

SPORTS

'It's so great to be racing back in front of fans again'

Keselowski wins in New Hampshire for 3rd win since shutdown

LOUDON, NH, Aug 3, (AP) — With about 70 laps to go in his back-and-forth battle against Brad Keselowski, Denny Hamlin radioed in to his team: "This is awesome racing."

Imagine how Keselowski felt. The 2012 Cup champion took the checkered flag at New Hampshire Motor Speedway on Sunday, beating Hamlin by 1.647 seconds after trading the lead with him for most of the 301-lap race.

The two swapped stage wins and held the lead a combined 18 times before Keselowski claimed his third victory since the sport returned from the pandemic shutdown, along with the now-traditional prize of a 18-pound, live lobster. Afterward, Keselowski grabbed a U.S. flag and spun his car around in front of a crowd that spent most of the race masked and socially distanced before crowding the fence to chant "Brad! "Brad!"

"It's so great to be racing back in front of fans again. It feels like forever, so welcome back, guys," said Keselowski, who is in a contract year at Team Penske. "We're just so glad to have them all back. It feels so weird to be racing without fans, but we're glad you're here. I hope you stay safe and thank you for being here."

Hamlin also finished second in New

Hampshire last year following a sprint to the finish that left him 0.210 seconds behind Kevin Harvick. Hamlin has five victories this year, including last week in Kansas.

"It was fun racing those guys. They were very very deserving today and I'm happy for them," he said. "The two best cars finished 1-2 today and they got the better end of it. I was having a good time there."

CAR RACING

Martin Truex Jr. was third after working his way back from the rear of the field because of a penalty for a runaway tire in the pits. Joey Logano was fourth and Harvick fifth.

"When those things happen, you just have to buckle down and get what you can get," Truex said. "Fortunately, we were able to come back from it."

Kyle Busch was last after a flat front right tire on the backstretch sent him skidding into the wall after just 15 laps. The reigning Cup champion is a 12-time winner in New Hampshire, including three in the top series.

"About halfway down the backstretch I felt it go flat and tried to get slowed



Driver Brad Keselowski holds a giant lobster to celebrate his victory in a NASCAR Cup Series auto race on Aug 2 at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon, NH. (AP)

down enough without taking everybody else running over me behind me down the straightaway," he said. "Seems to be our luck with the Pedigree car here at New Hampshire. ... It's still 2020, but sooner or later we have to turn this stuff around." The track has a capacity of 76,000, but

Gov Chris Sununu said last week that he expected about 12,000 fans to attend. A track spokeswoman said attendance would not be announced, but it appeared to be about 10% full.

The governor gave a brief welcome before the race and thanked fans for co-

operating with the restrictions. Fans were required to wear masks when making their way around the track but could remove them in their seats.

Hamlin won the first stage after fighting for the lead with Keselowski and Ryan Blaney. Keselowski took the second stage, passing Hamlin on the final lap of a two-lap sprint following a series of cautions late in the stage. It was his sixth stage win - the most of any driver.

Keselowski appeared to get the worst of a preseason staffing shuffle when he got the least accomplished of the three Penske crew chiefs. But Jeremy Bullins has focused on helping Keselowski win races and earn a contract extension.

"Talking to Jeremy Bullins, it was, 'What do we need to do to get to the next level?' Go dominate a race, and that's what we did today," Keselowski said. "Jeremy and this team has been a good kick in the butt."

In his last start in New Hampshire, where he swept the Cup Series events in 2003, Jimmie Johnson recovered from an early spin to finish 12th. The seven-time NASCAR champion finished the day 18th in the playoff race - below the cut line - and has only six races left to make up ground.

Johnson, who has said this will be his last year as a full-time Cup driver, was presented with a replica Revolutionary War musket as a parting gift, and "Thanks Jimmie 48" was painted on the inner wall. A trail on the property was named the Jimmie Johnson 5K trail for the fitness nut, who ran in the Boston Marathon last year.

