

# Jason lets lead slip after stunning start

by **DANNY GRIFFITHS**

JASON DAY suffered a late stumble as he started his bid to achieve a golfing feat which proved beyond greats like Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Greg Norman and Jack Nicklaus.

Since the Players Championship began in 1974 no player has successfully defended the title, with only six winning the prestigious event more than once.

Day's prospects of creating history looked bright when he played his first 11 holes in five under par, but the 29-year-old Australian bogeyed three of his last four holes to finish with an opening 70.

The world No.3 has recorded just one top-ten finish in 2017 and has fallen off the pace set by world No.1 one Dustin Johnson in the rankings, although the



**71** Opening round for England's Paul Casey to leave him one under par, while Ian Poulter finished on level par with a 72

Australian's form has been affected by his mother's battle with lung cancer.

The former US PGA champion broke down in tears after withdrawing from the

WGC-Dell Technologies Match Play in March, the defending champion having played just six holes of his opening match against Pat Perez.

Two days later his mother, Dening, successfully had surgery to remove a 'three-to-four-centimetre' mass in her lungs and Day returned to action in the Masters, finishing tied 22nd at Augusta.

After starting on the back nine at Sawgrass, Day (left) birdied the 11th, 13th and 16th to reach the turn in 33, before holing from 65ft at the first green.

Another birdie on the second took him into the outright lead.

But he then dropped shots on the sixth, eighth and ninth which left him three behind the early clubhouse leader William McGirt, who eagled the 11th and 16th in his 67.

PICTURE: GETTY



**Up and running:**

Rory McIlroy, among the late starters at Sawgrass last night, was level par through the first six holes

**RUGBY UNION** Saracens back Chris Wyles hopes to celebrate winning tomorrow's Champions Cup final with a few Wolfpack lagers - the beer he has launched with former team-mate Alistair Hargreaves. Interview by **Danny Griffiths**

## 'Retaining the trophy would be unbelievable'

**Successfully defending the Champions Cup would be some achievement.**

We have worked very hard throughout the season to get to this position and it would be unbelievable if we could achieve back-to-back victories. That would put us up there with Toulon, Leinster and Leicester as the only teams who have retained the trophy.

**How have you been so successful this season?**

We are very experienced as we reached two finals before winning last year and have a lot of international players who possess real quality.

**Clermont will be tough.**

They are a very good side with powerful backs, including our former team-mate David Strettle, who is playing very well.

**What are your best memories of Stretts?**

Having a beer with him! I also remember the way he used to power his way to tries. We

**QA** with **Chris Wyles**



after rugby and bounced a few ideas around before realising a solution was staring us in the face as we both love beer.



will have to watch him.

**Of course, Sarries can still win the Double, as you did last year, by also winning the Premiership final.**

We're just focusing on Saturday's final but it would be naive to say it hasn't crossed the minds.

**Why did you set up Wolfpack with Alistair?**

We were aware that we needed to plan for a future

**Are you nearing the end of your playing days then?**

No, I hope to be around for a few more years yet. Who would want to leave a wonderful club like Saracens?

**How has the business developed?**

There are plenty of craft beers and stouts available but room for a new lager. Wolfpack is available from a double-decker bus at Sarries games and in 50 pubs around London and the South East.

**How strong is it?**

5.2 per cent.

**Hopefully you can celebrate with a pint or two tomorrow. Cheers!**

For more information go to [www.Wolfpacklager.com](http://www.Wolfpacklager.com)

## Scott: Gloucester must grab European shot

SCOTLAND centre Matt Scott has urged Gloucester to seize the moment when they target European Challenge Cup final success at Murrayfield tonight.

Victory over Stade Francais

would give them a record-equalling third triumph in the competition and keep alive hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions Cup.

'We have got to grasp this

opportunity with both hands and we've the added incentive of trying to secure top European rugby next season,' Scott said.

'The chance to win silverware doesn't come around often.'

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