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German

By Paul Prendergast

Precision Kaymer-style

Martin Kaymer has climbed to the summit and slid back down again but a magical week at Pinehurst No. 2 has the German on the ascent again, running roughshod over the field to win the 2014 US Open by eight strokes.

The 29-year-old embraced the restored classic of American golf to set all-time scoring records with opening rounds of 65-65, the first in history to do so at a US Open, and then toyed with the field at the weekend to become the first German and the fourth European in the last five years to claim the trophy.

Kaymer's dominance was proof that his steely performance in May to win The PLAYERS Championship to break an 18-month victory slump was the beginning, and not the culmination, of something much bigger, much grander.

Validation for all the hard work he has endured to regain the kind of form that won him the 2010 PGA Championship in a three-hole playoff with Dustin Johnson at Whistling Straits and lift 10 European Tour trophies from 2008-2011.

Further validation to any that doubted

that he was the genuine article when he topped the world rankings for a period of two months a little over three years ago.

"This is quite nice proof, to have two Major championships under your belt and only 29-years-old," said the newly crowned champion, 2012 Ryder Cup hero and the hottest man in golf right now.

A historic day lay ahead on Sunday for Kaymer and sleeping on a 5-shot lead was not even the half of it. Ahead lay the chance for the Dusseldorf-native's second Major championship, tying the all-time Deutsche record for Major wins with Bavaria's Bernhard Langer.

Whether he knew it or not, Kaymer also slept on the prospect of a slew of scrapbook entry moments; becoming the first Continental European winner of the US Open; becoming just the fifth player – alongside Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino, Tiger Woods and Raymond Floyd – to win the US Open, PGA Championship and The PLAYERS treble; and the only European alongside the great Severiano Ballesteros to have won two Majors and held the World No. 1 ranking before turning 30.

Sitting there with the US Open trophy late on Sunday night is ... very, very happy. Very, very nice. Very, very satisfying.

Martin Kaymer



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I felt really comfortable, which is a very good thing. The more experience you can get in the final groups, and especially in Majors and being in contention at Majors, it definitely helps out for down the road.

Rickie Fowler

Rickie Fowler hits a shot from a bunker on the ninth hole

Once Sunday dawned, the inevitable became the reality with no player able to inch any closer than four shots of Kaymer and even then, only briefly.

Kaymer capped off his commanding ball striking and putting performance by completing what is becoming a Pinehurst Open champion's rite of passage: missing the 18th fairway to the right and pitching out of the sandy rough, just as Payne Stewart (1999) and Michael Campbell (2005) did before him.

Like Stewart in '99 although with far less pressure, Kaymer holed a lengthy par putt to win by eight over the dogged dual-heart transplant recipient Erik Compton and playing partner Rickie Fowler.

"I didn't make many mistakes," said Kaymer, after his four birdie, three bogey final round of 69 for a 72-hole total of nine-under 271. "The last two wins that I had in America, especially this week, I played very solid the first two days and that gave me a very nice cushion for the weekend.

"But to shoot only one-over-par at Pinehurst on Saturday and Sunday is good. The way I played I was very happy, the way I kept it together yesterday. And that gave me a good cushion for today."

Kaymer's eight-stroke romp tied Ryder Cup teammate Rory McIlroy's victory margin in 2011 when the Northern Irishman lapped the field at Congressional. Behind the pair of them in each year, a 'helluva second flight' was contested and the potential storylines in 2014 were plentiful.

A first Major for Fowler, Henrik Stenson, Matt Kuchar, Dustin Johnson; a true feel good story in Compton. Keegan Bradley tweeted on Sunday morning that "Eric Compton winning today would probably be the best story in the history of sports." He may not be wrong.

Sadly for them and for the second Major in a row, there was nobody who would step up in the early stages on a windless afternoon to have Kaymer question his resolve or even remotely glance into his rear vision mirror.

With the challengers failing to advance, Kaymer held playing partner Fowler at bay and went about obliterating any chance of these headlines making it to print with a performance that reeked of outstanding German precision and engineering.

"He kind of killed the event in the first two days," said the vanquished Stenson. "And then it was more a question of if



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Erik Compton reacts to making a putt for birdie on the eighth hole.



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Keegan Bradley playing his second shot on the third hole during the final round.

he would keep it under control. He held everyone off and then went out and played a solid round today.

"So very impressive and a very deserving champion."