Others on the bubble jostling for the 16 playoff spots are 14th-place Clint Bowyer, who finished 18th on Sunday, Matt DiBenedetto (15th, finished sixth), William Byron (16th, finished 11th), Tyler Reddick (17th, finished 10th), Johnson and Erik Jones (19th, finished 24th).

Bubba Wallace and Corey LaJoie were sent to the back of the grid because of improperly mounted ballast that was discovered during pre-race inspection. Both crews were also docked 10 points in the driver and owner standings.

Jerry Baxter, the crew chief for Wallace's No. 43 car, and Ryan Sparks, the crew chief for LaJoie's No. 32, were suspended for the race.

Wallace finished 23rd. He is also a free agent, and Richard Petty Motorsports co-owner Andrew Murstein said earlier Sunday that the team had offered Wallace an ownership stake as part of a proposed extension.

'Big step for athletes'

Tokyo Paralympic competition schedule will be same next yr

TOKYO, Aug 3, (AP) — The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic schedule remains essentially unchanged for the event that has been postponed until next year, organizers said on Monday.

Tokyo organizers made a similar announcement several weeks ago for the postponed Olympics.

The Paralympics open on Aug 24, 2021, and close on Sept 5. The Olympics are to open on July 23.

Organizers have lined up the same 43 venues that would have been used this year for the Olympics and Paralympics. The massive Athletes Village and the media center have also been secured.

"There are no major changes to the schedule," Hide Nakamura, the games delivery officer, said. "Having the schedule being fixed is a big step for athletes."

Local organizers and the International Olympic Committee have offered few details about how these two massive events can be held in the midst of a pandemic, or even the wake of a pandemic. They say they are trying to prepare for many scenarios that could include quarantines, limited fans, and massive cuts in staffing.

Some medical experts have said the Olympics and Paralympics cannot be held safely unless

there is a vaccine. Others have said quarantines could be enough to safeguard Japan from athletes coming in from more than 200 countries and territories.

The Olympics involve 11,000 athletes and 4,400 are scheduled for the Paralympics. In addition, tens of thousands of games officials, media, and hospitality providers work behind the scenes. About 4.5 million tickets have already been sold for the Olympics.

The Paralympics involve 539 events and 22 sports.

Japan has attributed just over 1,000 deaths to COVID-19, modest numbers by global standards.

However, Tokyo has seen its new cases rise steadily in the last several weeks. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have resisted calling

PARALYMPICS

for a state of emergency, but bars and restaurants in Tokyo have been told to close early.

Organizers have given no cost estimate for the delay, although media in Japan have put it at \$2 billion to \$6 billion. Most of the costs are to be picked up by Japanese governments.

The International Olympic Committee has said it will chip in \$650 million.

The costs of delay come on top of \$12.6 billion that Tokyo says it is officially spending to prepare. A government audit has said the costs are twice that much.



Koike



In this July 22, 2018 file photo, Tokyo 2020 Paralympic mascot 'Someity' stands on stage during their debut event in Tokyo. (AP)

Vandeweghe, Melichar shine

New York Empire claim World Team Tennis title

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, WV, Aug 3, (AP) — The New York Empire won the World Team Tennis title Sunday, with Coco Vandeweghe and Nicole Melichar surviving a championship point against the Chicago

Luckily, I controlled it in the right way.

It really accentuated what World Team Tennis is - the team vibe, team energy, people picking each other up when they're down. I had so much fun out there."

In women's singles, 2017 US Open winner Stephens beat Vandeweghe 5-3 to make the score 16-13.

The Empire jumped out to a quick start thanks to Jack Sock, who had wins in mixed doubles with Vandeweghe and men's doubles with Neal Skupski. Sock fell to 18-year-old Brandon Nakashima 5-0 in singles.



Vandeweghe

MEMPHIS, Tennessee, Aug 3, (AP): Justin Thomas won the FedEx St Jude Invitational on Sunday to take the No. 1 spot in the world for the first time since June 2018.

