

## **Wagner wins Shell Open, heads for Masters**

**APRIL 7, 2008**—He couldn't help himself.

Wagner sweats as a matter of course, and there was an inordinate amount of heat on him Sunday at the Redstone Golf Club Tournament Course.

Perspiration seeping through his shirt, a towel never far from reach, Wagner managed not to melt down in the final round of the Shell Houston Open. He closed out his first PGA Tour victory by shooting a 1-under-par 71. With a 16-under-par 272, Wagner finished two strokes ahead of Chad Campbell and Geoff Ogilvy.

"I sweat through my shirt every day," Wagner said. "I sweat getting out of the shower."

He especially sweats after four consecutive days in the lead, with a \$1.008 million paycheck there for the taking. The temperature was a comfortable 81 as Wagner stood on the final green, but he may as well have been in a blast furnace. He woke up Sunday as the 313th-ranked player in the world. He went to bed with a two-year tour exemption and the last spot in this week's Masters.

"It was very high pressure the last two days, and I don't know how I got through it," said Wagner, an Amarillo native who had missed six cuts in nine previous starts this season. "I thought I was going to get sick on myself out there a couple times."

One time could have been watching a four-stroke lead at the turn shrink to one by the time Wagner walked off the 15th green. Another time could have been standing over a par putt at No. 17, leading by two, having left his previous attempt 11 feet short. Another time could have been standing at the tee box of the 488-yard No. 18, water looming along the left side of the entire hole.

"It'd probably be easier to tell you the times I didn't feel like I was going to get sick," Wagner said.

Wagner is the 13th first-time winner at the SHO. He shot a course-record 63 in the first round and never relinquished the lead. In the process, Wagner became the fifth player in SHO history to have at least a share of the lead from wire to wire.

"It's very impressive," said 2003 champion Fred Couples, who shot 66 in the final round to finish in a fourth-place tie with Billy Mayfair (66-275). "To be able to be in the lead or near the lead for 72 holes is not an easy thing to accomplish. Usually, it's done by a player who has done it before."

### **CAMPBELL GOES BACKWARD**

Wagner began the final day one stroke ahead of Campbell (72) and two ahead of Bob Estes (72) and Charley Hoffman (72). Campbell backtracked on the front nine, making four bogeys and only one birdie. Hoffman and Estes made the turn exactly where they started at 12 under. Wagner sprinkled birdies at Nos. 2, 4 and 8 around a bogey at the par-4 No. 6 to make the turn at 17 under.

“I was freaked out all day today and yesterday,” Wagner said. “But I’ve been doing a lot of deep breathing out on the golf course. It kind of settles me down.”

Before Wagner could settle into cruise control, Estes birdied the 11th and 12th holes to get to 14 under. Ogilvy (68) birdied four of his first 13 holes to get to 14 under. Campbell birdied Nos. 11-13 to get to 14 under. When Wagner three-putted the par-3 No. 14, his lead was two.

Campbell cut the lead to one when he birdied the par-5 No. 15. Playing alongside Wagner, Campbell took aim at the par-3 No. 16 with a 5-iron. Misjudging the wind, he put the ball in the left bunker and made bogey.

“I wish I would have put a little more pressure on Johnson all day, but it just didn’t happen,” Campbell said.

## **FEAR OF WATER**

Wagner created a mini-crisis for himself after he left his approach at No. 17 60 feet from the hole. He left his first putt 11 feet short. He saved par anyway, giving him a two-stroke lead to take to the 18th tee. Last year’s champion, Adam Scott, took a one-stroke lead to No. 18 and proceeded to hit his tee shot in the water.

“When I got over the bridge and saw that the guys in front of us hadn’t even hit yet, I kind of started freaking out,” Wagner said. “Lot of bad thoughts went through my head.”

Bad thought No. 1: “Don’t hook it in the water.” Bad thought No. 2: “If you do hook it in the water, make it cross the land so you don’t have to hit the tee shot again.”

Wagner steered clear of the water and into a bunker right of the fairway. He left a 6-iron short of the green, chipped to 6 feet and saved par to secure his first victory. A tour winner at age 28, Wagner kept pumping his fist and slapping hands with caddie Steve Hale.

“When that went in on 18, it was more relief that it was over and excitement and so many different feelings mixed into one,” Wagner said. “I just kind of went crazy. But I was happy to go crazy.”

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