Fowler, to his credit, was playing in his first final round Major pairing and built on the swing changes he has made with coach Butch Harmon that also logged him a tied fifth finish at The Masters in April.

He wore knickers during Thursday's

first round to acknowledge the late Payne Stewart but on Sunday, was back in his Oklahoma State orange final round garb and with a maturing game that now seems destined for greater things.

"I felt really comfortable, which is a very good thing," said Fowler. "The more experience you can get in the final groups, and especially in Majors and [being] in contention at Majors, it definitely helps out for down the road."



David Cannon/Getty Images

Jason Day of Australia hits his third shot from a bunker on the fifth hole.

World Cup and WGC Matchplay-winner Jason Day of Australia impressed yet again at a US Open to finish one better than Scott in a tie for fourth.

Fowler had the early American crowd support but as the final round unfolded and it became clear that he was not simply there to make up the numbers, the gallery were quick to share their support with the 'underdog' in Compton.

"On every hole, from the tee box to the putting green, people were cheering for me and I definitely felt the love and the support from the crowd," Compton said, who is still in search of his first win on Tour.

Compton got into this championship using the same fighting qualities he showed on Sunday, surviving a five-way playoff in sectional qualifying. His history as a survivor is well documented and a 'never give up attitude' to life and golf gave him a chance – outside as it was – of a Cinderella Story on Sunday.

"Seemed like people really got around my story," Compton continued, "And for me to be here and to do this at such a high level is just as good of a feeling as winning a golf tournament. So it's just a great feeling. I can't wait to get back into another Major."

He won't be waiting long as the 34-year-old's finish in this just his second Major, will guarantee him a start in at least a few more.



Brooks Koepka hits a shot from a greenside bunker on the 12th hole.

David Cannon/Getty Images

The pre-championship Cinderella story of a grand slam of Majors for Phil Mickelson was not to be as the runner-up to Stewart at Pinehurst 1999 battled to a distant seven-over-par total, while world number one Adam Scott was up and down during the championship with a pair of 73s blotting his copybook.

A closing 69 to finish at two-over gave the Australian his eighth Top-10 in his last fourteen Majors while his World Cup and WGC Matchplay-winning compatriot Jason Day impressed yet again at a US Open to finish one better than Scott in a tie for fourth.

The injured Tiger Woods was missed but just like the spectacularly restored Pinehurst No. 2 course which was a marvel all week, a renewed Martin Kaymer has more than adequately filled the void of a dominant champion with a performance for the ages.

"To sit here with the US Open trophy," Kaymer said, "Sitting there with the US Open trophy late on Sunday night is ... very, very happy. Very, very nice. Very, very satisfying."

About the only negative for Kaymer will be his record scoring spree will result in further handicap shortening at the Whisper Rock Golf Club he calls home in Scottsdale, Arizona. The club will be swift to lower his handicap further from +5.9 as it stood at the end of May.

Off such an austere mark, there will be plenty of well heeled, well performed members lining up to take their chance at rolling the reigning US Open and PLAYERS champion when he's back in town.

They should bring their money with them, this streak might not be at an end just yet. ●



Sam Greenwood/Getty Images

Above: (l-r) LPGA players Brittany Lang, Jaye Marie Green, Belen Mozo and Brittany Lincicome follow the play during the final round of the 114th US Open.

Dustin Johnson of the United States hits his tee shot on the eighth hole.



Andrew Redington/Getty Images

Adam Scott playing his second shot on the third hole as a gallery of fans look on.



David Cannon/Getty Images

Sweden's Henrik Stenson finish tied fourth.



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Final Leaderboard

| Score | Name | Scores | US\$ |
|-------|-----------------|-------------|-----------|
| 271 | Martin Kaymer | 65-65-72-69 | 1,620,000 |
| 279 | Rickie Fowler | 72-68-67-72 | 789,330 |
| 279 | Erik Compton | 70-70-67-72 | 789,330 |
| 281 | Keegan Bradley | 69-69-76-67 | 326,310 |
| 281 | Jason Day | 73-68-72-68 | 326,310 |
| 281 | Brooks Koepka | 70-68-72-71 | 326,310 |
| 281 | Dustin Johnson | 69-69-70-73 | 326,310 |
| 281 | Henrik Stenson | 69-69-70-73 | 326,310 |
| 282 | Adam Scott | 73-67-73-69 | 230,900 |
| 282 | Jimmy Walker | 70-72-71-69 | 230,900 |
| 282 | Brandt Snedeker | 69-68-72-73 | 230,900 |