

MEDIA ADVISORY

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Allianz Championship

Toledo Defeats Andrade in Playoff to take home the Victory at the Allianz Championship

BOCA RATON, Fla. -- The Allianz Championship celebrated its Silver Anniversary with Esteban Toledo's dramatic three-hole playoff victory over Billy Andrade.

The close finish was not surprising – four of the last seven Allianz Championships have gone to playoffs and there has never been larger than a two-shot victory in the 10 events held on The Old Course at Broken Sound.

It wasn't surprising Toledo won a playoff, either: Three of his four victories on the Champions Tour have come in playoffs and – get this – all three of them have come on the third hole.

“I don't know what the key is. I don't have it,” Toledo said. “Being in a playoff isn't easy. There's a lot of stress and a lot of nerves. Sometimes I surprise myself how well I play in tough conditions.”

The conditions were tough throughout the Allianz Championship. The weather seemed more like the British Open than South Florida as fronts turned Friday's first round and Sunday's final round into survival battle. The scoring average for the week was the highest (72.28) in the tournament's history. And the winning score of 11-under 205 was the highest since Corey Pavin won at that number in 2012.

“It was very tough out there,” said Tom Lehman, who could have joined Toledo and Andrade in the playoff had he birdied the 18th hole (he bogeyed to finish eighth). “You had to hit the ball solidly or you were going to get eaten up by the conditions.”

Andrade had a chance to win his fourth Champions Tour title in the last 10 months, but he missed a 5-foot birdie putt on the final hole in the regulation. It was something he wished he could have had a mulligan on.

“I just hit a very poor putt,” Andrade said. “I probably hit the worst putt I've hit in quite a while. I got a little quick. I was thinking about winning instead of thinking about making the putt.”

“I didn't stay with my routine. I was out of sorts, and when you do that, you don't make putts. But that's OK. I'm going to miss a few more in my time and I'll make a few more, too.”

Toledo made the one he had to, draining a 4-foot par putt on the third extra hole after Andrade's 6-foot par try lipped out. A former professional boxer, Toledo threw a punch in celebration after a hard three days' work.

“I get excited. I throw the left hook,” Toledo said. “It's just my thing. Chi Chi (Rodriguez) has his thing; I have my thing. I'm not trying to be a clown or anything, buy I think it's a celebration that's a great image. I'm a boxer, not a golfer.”

The \$262,500 first prize was just another reminder of how far Toledo has reached in his life. He grew up in Mexico, the youngest of 11 children raised in a home with dirt floors and no plumbing.

“This has been a dream for me,” Toledo said. “I never thought this would happen.”

Despite the difficult conditions, Tom Byrum shot the best round of the tournament – an 8-under 64 – to improve from 32nd place to a third-place tie with Jeff Sluman (70).

“I would say thank goodness for my putter,” Byrum said. “My short game was stellar. I was a little shaky with my ball striking. When it looked like I was going to make a bogey (on the 10th hole), I chipped in for birdie.”

Doug Garwood made some noise in the second round when he made a run at a 59. He was 10-under through 14 holes and faced a 10-foot birdie putt at No. 6 – he started on the back nine.

A birdie there, and he was two birdies away from becoming the second player on the Champions Tour to shoot 59 (his college teammate at Fresno State, Kevin Sutherland, was the other). Alas, Garwood missed the birdie putt and finished bogey-double bogey to “settle” for a 65.

“When I was 10-under, I was thinking, ‘Wow, if I birdie out, I shoot 58,’” Garwood said. “That was probably my downfall.”

Allianz Championship officials were thankful they decided to move Sunday’s tee times up an hour to help fans get home in time for the Super Bowl. Had they not, it would have been iffy for the tournament to end Sunday before darkness because the conditions slowed play and the three-hole playoff.

It was the first time in the 10-year anniversary of the Allianz Championship the finish has been on the same day as the Super Bowl. Allianz officials had plenty to celebrate. More than 60,000 fans showed up during the week, including almost 20,000 on Saturday, when the conditions were warm and calm.

The Allianz Championship started giving back to the community even before the tournament ended. Allianz officials presented a check for \$50,000 to the Alzheimer’s Association.

Last year, Allianz donated more than \$600,000 to local charities, the bulk of it going to the Boca Raton Regional Hospital.

Allianz Championship’s Silver Anniversary week started with a glitzy Draw Party at Broken Sound’s main clubhouse that featured models wearing lampshades and the appearance of Miss Florida. You know it’s quite the party when more than 15 of the professional golfers in the field showed up for it.

Toledo’s week also got off to a rousing start when he hit the cup from 100 yards with his first shot in the inaugural Allianz Championship Media Skills Challenge won by WPBF-Channel 25.

He ended it in even finer fashion, hoisting the trophy.

“This was a great week,” he said. “I can’t believe how many fans showed up. Hollis Caverner and Ryan Dillon run a great tournament. It was a wonderful experience, getting a taste of Boca Raton. And I can’t wait to come back.”

As the champion.

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