

## **Watson leads by 2 strokes midway through Travelers**

Written by Nancy Spencer

Friday, June 21, 2013 11:54 PM -

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### **Associated Press**

CROMWELL, Conn. — Although Bubba Watson will always have a soft spot in his heart for Augusta National, he enjoys playing TPC at River Highlands nearly as much.

Watson shot a 3-under-par 67 Friday to take a 2-stroke lead over Patrick Reed and Padraig Harrington after two rounds of the Travelers Championship.

“I love this place. I always play well here,” Watson said.

The 2010 Travelers champion was at 10-under 130. Reed and Harrington were at 8-under after both shot 66s in the second round. Four players — including 2007 champion Hunter Mahan — were tied for fourth at 7-under.

Charley Hoffman, who held the first-round lead after a 61 on Thursday, followed that with a 73 in a round that included three bogeys and a double-bogey.

One week after winning the U.S. Open at Merion, Justin Rose was tied for 12th at 5-under.

Watson, whose last victory came in the 2012 Masters, has played well in this event often. He’s finished in the top 15 four times in six previous starts, including that win in 2010 — his first on the PGA Tour — and a second-place finish last year.

With two top-10 finishes and six top-25s this season, Watson is currently 57th in FedEx Cup

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points. He finished tied for 32nd in last week's U.S. Open.

Watson began his day with a bogey at No. 10 but made four birdies after that in the relatively benign morning conditions. Windy conditions kept many of those who began their rounds in the afternoon from matching the scores of their early rising counterparts.

Still, Harrington managed a 66 despite teeing off at 12:40 p.m.

"It did get windy out there," Harrington said. "It was a challenge but there were still opportunities to make birdies."

Harrington hasn't won since the 2008 PGA Championship, his third career major. The 41-year-old Irishman has missed four cuts this season but is playing relatively well lately. He finished 10th at the St. Jude Classic two weeks ago and tied for 21st at the U.S. Open last week.

Harrington shot consecutive rounds of 4-under-par but called his second effort "a fighting 66."

Harrington was in contention to win here in 2010 and 2012.

Rose admits to being a bit tired but still shot 68 Friday.

"I haven't hit the ball quite as solidly as I would have liked to," said Rose, who made bogey on River Highlands' two easiest holes, Nos. 2 and 15. "I just think I need to maybe go and take care of my body a little bit, some stretching, some physio, maybe a workout, just work out a few kinks. I feel a little bit stiff and tight in the back and the hips."

**LPGA**

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ROGERS, Ark. — Mika Miyazato made the most of her return to the LPGA Tour's NW Arkansas Championship.

Miyazato birdied six out of 10 holes in the middle of her round on Friday to shoot a 6-under 65 and earn the first-round lead at Pinnacle Country Club.

Miyazato finished in a tie for second at the event last year, missing a 15-foot birdie putt on the final hole to finish a stroke back of winner Ai Miyazato.

The Japanese golfer hit 16-of-18 greens in regulation to finish a shot ahead of So Yeon Ryu and Angela Stanford at 5 under. Ten golfers are two shots back at 4 under, including local favorite Stacy Lewis, who played collegiately at the nearby University of Arkansas.

World No. 1 Inbee Park is four shots off the lead after shooting a 2-under 69.

Lewis, the world No. 2, earned an unofficial win at the rain-shortened event as an amateur in 2007 but she hasn't finished higher than eighth since. She had no such problems on Friday, hitting all 13 fairways.

While Lewis enjoyed the local following in the afternoon, Miyazato posted the lowest score of the day during her morning round.

Miyazato, who has struggled for much of this year, nearly won the tournament a year ago. She entered this week 46th on the money list and 77th in scoring average — including 133rd in putting — but 15th in the world rankings.

The group at 4 under includes Lewis, Chie Arimura, Danielle Kang, Azahara Munoz, Beatriz Recari, Lisa McCloskey, Mina Harigae, Suzann Pettersen, Christel Boeljon and Sarah Kemp.