Thomas duelled defending champion Brooks Koepka down the final holes, sealing the World Golf Championship victory on the par-5 16th. Thomas took the lead for good with his second straight birdie, while Koepka bogeyed the hole.

Koepka pulled within a stroke with a 39-footer for birdie on No. 17. But Koepka put his tee shot into the water along the 18th fairway on his way to double bogey, allowing Thomas to finish up an easy par putt for what wound up a three-stroke victory.

Thomas closed with a 5-under 66 to finish at 13-under 267 and take the \$10.5 million winner's check for his 13th PGA Tour title. At 27, he became the third-youngest player since 1960 to reach 13 PGA Tour wins, trailing only Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus.

This was the fifth time Thomas rallied to win, and he matched his biggest comeback after starting the day four strokes back of third-round leader Brendon Todd. Thomas has three wins this season, two since the start of the year.

The last time Thomas was No. 1, he spent four weeks at the top of the ranking. He will supplant Jon Rahm, who became No. 1 after winning at Memorial two weeks ago.

Koepka will go to TPC Harding Park in San Francisco looking to defend his PGA championship title. He finished with a 69 and tied for second with Phil Mickelson (67), Daniel Berger (65) and Tom Lewis (66).

Thomas had Jim "Bones" Mackay on his bag, playing in the same group with Mickelson for the first time since Mickelson split with his longtime caddie. Mackay was a late fill-in for Thomas' usual caddie, Jimmy Johnson.

GOLF

In Toledo, Ohio, Danielle Kang played the brand of steady golf that wins on tough golf courses, closing with a 2-under 70 at Inverness Club and winning the LPGA Drive On Championship in the first LPGA Tour event in more than five months.

Kang and Celine Boutier of France turned the final hour into a terrific duel, and they were tied when Kang made her lone bogey on the par-5 13th with a poor chip from the thick collar.

It was Boutier who blinked last. She missed a short par putt on the 15th hole to fall one shot behind, and then stuffed her approach to 4 feet below the hole on the 18th. Instead of a playoff, however, Boutier made a tentative stroke on a tricky putt and the ball caught the left edge of the cup and spun away.

Kang, the No. 4 player in the women's world ranking, won for the fourth time in her career. It was her first LPGA competition since Jan 23 in Florida. She did not go to Australia, and then the COVID-19 pandemic halted play on the Asian swing and then on through the summer.

Boutier, who won the Women's Texas Open during her time off, made an 8-foot birdie putt on the 14th to tie Kang before she started to slip. Boutier closed with a 71.

Inverness hosted the one-time event, and both contenders are likely to be back next summer when the storied club hosts the Solheim Cup. The LPGA Tour stays in northeast Ohio next week for the Marathon Classic.

