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Golf

News

Weir cleans up at Skins Game

June 22, 2010

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THE CANADIAN PRESS

VICTORIA -- Canadian Mike Weir says he saved his best shot for his last Tuesday to win a 125-yard pitch-off and \$270,000 as the Telus Skins Game was decided in an extra-hole shootout.

The pitch-off was needed after the five golfers -- South Africa's Retief Goosen, England's Ian Poulter, Colombia's Camilo Villegas, Fred Couples of the United States and Weir -- did not win a single skin after nine holes.

The prize money grew to include 12 skins, nine Tuesday and three left over from Monday's nine holes.



Mike Weir.

Goosen won \$75,000 on Monday with five skins and Poulter won one skin and \$15,000 Monday.

"It was tough to make birdies out there," said Weir, noting the five golfers only made seven birdies Tuesday and 15 birdies Monday. "It was just that kind of a day. It was kind of tough to separate yourself. We had to go to extra holes."

The golfer from Bright's Grove, Ont., credited his win to hitting the right shot at the right time.

"That's what skins is."

Weir narrowly missed winning a \$245,000 skin on the par-4 17th, but his putt hit the edge of the hole and lipped out.

Weir said he plans to take some time off before playing in the British Open next month at St. Andrews in Scotland.

Weir said he didn't know he won the pitch-off until a tournament official said his shot was about a foot-and-a-half ahead of the next closest by Villegas.

Villegas and sentimental crowd favourite Fred Couples of the United States went skinless over the two days. Couples was playing in his 11th skins game in Canada has won more than \$1 million.

Weir and Poulter came closest to winning skins at earlier holes, but their missed putts had the spectators groaning.

Goosen's birdie touch cooled Tuesday, forcing the former U.S. Open champion to play from the bunkers more than he would like.

Poulter was the most animated and vocal of the golfers, often trading self-deprecating asides with spectators.

"You're killing me," said Poulter as a spectator pointed to one of his wayward drives that landed in deep grass on a hillside near the spectators.

"Why couldn't you kick it when it was still moving?" he said.

On the par-hole 13, Poulter rubbed his hands together greedily as he went for a birdie, but missed.

This was the 18th skins game in Canada and the fifth time it has been played in British Columbia.

The traditional skins format is the low score on each hole wins the prize money for that hole. If there is a tie for the low score on any hole, the money is carried over to the next hole until there is a low-score winner.

The skins money was set at: \$15,000 for holes one to six; \$20,000 for holes seven to 12 and \$25,000 for holes 13 to 18.

Telus announced it raised \$925,000 from the event to donate to the Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children in support of Jeneece Place, a proposed home away from home for children and their families who travel to Victoria for specialized pediatric treatment.

At the conclusion of the Skins Game, Telus officials said they will top up the donations to Jeneece Place to \$1 million.

The Bear Mountain Resort, boasting two 36-hole Jack Nicklaus-designed courses, first opened in 2003.

The Mountain course, where the Skins Game was held, is a par-2, 7,212-yard course that offers challenging terrain and mountain-top ocean views. The par-71, 6,807-yard Valley course is less challenging and is set just above sea level.

Previous pros competing at past Canadian skins games were: Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino, Greg Norman, John Daly, Vijay Singh, Sergio Garcia, Phil Mickelson and Tom Watson.

Villegas, Goosen, Weir and Couples all said they are entering this year's Canadian Open later this summer.

Poulter said he won't be at the Open this year, but plans to return soon.

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