

STAR POWER

Strongest field in golf in the spotlight at PGA Championship

BY DOUG FERGUSON | AP Golf Writer

In the five weeks since Rory McIlroy held off Scottie Scheffler for another Masters title, golf no longer seems to be a two-man show.

More stars are beginning to emerge.

Cameron Young, who earned his signature win at The Players Championship going into the Masters, played three rounds with Scheffler and beat him by six shots in a signature event at Doral.

Matt Fitzpatrick beat Scheffler in a playoff at another signature event, the RBC Heritage, and then teamed with brother Alex to win in New Orleans.

They all are part of the strongest field in golf — everyone from the top 100 in the world — who gather at Aronimink Golf Club outside Philadelphia for the 108th edition of the PGA Championship on May 14-17.

Young and Fitzpatrick keep giving themselves chances. Scheffler comes into the PGA Championship off three consecutive runner-up finishes. McIlroy no longer wonders what will go wrong, only what can go right.

“I’m excited for the road ahead,” McIlroy said. “I’m excited for Aronimink, Shinnecock (U.S. Open), Birkdale (British Open). I feel like if anything I’m more motivated after what happened at Augusta this year than I’ve ever been.”

PGA IDENTITY IS VARIETY

After all these years, the PGA Championship is discovering its identity among the four majors. It’s the one with no identity at all.

Players know what to expect at Augusta National and with links golf at the British Open. The U.S. Open typically is the toughest test with narrow fairways and firm greens. Only at the PGA Championship, held on 75 courses over 108 championships, is there something new.

“That variety of traditional courses, new courses, middle-aged courses, it’s unique and different,” said Kerry Haigh, the PGA’s championships

director in charge of presenting the test. “That’s what our identity is. Every year is a different challenge, a different venue, a different corner of the country.”

ARONIMINK FINALLY GETS ANOTHER PGA

The PGA Championship returns to Aronimink for the first time since Gary Player won his first Wanamaker Trophy in 1962. Donald Ross designed Aronimink, and Gil Hanse and Jim Wagner did restoration work about a decade ago. It features bunker complexes along the fairways and surprising elevation. The last time it hosted the top men was the BMW Championship in 2018, when Keegan Bradley won over Justin Rose in a playoff.

Aronimink was scheduled to host the 1993 Championship. But the PGA of America required a diverse membership coming off the Shoal Creek controversy in 1990. Aronimink had a seven-year waiting list and said it could not have a Black member by then. The club wound up waiting 33 years.

THE SLAM

For the second year in a row, two grand slams are part of the conversation at the PGA Championship. The more likely one is Jordan Spieth, who tries for the 10th time to get the final leg of the career Grand Slam. But he has gone three years since his last win, and he has never finished closer than six shots in the PGA when the Grand Slam was at stake.

The other is McIlroy and the calendar slam, and the odds are higher to win all four in the same year. Spieth in 2015 is the last player to win the first two majors of the year.

BUSY STRETCH

Don’t be surprised if some of the top players are running on fumes. With the addition of another \$20 million signature event, the PGA Championship concludes a six-week stretch of three signature events and two majors. McIlroy missed two signature events during his three-week break after the Masters. Young and Fitzpatrick will have played five of the six.



Scottie Scheffler



FACTS & FIGURES

Event: 108th PGA Championship

Dates: May 14-17

Site: Aronimink Golf Club near Philadelphia

Length: 7,394 yards

Par: 70

Field: 156 players

Prize money: TBA (\$19 million in 2025). Winner's share: TBA (\$3,420,000 in 2025).

Last year: Scottie Scheffler lost a five-shot lead on the front nine and wound up winning by five shots by closing with an even-par 71. The two-time Masters champion became the first player since Seve Ballesteros to win his first three majors by three shots or more.

Last major at Aronimink: Gary Player won by one shot over Bob Goalby for his first PGA Championship in 1962.

Previous winners at Aronimink: Sei Young Kim (2020 KPMG Women's PGA), Keegan Bradley (2018 BMW Championship), Nick Watney (2011 AT&T National), Justin Rose (2010 AT&T National), John Jacobs (2003 Senior PGA Championship).

The odds: Scottie Scheffler (+400), Rory McIlroy (+750), Cameron Young (+1400), Jon Rahm and Xander Schauffele (+1600).

Calendar Grand Slam: Masters champion Rory McIlroy can become the fifth player since 1960 to win the first two majors of the year.

Career Grand Slam: Jordan Spieth tries for the 10th time to complete the career Grand Slam at the PGA Championship. Of the six men with all four majors, none got the final leg at the PGA Championship.

Key statistic: Americans have won the PGA Championship the last 10 times, the longest such streak of any major.

Noteworthy: The PGA Championship has been held at 75 golf courses in 26 states.

Television (all times EDT): Thursday-Friday, 7 a.m. to noon (ESPN+), noon to 7 p.m. (ESPN); Saturday-Sunday, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. (ESPN+), 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. (ESPN), 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. (CBS and Paramount+).