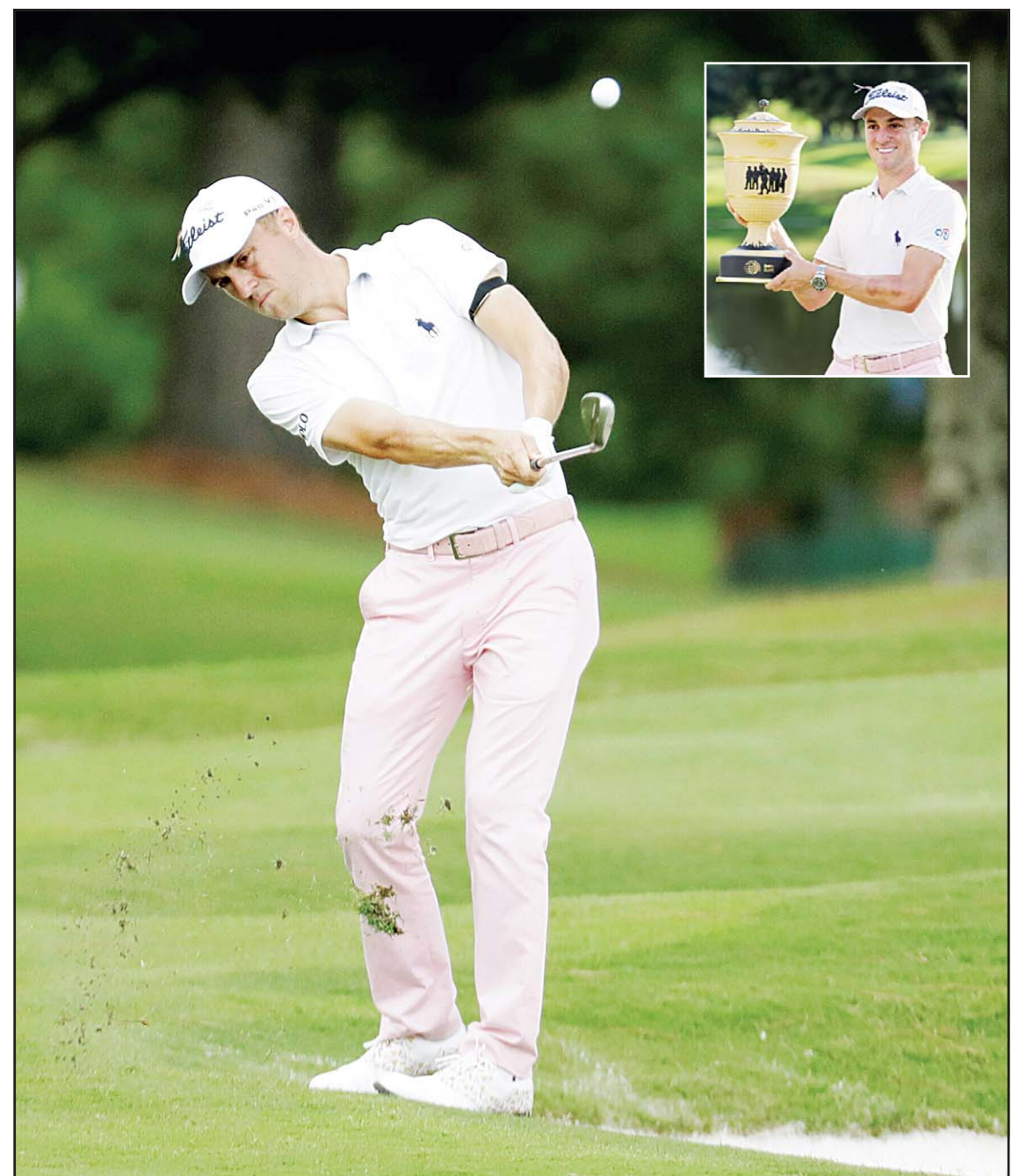
Kang finished at 7-under 209. Minjee Lee of Australia shot a 70 to finished third, three shots behind.

In Truckee, California, Richy Werenski holed a flop shot from the fairway on the par-4 18th for a five-point eagle and birdied the last for a one-point victory over Troy Merritt in the Barracuda Championship.

Werenski won for the first time on the PGA Tour, scoring 13 points in the final round on Tahoe Mountain Club's

Thomas wins in Memphis; Kang clinches title in LPGA's return

Werenski rallies to claim Barracuda Championship crown



Justin Thomas hits from the rough on the 16th hole during the final round of the World Golf Championship-FedEx St Jude Invitational on Aug 2, in Memphis, Tenn. (Inset): Thomas holds the trophy after winning the World Golf Championship-FedEx St Jude Invitational on Aug 2, in Memphis, Tenn. (AP)

Old Greenwood Course - the first-time venue after 21 years at Montreux Golf and Country Club. The 28-year-old former Georgia Tech player won the event three years after losing to Chris Stroud on the second hole of a playoff.

The fifth straight first-time winner in the tour's lone modified Stableford scoring event, Werenski earned a spot next week in the PGA Championship in San Francisco. He and Merritt, also in the field next week at TPC Harding Park, secured spots in the US Open in September at Winged Foot.

