evans Scholarship for every ace.

“That’s incredible,” Hovland said. “For it to actually mean something is really cool. I hope that goes a long ways.”

8 Six U.S. players locked in Presidents Cup berths Sunday: Scheffler, Cantlay, Schauffele, **Sam Burns**, **Justin Thomas** and **Tony Finau**. Eight internationals did as well: **Cameron Smith** and **Adam Scott** (Australia), **Hideki Matsuyama** (Japan), **Sungjae Im** and **Kim** (South Korea), **Joaquin Niemann** (Chile), **Corey Connors** (Canada), and **Mito Pereira** (Chile). Smith and Matsuyama are expected to jump to LIV Golf either before or after the team tournament.

9 **Course stats:** The field averaged 70.896 strokes, highest of the week, with half the holes over par and half under par. The uphill par-4 ninth proved the toughest, at 4.224 strokes, while the par-5 third was the easiest, at 4.806 strokes. For the week, Wilmington South averaged 70.248 strokes.

– **Tim Cronin**

Remembering Tom Weiskopf

In 1963, **Tom Weiskopf** won the Western Amateur. As a result, the following year he

played in the Western Open.

He tied for

30th and won

\$487.50. The

following year,

and every year

thereafter, he came to the Western with a check for \$487.50 in his pocket for the Evans Scholars Foundation.

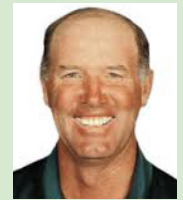
Weiskopf had won 15 times on the PGA Tour, including the 1973 British Open, when he teed it up in the 1982 Western Open. He amazingly dubbed one off the elevated first tee at Butler National, but recovered to make par and went on to win the tournament – beating **Larry Nelson** and avenging a last-hole collapse at Butler in 1974 that brought **Tom Watson** his first victory.

It was his last victory on the circuit. He was already a successful golf course designer, and would have a fine senior career as well, including a win in the U.S. Senior Open.

Weiskopf lost his fight with pancreatic cancer on Saturday night. He was 79.

Weiskopf, like idol **Jack Nicklaus**, was a product of Ohio State.

“He was unfortunate that he ran into Nicklaus so often,” **Tony Jacklin** said. “He held Jack in such high regard.”



Weiskopf

– **Tim Cronin**