

JOHNSON LOOKING FOR A WORLD GOLF SWEEP

BY DOUG FERGUSON

AUSTIN, Texas

Dustin Johnson is one victory away from something not even Tiger Woods has accomplished: a sweep of the four World Golf Championships.

All that remains is the Dell Technologies Match Play, and Johnson has to be considered a strong favorite. He is the No. 1 seed for the first time. He is coming off consecutive victories at Riviera and the Mexico Championship. His form has never been better.

And he won't have to worry about Mark Wilson.

Wilson isn't part of the 64-man field at Austin Country Club, but he illustrates why this might be the toughest World Golf Championship to win.

Anything can happen. Anything usually does.

On a Dove Mountain course in the high desert of Arizona that favored big hitters, Wilson eliminated Johnson in back-to-back years. Johnson showed that good putting makes up for a lack of distance off the tee in any format, particularly match play. And Johnson showed that power still requires a little bit of accuracy.

"I played in the desert a lot there," he said with a smile.

World Golf Championships: Match Play

Today-Sunday: Austin (Texas)
Country Club

On the air: 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Golf Channel

Even so, there is reason to believe that Johnson might actually make it to Sunday for the first time in his ninth try.

While the seeds of the Match Play champions resembled lottery numbers in the early going of this tournament, that hasn't been the case recently. Over the last 10 years, the lowest seed to win was No. 21 (Matt Kuchar and Hunter Mahan). And with the format changing to round-robin group play the last two years, the winners were Rory McIlroy at No. 1 in the world, and Jason Day, who rose to No. 1 in the world.

"It gives you a chance," McIlroy said of the format.

The Match Play begins today with three rounds of group play, preceded by endless speculation about who has the best chance to advance out of the 16 groups of four players, when no one ever knows what to expect, including the play-

ers.

The brackets make it look like the NCAA Tournament. The game makes it look more like roulette.

Johnson has only major champions in his group — Jimmy Walker (PGA Championship), Martin Kaymer (PGA, U.S. Open) and Webb Simpson (U.S. Open). It sounds daunting, except that Kaymer is 0-for-73 since winning the U.S. Open at Pinehurst No. 2, and Simpson is winless in his last 80 starts dating to 2013.

"I'm playing very well right now. I think that's my advantage," Johnson said. "But playing match play, (it) doesn't matter if you're No. 1 or whatever number you are because it's only 18 holes. And anything can happen."

If nothing else, this World Golf Championship that uses the world ranking to determine the field and seeds illustrates how tough it has been to stay at the top.

Tiger Woods was the last player to be the No. 1 seed in successive years — 2008 when he won, 2009 when he lost in the second round to Tim Clark in his return from knee surgery. Since then, there have been seven No. 1 seeds over the last eight years. McIlroy was a top seed twice and the only No. 1 seed to win.

Ferguson writes for The Associated Press.

championship in last four years

BY TERRY MONAHAN

Senior year was going to be Dylan Hunt's best ever at Mt. Carmel High.

Two games into the 2016 football season, the three-sport standout was sidelined by what he thought was a minor knee injury.

"I was running toward the end zone and the knee popped," Hunt said. "I jogged off the field."

The pain persisted for weeks until doctors finally diagnosed the source.

Hunt, the 6-foot-1 starting quarterback, had torn his anterior cruciate ligament.

"There went football, there went basketball and there went volleyball all in one day," Hunt remembered saying.

Though rehabilitation has improved and recovery times have been shortened, Hunt didn't figure to return for basketball and volleyball before the end of the high school year — too much jumping and landing on wooden floors.

Yet just six months after replacing the ligament in his right knee, Hunt is back playing volleyball with the defending San Diego Section Division I champion Sundevils, even if it is on a limited basis for now.

"When the doctor let me start running a little bit," Hunt said, "I felt like an athlete again."

"I had not felt that way since that night at (La Costa Canyon) back in September."

In his brief appearance at quarterback, Hunt was 14 of 25 passing for 231 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions. He also averaged 6.8 yards on 14 rushes for 95 yards and two TDs.

His last basketball season in 2015-16, Hunt averaged 6.6 points, 3.5 rebounds and 1.9 assists for Mt. Carmel.

Last spring, Hunt was the driving force as the Sundevils captured their second section volleyball title in three seasons and their eighth crown since 1996.

"I felt this would never happen, playing for

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Malcolm Andrews (Mt. Carmel), Colin Bailey (Torrey Pines), David Barrett (Francis Parker), Slater Bird (Westview), Chase Blackwell (La Jolla), Adam Chang (Westview), Christopher Cheung (Scripps Ranch), Jack Cole (La Costa Canyon), Dylan Curtis (El Capitan), Alex Dashwood (St. Augustine), Zane Emery (Carlsbad), Owen Gallahue (Bishop's), Camden Gianni (Santa Fe Christian), Jack Goedken (Carlsbad), Monty Gracey (San Dieguito), Chris Fromm (Francis Parker), Nathaniel Gates (La Jolla), John Giovannoni (San Dieguito), Adam Gordon (Francis Parker), Trent Greenman (Torrey Pines), Nick Gustafson (Francis Parker), Dylan Hunt (Mt. Carmel), Nate Janis (San Dieguito), Christian Janke (Sage Creek), Collin Jordan (Cathedral Catholic), Cade Keegan (Mt. Carmel), Corbitt Kerr (St. Augustine), Anderson Lee (Pacific Ridge), Jason Lee (Westview), Luke Lentin (La Jolla), Jeff Lubisich (Poway), Mike Madden (Cathedral Catholic), Andrew Mataafa (Mt. Carmel), Robby McRoskey (St. Augustine), Sean Mitchell (Eastlake), Adam Nussbaum (Francis Parker), Wes Olstad (La Costa Canyon), Evan Pasko (Torrey Pines), Garland Peed (Torrey Pines), Colton Petiprin (Carlsbad), Caleb Phillips (Santa Fe Christian), Wailea Pukahi (La

Westview (2) and Scripps Ranch (3) — have garnered 47 titles.

Toughest league: The four best leagues in the section are the Metro Mesa, Avocado West, Palomar and Western. Which league is the best? Only Eastlake and Otay Ranch have won titles out of the Metro Mesa. Bonita Vista has been in the finals but lost. La Costa Canyon, Carlsbad, Torrey Pines and now El Camino have won out of the Avocado West. Canyon Crest has never reached a final. Poway, Westview, Rancho Bernardo and Mt. Carmel have been crowned out of the Palomar. Del Norte has lost in its two finals appearances. The Western League is composed of past champions. Cathedral Catholic, St. Augustine, Francis Parker, La Jolla and Scripps Ranch have all won titles, making a strong case for the Western League being the toughest.

Rookie champs: El Camino and Sage Creek experienced a boys volleyball section championship last spring for the first time. El Camino defeated Bonita Vista for the Division II title while Sage Creek grabbed the Division IV crown by beating Pacific Ridge in the final.

Tournaments: La Jolla won last week's Beach City Invitational. The Scripps Ranch Tournament is set for April 28-30.