

GOLF

CARLSBAD, Calif.

Tiger wins Match Play round in minimum holes

Arms crossed, staring into the soul of his opponent, Tiger Woods looked as though he was wrapped up in one of those nerve-racking moments that define the Match Play Championship.

But that wasn't the case.

Ruthless to the end until his name was in the record books, Woods won the first nine holes, seven with birdies, and closed out Stephen Ames as early as mathematically possible, 9 and 8.

"It's been a while since I played one like that," Woods said with a smile.

It wasn't Woods' largest margin in match play. He once beat Ted Snaveley, 11 and 10, at the Pacific Northwest Amateur in 1994 at Royal Oaks in Vancouver, Wash. But that was scheduled for 36 holes.

Winning was a chore for Scott Verplank, who matched the tournament record by going 26 holes before he finally disposed of Lee Westwood of England.



WOODS

BY MICHAEL MAROT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDIANAPOLIS

When the NCAA Tournament selection committee selects and seeds the field of 65 each March, committee members usually rely on schedule strength to make the tough decisions.

This year could be different. Committee chairman Craig Littlepage said Wednesday that with so few clear-cut choices for the 34 at-large berths, imbalanced conference schedules and gridlock in some league standings, the committee's task this season is more daunting.

"We know we are going to face some unusual challenges this year, and specifically because of conference realignments," Littlepage said during an hour-long conference call. "It seems we have some gridlock at the top or in the middle of conferences."

"And because there has been some imbalanced conference scheduling, it means some teams

might not have played the same schedules."

In recent years, the committee has placed a greater emphasis on scheduling, rewarding schools that play strong opponents, particularly nonconference, while penalizing teams that increase their victory totals by defeating far inferior opponents.

Now comes another variable: conference scheduling.

With fewer teams playing round robins in the power conferences, Littlepage acknowledged it is tougher to evaluate teams with similar records even in league play. Big East teams, for instance, play nine conference opponents once and three teams twice but don't play three.

"You have some conferences where teams might not be playing the same schedule, and some conferences that have non-plays," he said. "Finally, there's the question that you need a .500 record in league play to get consideration, but with the schedules, that presents some difficult challenges."

As usual, Littlepage said, the committee will evaluate teams on an individual basis rather than debating which conferences deserve multiple bids.

But this year's results could be unique.

• Kentucky could finish 8-8 in the Southeastern Conference despite failing to beat a foe with a .500 record in league play.

• Mid-major conferences are hoping to become bigger players in the at-large process this year, and Littlepage intimated that could happen. He cited the Missouri Valley, Mid-American, Sun Belt and Colonial Athletic Association as having strong seasons.

• And because there are fewer favorites for the at-large bids, the committee could be faced with some difficult explanations. Littlepage acknowledged that in the 16-team Big East, for instance, it was possible for a team that does not qualify for the 12-team post-season tournament to jump into the NCAA Tournament ahead of one that does.

WHERE THEY STAND

The Rating Percentage Index is one factor used by the NCAA Tournament selection committee to fill the field of 65 teams for each year's tournament. Here are this week's RPI standings for the nation's top 10 teams and Division I schools in Indiana.

Rank	School	Index	Schedule rank
1.	Duke	.7082	2
2.	Villanova	.6751	12
3.	Connecticut	.6618	43
4.	Tennessee	.6597	6
5.	Memphis	.6483	42
6.	Pittsburgh	.6411	52
7.	Ohio State	.6390	30
8.	Michigan St.	.6310	23
9.	Gonzaga	.6289	90
10.	Texas	.6275	59
44.	Indiana	.5855	18
78.	Butler	.5567	112
86.	Notre Dame	.5512	47
126.	IUPUI	.5224	270
142.	Indiana State	.5116	94
168.	Purdue	.4969	46
184.	Valparaiso	.4835	321
223.	Evansville	.4632	83
228.	Ball State	.4599	151
281.	IP-Fort Wayne	.4267	231

SOURCE: rpiratings.com

• Doubters

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

runner-up in the uneven bars and all-around at last year's state meet. She is easily the most accomplished gymnast in Center Grove history.

Since her departure, the Trojans have relied more on consistency from all gymnasts rather than prolific scoring from just one or two individuals.

For example, Maurer, Blankenship and junior Megan Roller regularly place in the top three in their respective events.

Maurer has finished first in the floor exercise eight times and first on the uneven bars five times this season. Roller has won the all-around six times overall, including each of the past five meets. Before that, Blankenship had won the all-around three straight times.

"I think it's awesome that we're putting ourselves in this position," Roller said. "After Hesler graduated, a lot of people thought we wouldn't be able to do this."

"It's just awesome being able to prove people wrong and get better as the season goes along."

Center Grove's young talent also has played a critical role.

Freshman Katelyn Fernandes

has become a threat in the vault. She broke the school record Saturday at the Lafayette Harrison Invitational.

Fernandes scored a 9.7, breaking the old record of 9.625 set by Roller in 2005. The score also ties her with Fort Wayne Dwenger's Juanita Nix for the second-best vault score in the state this year.

But not only did she win the event, she also captured her first all-around title.

"I was really excited," said Fernandes, who also was first on the balance beam and tied Roller for first in floor. "When I heard the score, I was really surprised."

"I didn't think it was worth that much."

Fernandes joined the Trojans this year after taking three years off from club gymnastics because of burnout. And she's continuously worked at improving her vaulting technique.

During the first couple of meets, she had problems with landings. But she continued to drill and finally worked through the problem.

During a Feb. 1 meet at Perry Meridian, Fernandes won the vault, and since then has finished first five times in the past seven meets.

"I got the feel of the flip," Fernandes said. "I used to kick out early."

