

# Reed

## Achieves Major Champion Status with Gutsy Masters Victory

By Paul Prendergast

The Masters Tournament never fails to deliver on drama and 2018 was absolutely no exception to that rule as another classic Sunday of heart palpitations played out at Augusta National.

Standing tallest in the end having endured palpitations aplenty with the weight of an overnight lead on his shoulders and a chasing pack looming ever closer in his rear view mirror, was 27-year-old American Patrick Reed.

One of many to be viewed as destined to win a Major sooner rather than later, Reed's final round 71 was good enough to hold off another listed in that category, Rickie Fowler, and the even younger, but already a three-time Major winner, Jordan Spieth, by one and two strokes respectively.

"It's almost impossible to put into words. Just to make the par on the last and watch the ball go in the hole and know that I've won my first Major," Reed said.

"One of my huge goals this year was to not only contend in Majors, but also get back in that winning circle. To do it in the first Major and finish off that drought, it just meant so much to me."

At the start of the day, most concluded the 2018 Masters would be a shootout between Reed and one of his past Ryder Cup adversaries, Rory McIlroy, also in search of a first Masters victory to provide the final piece to the puzzle of an elusive career Grand Slam of Majors.

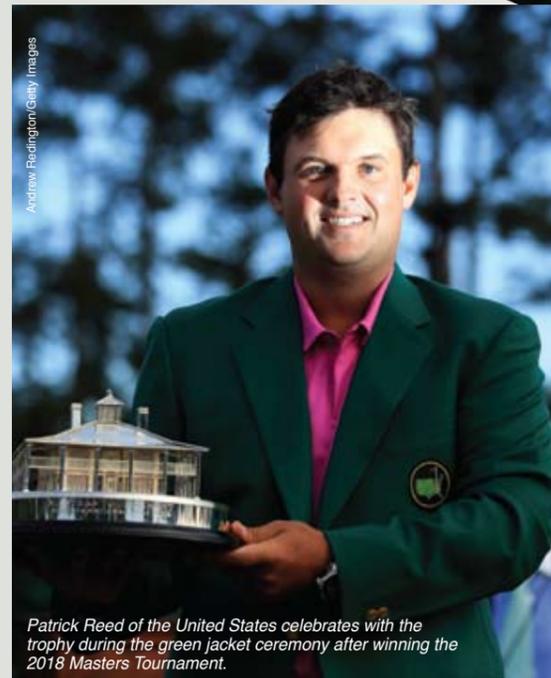
Reed later concluded the pairing with McIlroy and his date with a potential Grand Slam destiny was beneficial to his own chances.

"Honestly, I felt like a lot of that pressure was kind of lifted and kind of taken off me. You had a lot of the guys picking him (McIlroy) to win over me, and it's one of those things that the more chatter you hear in your ear about expectations and everything, the harder it is to play golf."



“ Patrick Reed

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Patrick Reed of the United States celebrates with the trophy during the green jacket ceremony after winning the 2018 Masters Tournament.

The often loud and proud Reed enjoyed arguably his greatest moment in golf with a leadoff Singles victory over McIlroy in the 'loud and proud' staging of the 2016 Ryder Cup at Hazeltine, setting in motion a wave of momentum that would carry the Americans to their first Ryder Cup success since 2008.

Over the opening handful of holes at Augusta, it was difficult to get a read on who might grasp the nettle, with Reed bogeying the first to have his overnight lead trimmed to two strokes, and McIlroy showing immediate intent with a soaring iron shot to within three feet for an eagle try at the second.

With Reed bunkered short and only able to make par, McIlroy's chance to draw level was lost when his putt slid by on the high side. A poor wedge at the short third spun down the slope fronting the green, leading to a deflating bogey for the Northern Irishman, his mood soured further with Reed having holed for birdie from

off the fringe to immediately restore a three-stroke lead.

As the final pair's fortunes continued to ebb and flow over the front nine, it was clear the American's main challengers, beyond any demons in his own head, were to come from players ahead of him and well back after 54 holes.

This Masters week had started with incredible scenes and it was only fitting it end with another pulsating conclusion on Sunday afternoon.

On Wednesday, 68-year old Tom Watson turned back the clock to win the Par 3 Tournament at six-under, two ahead of 77-year Jack Nicklaus, who in turn was two ahead of 82-year old Gary Player – the ageless trio combining for 12-under par.

On the final tee, Nicklaus handed an opportunity to his 15-year-old grandson and caddie, GT Nicklaus, and was then reduced to tears of unbridled joy when GT displayed the rich Nicklaus genes flowing through his veins by holing his tee shot.



Andrew Redington/Getty Images



David Cannon/Getty Images

Cameron Smith of Australia shared fifth with Bubba Watson, Henrik Stenson and Rory McIlroy on 9-under 279.