Werenski made a 15-footer on the par-4 18th. He finished with 39 points, with players getting eight points for albatross, five for eagle, two for birdie, and minus-one for bogey and minus-three for double bogey or worse.

Merritt failed to convert the 54-hole lead into a victory for the second straight year. Last year at Montreux, Collin Morikawa rallied to beat Merritt. On Sunday, Merritt parred the final 10 holes - leaving a 30-footer short on 18.

Matthias Schwab and Fabian Gomez tied for third with 37 points. Playing on a sponsor exemption, Schwab needed to finish in a two-way tie for second or better to earn special temporary membership on the tour.

In Grand Blanc, Michigan, Jim Furyk turned 50 when golf was shut down and made the most of it when the PGA Tour Champions returned, closing with a 4-under 68 to win the Ally Challenge when Brett Quigley bogeyed his last two holes.

Furyk became the first player since Miguel Angel Jimenez in 2014 to win in his start on the 50-and-older circuit.

His victory came at a familiar place. Warwick Hills was one of his favorite stops on the PGA Tour when it hosted the Buick Open until a decade ago. Furyk won there in 2003 and was a runner-up two other times. It was his first victory since the RBC Heritage in 2015.

Furyk, a former US Open champion with 17 titles on the PGA Tour, was hardly out of competitive shape. He played five times on the PGA Tour over the last two months, making three cuts.

Quigley birdied the par-5 16th to tie for the lead, only to catch the left lip on a par putt on the 17th to give Furyk control. He dropped another shot on the 18th for a 1-under 71 and tied for second with two-time US Open champion Retief Goosen, who closed with a 66.

Furyk finished at 14-under 202, and now heads to San Francisco for the PGA Championship. He earned a spot by remaining among the top 100 in the world.

In Birmingham, England, Sam Horsfield won the Hero Open for his first European Tour title, holding off Thomas Detry by a stroke at Forest of Arden Marriott Hotel and Country Club.

Horsfield closed with a 4-under 68 for an 18-under 270 total. The 23-year-old

Englishman birdied the 17th hole to take the lead and finished with a par.

Detry, from Belgium, shot a 66. Alexander Bjork (69), Chris Paisley (70) and Oliver Farr (71) tied for third at 14 under.

Miguel Angel Jimenez, the 56-year-old Spanish star making his record 707th European Tour appearance, shot a 72 to tie for 34th at 7 under.

In Omaha, Nebraska, Seth Reeves overcame an eight-stroke deficit to win the Pinnacle Bank Championship for his first Korn Ferry Tour title, making a late eagle and birdie in a one-stroke victory over five players.

Reeves closed with a 7-under 64 to finish at 11-under 273 at The Club at Indian Creek. He eagled the par-5 15th and birdied the par-4 18th, finishing more than two hours before the final group.

The 29-year-old former Georgia Tech player earned \$108,000 and jumped from 135th to 18th in the season points race for PGA Tour cards.

Third-round leader Ryan Ruffels bogeyed the 16th and 17th in a 73 to drop into a tie for second with Taylor Pendrith (66), Nick Voke (67), Carl Yuan (68) and Tyson Alexander (69). Pendrith, from Canada, had his fourth consecutive top-three finish. He's third in the standings.

Other Tournaments: Pierceson Coody won the 118th Western Amateur on Sunday at Crooked Stick in Carmel, Indiana, beating Denmark's Rasmus Neergaard-Petersen 2 and 1. The 20-year-old Coody, the grandson of 1971 Masters champion Charles Coody, is a junior at Texas. He's the seventh Longhorn to win the George R. Thorne Trophy. Hae Ran Ryu successfully defended her Jeju Samyung Masters title on the Korean LPGA, closing with a 7-under 65 for a three-stroke victory over Jeongeun Lee6. Ryu finished at 23-under 265 at Saint Four Golf & Resort on Jeju Island.



Danielle Kang hugs the LPGA Drive On Championship golf tournament trophy on Aug 2 at Inverness Golf Club in Toledo, Ohio. (AP)