Center Grove coach Eric Howe

knew Fernandes had potential. But he is surprised how she has progressed.

"I think she has surprised quite a bit of people the way she's turned it on," Howe said. "She's just doing it with a lot more confidence. She's coming into her own as a high school gymnast and finding her comfort zone within our team."

"We view our team as a whole family. She's finding her little niche in it."

Center Grove started the season with a difficult schedule but quickly got in a groove that it has maintained all season.

In the second and third meets of the season, the Trojans narrowly defeated state powers Lawrence Central and Warren Central, respectively, on the road.

The Trojans have been motoring ever since. And they take a wealth of confidence and momentum into the March 4 sectional at Columbus East, where they're not only bidding for a fourth straight title but take the first step in what they hope is a march to the state championship.

"I think all the pieces are there this year," Howe said.

"We've been there the past three years. What it comes down to is who shows up at the state meet and maintains focus throughout the entire meet."

posted at Saturday's sectional.

Blackwell attributed his regional confidence to his performance in the sectional.

"I was less stressed out," Blackwell said. "When you do what you do at practice instead of worrying about what everyone else thinks, it makes everything a lot easier and more fun."

Blackwell hasn't changed much of his repertoire from last season. He's just hitting his dives more consistently.

For the first time in his career, he has had the same diving coach, Larry Albright, for two consecutive years. That has helped with consistency.

"When you're consistent, it helps you with other dives you're not sure of," Blackwell said. "It relaxes you. It makes it hard for people to catch up with you. If you're not messing up on any dives, then they don't have a chance to really gain on you."

Apart from aiming to become Franklin's highest-placing diver, Blackwell's goal is to earn a medal with a top-eight finish.

"This is my last chance to try to see what I can do," Blackwell said. "Hopefully, I'll have my best meet ever and finish higher than what I think I should."

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Josh Blackwell
Franklin Community High School
diver on competing at state finals

gram and for himself. Franklin coach Kurt Hass said Blackwell has no small task in front of him.

"The boys program has been overshadowed by the girls program, due largely to the six state champions," Hass said. "The fact they did it in such a small period of time is a big deal."

"As far as the boys program is concerned, it's a little different scenario. They haven't had six state champions."

"Yet we've had some kids that have been really successful."

Blackwell is taking momentum into the state meet.

He scored a season- and career-high 452.05 points at Tuesday's regionals, good enough for first place. The score broke his previous best of 407 points, which he

first time in Wayne's five seasons that he led the Colts in receptions.

The two sides agreed to the deal Wednesday, less than 24 hours before the NFL's deadline to designate franchise players.

But Wayne wanted more than money out of his contract.

"He thinks in terms of enjoying the situation with the team and the offense he's familiar with," Dunn said. "And having Peyton (Manning) throwing you the ball and coach Dungy doesn't hurt. He thinks it's a good situation."

Wayne has caught 304 passes for 4,164 yards and 28 touchdowns in

five seasons. He topped the 1,000-yard mark in 2004 and 2005 when he established himself as one of Manning's top targets. He caught a then-career-high 77 passes for 1,210 yards and 12 TDs in 2004 when he became part of the NFL's first receiving trio to top 1,000 yards and 10 TDs.

Now the Colts must make a decision on Edgerrin James.

James, a two-time league rushing champion, will become an unrestricted free agent March 3 unless the Colts put the franchise tag on him for the second straight season.

FOOTBALL

COLUMBUS, Ohio

Clarett pleads not guilty to robbery charges

Former Ohio State running back Maurice Clarett pleaded not guilty to charges that he flashed a gun at two people behind a bar on New Year's Day and took a cell phone.

Prosecutors allowed Clarett to enter his plea on robbery charges Tuesday with the clerk's office, avoiding his arraignment in court scheduled for Friday, Duane Williams, deputy clerk for Franklin County Common Pleas Court, said Wednesday.

Clarett got into a sport utility vehicle with two men after he was identified by the bar owner, who happened to come out into the alley, police said. No one was injured.

Clarett, who led Ohio State to the 2002 national title, was sought by police for almost two days before he surrendered about the time the Buckeyes were completing a victory against Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 2.

ANNAPOLIS, Md.

Naval Academy charges quarterback with rape

Navy quarterback Lamar Owens has been charged with raping a female midshipman in her dormitory room, the academy announced Wednesday.

"These charges are accusations, and Midshipman Owens is presumed innocent until proven otherwise," academy spokesman Cmdr. Rod Gibbons said.

Since the reported attack last month occurred on academy grounds, Owens was charged under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and the investigation is being handled by the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Gibbons said.

The academy did not release the name of the woman.

COLLEGES

LOS ANGELES

Former athletes want end to scholarship caps

Three former college athletes sued to lift the NCAA's cap on financial aid and allow schools to pay for such items as laundry, health insurance and travel.

The antitrust suit was filed Friday in federal court. It seeks to overturn NCAA rules limiting college athletic scholarships to covering tuition, books, housing and meals.

The suit was filed on behalf of former football players Jason White of Stanford and Brian Polak of UCLA and former University of San Francisco basketball player Jovan Harris.

The complaint contends that the rules are an unlawful restraint of trade because major college football and basketball games constitute a lucrative and profitable business.



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As we continue to grow, my first priority is to make sure that Edward Jones always provides exceptional service to every investor in Franklin who chooses to do business with us. To that end, I'm pleased to announce that Mike Deppe has joined our team. He is anxious to continue the Edward Jones tradition of service and to put his knowledge and expertise, as well as the full resources of our firm to work for you.

I'm pleased to be working with Mike and feel sure you will be as impressed with his professionalism as I am. Should he contact you, I know you will extend the same warm welcome you have always given me. If we can be of service at anytime, please call or stop by the office.

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