David Cannon/Getty Images

Rickie Fowler came close to his first Major, falling short by a shot on 14-under 274, after a final round 67.

Jordan Spieth finished third, two shots of the pace, on 13-under 275 after a final round 64.

Moments earlier, Tony Finau had shocked and amazed everyone by becoming the first man in Masters' (or any tournament) history to score an ace, dislocate an ankle and restore it back in place, inside 30 seconds.

Another classic 'Sunday back nine at Augusta', therefore, was destined to take shape under clear blue skies and after the early theatrics of the chasing pack, the leaderboard quickly took the form of a bookie's list of pre-tournament favourites.

Reed's recent Ryder and Presidents Cup team mates Fowler and Spieth were playing inspired golf, Spieth surging with a front nine of five-under 31 and continuing on with gay abandon over the second nine. When he holed one of those now 'to be expected' Spieth long bombs on the 16th for his ninth birdie of the day, he drew level with Reed for the first time at 14-under, having started the day nine back.

Before the roars from the 16th could subside however, Reed continued to demonstrate how impressively his game and temperament has developed with great swings on the 14th hole, with a solid tee shot followed up by a controlled iron that never left the flag.

When the curling eight-footer found the bottom of the cup, Reed had restored a slender lead heading into the final four holes.

Fowler's charge for his own breakthrough Major was built on the back of four-under back nine underlined by a final-hole birdie, which delighted patrons already quivering with excitement from the pulsating drama being played out by three of America's finest.

Ahead of Reed, crowd favourite Spieth's unlikely charge to a second Green Jacket and a new course record was cruelled when he pulled his tee shot off the 18th tee, clipping an overhanging tree and dropping down well short of the fairway. With the green out of reach, Spieth was unsuccessful in salvaging par and signed for an eight-under 64 for a 13-under total.

Fowler's five-under 67 meant that Reed needed to par to eclipse his 14-under clubhouse target and, he certainly went about it the hard way.

Long regarded for the bullish quality of his short game and scrambling skills, which have certainly come to the fore in a number of recent team events, Reed had to call on every facet of his repertoire over the course of the week, but none more critically than at the 17th.

Putting from off the front left of the green to the back right, Reed was both unlucky and very fortunate that the ball collided with the hole and flagstick, before coming to rest an uncomfortable five-feet away.



David Cannon/Getty Images

Jon Rahm finished fourth after a final round 69.



Rory McIlroy's final round 74 blew his chances of a career Grand Slam at this Masters.

Had the ball hit the middle of the flagstick and gone in, it would have been listed along with those 'Larry Mize' moments in Masters' folklore. Had it 'not' hit the hole, it's conceivable the ball could have careered off the green on the other side.

Cometh the man, however, and Reed seized the moment by holing the pressure-packed return putt to take a one-shot lead to the final hole.

"To be able to make that putt, I felt like on 14 (where he made birdie) and then the two-putt on 17, gave me that momentum going to 18," Reed would say.

Reaching the final green in two didn't signal an end to his challenges, however, as his downhill birdie putt Reed later said was one of the fastest he could have faced on the course. The daintiest of lag putts still saw the ball slide three feet by, but the former Georgia college student completed his hard-earned victory by calmly holing the return for his own Masters immortality.

Spain's Jon Rahm had his chances to emulate the final day charges of Fowler and Spieth, but finding the pond at 15 ended his charge, finishing in fourth place at 11-under.



Henrik Stenson closed with a round of 70 to share fifth.



Bubba Watson's final round 69 left him in a tie for fifth.



Reed being presented with the green jacket by 2017 Masters champion, Sergio Garcia, during the green jacket ceremony.

Patrick Reed

To have to par the last hole to win my first Major, it definitely felt right. I knew it was going to be tough. Just trying to close off a golf tournament is really hard, but to close off your first Major and to do it at a place that's so close to me, being this is where I went to college.

Australia's Cameron Smith romped home in six-under 30, which could have been 29 had he holed a short birdie putt on the final hole, to share fifth place with an illustrious group of Major champions in Bubba Watson, Henrik Stenson and Rory McIlroy.

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Final Leaderboard

Total	Name	Scores
273	Patrick Reed	69-66-67-71
274	Rickie Fowler	70-72-65-67
275	Jordan Spieth	66-74-71-64
277	Jon Rahm	75-68-65-69
279	Cameron Smith	71-72-70-66
279	Bubba Watson	73-69-68-69
279	Henrik Stenson	69-70-70-70
279	Rory McIlroy	69-71-65-74
280	Marc Leishman	70-67-73-70
281	Tony Finau	68-74-73-66
281	Dustin Johnson	73-68-71-69