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### **European Tour**

MUNICH — Ernie Els shot a 3-under 69 in the second round of the BMW International Open on Friday to maintain his 1-stroke lead.

The South African made six birdies, a double bogey and a bogey, leaving him at 12-under 132 halfway through the European Tour event. Els, a 2-time winner of the British Open and U.S. Open, opened with a 63 Thursday.

He was followed by Matthew Baldwin of England (69) and Alexander Levy of France (68). Defending champion Danny Willett of England shot a 65 for the day's best round and was tied for fourth place with Bernd Wiesberger of Austria.

Willett was six strokes off the pace after an opening 69 and is happy he is back in contention to become the first player to defend the title in the 25th year of the event. His season was disrupted by a back injury.

Five players — 2008 winner Martin Kaymer and Marcel Siem of Germany, Tommy Fleetwood of England, Spain's Miguel Angel Jimenez and Sweden's Alex Noren — were three strokes off the pace in sixth.

Siem received great support from the appreciative crowd.

Els was behind Willett and Wiesberger by the time he teed off in the afternoon. Els began with five successive pars before holing his first birdie but ran into trouble when he found water from the tee at the par-four No. 7 and needed six shots.

After four more birdies, a bogey on No. 16 appeared to have cost him the lead but he finished

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with a simple tap-in for another birdie.

## **USGA Women's Amateur Public Links**

NORMAN, Okla. — Lauren Diaz-Yi (148) of Thousand Oaks, Calif., will battle Doris Chen (136), Bradenton, Fla., in today's 36-hole championship in the USGA Women's Amateur Public Links at the Jimmie Austin OU Golf Club Course in Norman, Okla.

In Friday's quarterfinals at the 6,351-yard, par-72 course, Diaz-Yi bested Krystal Quihuis of Tucson, Ariz. (152) 4 and 3; Chen defeated Anne-Catherine Tanguay, Canada (144) in 19 holes; Raychelle Santos, La Quinta, Calif. (148), defeated Cindy Ha, Demarest, N.J. (150), 2 and 1; and Julie Yang, Stillwater, Okla. (142), ousted Karen Chung, Livingston, N.J. (146), 2 and 1.

In the semifinals, Diaz-Yi eliminated Santos 4 and 3; and Chen overcame Yang 5 and 4.

## **Champions Tour**

GLENVIEW, Ill. — Professional golfers haven't played a tournament at North Shore Country Club in 80 years, when the U.S. Open was conducted and amateur Johnny Goodman upstaged the likes of Tommy Armour and Walter Hagen.

That's too far back for someone like Bernhard Langer to recall but the second-ranked player on the Champions Tour understands why North Shore was selected as the site of the new Encompass Championship.

"I could see why they would have had the U.S. Open here years ago," Langer said. "This course will punish you if you hit the ball off-line and if you don't hit it close on the greens, you're going to have some crazy putts with these mounds."

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Langer is one of seven World Golf Hall-of-Famers playing in the 54-hole tournament, which includes a celebrity pro-am for the first two days. He also leads the tour's money list and is second in the point standings behind David Frost, who won the Tradition, the most recent tournament on the tour, two weeks ago.

Both will be chased by a field that includes Nick Price for the first time since last August. The long layoff included five months of recovery time from surgery to eliminate tennis elbow in his left arm.

The winner earns \$270,000 of the \$1.8 million purse.

Nine of the tour's top-10 points standing leaders are on hand for the tournament on a course that dates to 1924. Aside from U.S. Open sectionals, only amateur tournaments, including the 1983 U.S. Amateur, have been played at North Shore since.

That makes the course a mystery even to the senior set. Of this week's field, only Stan Uley and Andrew Magee played in that Amateur and neither has strong memories of the course.

The celebrity contingent includes new Chicago Bears head coach Marc Trestman and his kicker, Robbie Gould, former Bull Toni Kukoc and Jack O'Callahan, member of the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team.

The Encompass Championship is the successor to a similar tournament in Tampa, Fla., sponsored by Encompass last year; Michael Allen, the winner, isn't considered the defending champion at North Shore.