

Top golfer starts slow in Masters

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Tiger Woods stared at his ball, dazed and a bit confused after another putt rolled awry in the opening round of the Masters.

Just as quickly, he pulled himself together. Woods putted out, removed his cap, shook hands with the others in his group and erupted in a giant smile.

This guy isn't worried. Not in the least.

"There's four days," said Woods, who holds three major titles and wants to complete the set. "It's awfully hard to go out there and shoot in the mid-60s every day in a major."

Still, it was hardly an overwhelming performance by the world's greatest player, carried out on an Augusta National course that is rarely so forgiving. With moist greens and barely a trace of breeze, Thursday was a day for scoring low — real low.

Rookie Chris DiMarco took advantage, shooting a 7-under-par 65 just three days after playing the course for the first time.

Steve Stricker and Argentina's Angel Cabrera breezed to 66s. Another shot back were Phil Mickelson, Lee Janzen and John Huston.

In all, 14 players scored in the 60s, the most for a round since 1995.

So, where was Woods? After putting his first shot in the pine straw and his second in a bunker, he wound up with

a bogey. He meandered through the next 17 holes with barely a fist pump, nary a spectacular shot.

He made only one birdie on a par-5 and finished at 70 — a bit of a letdown for the huge galleries that followed him around all day, hoping to catch a glimpse of history's finishing touch.

"I played pretty solid," Woods said. "I hit a few good putts, misread a few. But overall, I'm pleased that I got off to the start I was able to get off to."

Woods was certainly aware that he's never scored below 70 in the opening round at Augusta — not even in 1997, when he won the Masters with a record 18-under total. That year, he also started with a 70, then buried the field over the next three days.

"No one is going to shoot 15-, 18-under par in a round," Woods said, showing off the devilish grin that must drive rivals crazy. "Any time you shoot in the red in a major championship on the first day, you are going to be in all right position."

Then again, no one is going to lay down and just let Woods do something that had never been done — hold all four major championship at the same time.

DiMarco led the charge to keep Woods from his destiny.

The 32-year-old New York native is playing in the Masters for the first time, and Augusta National is hardly a place

for beginners. But he got a taste of the slick greens last Sunday, playing 36 holes to complete a rain-plagued, wind-swept tournament near Atlanta.

"If anything, that day kind of helped me," said DiMarco, who birdied seven of the first 13 holes Thursday. "Looking back now, because the greens were so fast, and with the wind blowing them, it really got me in the mode to be kind of defensive, but stay aggressive."

He went to No. 18 with a chance to equal the record for lowest opening round by a first-year player. A 20-foot birdie attempt came up short.

Lloyd Mangrum opened with a 64 in his first Masters in 1940, a record that was equaled by Mike Donald a half-century later.

Mangrum wound up second, but Donald soared to an 82 in his second round and finished 47th. Last year, rookie Dennis Paulson led the way after 18 holes, then failed to break par the rest of the week.

Here's more proof that DiMarco doesn't need to get fitted for a green jacket just yet: The first-round leader hasn't won at Augusta since Ben Crenshaw pulled it off in 1984.

"There are probably 500 DiMarcos who could come out and shoot 7 under on the first day," Greg Norman said. "You don't know the pressure of the golf course when you first come out here."

Mickelson does. While yet to win at Augusta, he has four top-10 finishes and seems poised to finally break through after four straight birdies on the back nine.

"Starting out, I didn't attack too many pins," said Mickelson, who recently learned his wife is pregnant with their second child. "I wasn't really feeling as though I had total control over where the ball was going and where I was missing it, so I really didn't do too much the first eight, nine holes."

He got things rolling with an 8-iron to 3 feet at No. 12, the treacherous par-3 in the heart of Amen Corner. Mickelson completed the run with a couple of 20-footers sandwiched around another short birdie putt.

Defending champion Vijay Singh got off to a conservative start and still managed a 69, along with 1998 winner Mark O'Meara. Others among the 32 players who broke par were two-time champion Jose Maria Olazabal (70), while the group at 71 included Norman, David Duval, Ernie Els and Davis Love III.

Then were was James Driscoll, the U.S. Amateur runner-up. He opened with a 68 — the best amateur score since 1983.

"I try not to think too much," Driscoll said. "I tend to play better when I don't have too many thoughts running through my head."

Rockies rout Cardinals, 11-2

DENVER (AP) — There's a growing epidemic in Denver that seems to be infecting pitchers and hitters alike.

"Contagious" was the word of the day on Thursday after the Colorado Rockies routed the St. Louis Cardinals 11-2 to sweep a season-opening three-game series.

Pedro Astacio gave the Rockies their third straight solid outing, going eight innings.

And Rockies hitters continued to hammer the ball, boosting their run total to 32 in the series. As a team, they're hitting .410, which leads the majors by a wide margin.

Astacio (1-0), following the lead of Mike Hampton and Denny Neagle, allowed one run on six hits with no walks and 10 strikeouts.

"That was a great performance," manager Buddy Bell said. "Just from a stuff standpoint and a command standpoint, it was probably on a par with what Mike did on Monday (8 1-3 scoreless innings). It's the third very good start that we've had in a row. You're not going to get that all the time, but with these guys it's kind of contagious."

Astacio, demoted from No. 1 to No. 3 in the Rockies' rotation after the acquisitions of Hampton and Neagle, said his slot is not a concern.

"The only thing I worry about is pitching every five days," Astacio said. "It doesn't matter if I'm the fifth guy or the first guy. It doesn't matter what position I'm in. I go out every start and try to give them everything I have."

In the series, Colorado's three starters combined for a 1.69 ERA.

The Cardinals, swept just twice all last season (both by the Mets), gave up 32 runs in the series, and their three starting pitchers — Darryl Kile, Andy Benes and Matt Morris — have a combined ERA of 18.56.

The Rockies pounded Morris, who was making his first start since Sept. 27, 1998. Morris lasted three-plus innings, surrendering 11 hits

and 10 runs — six earned — and departed with a 10-1 deficit.

"They outpitched us, outplayed us, outmanaged us, outcompeted us," St. Louis manager Tony La Russa said. "They outdid us in every area."

Ron Gant and Todd Helton each hit three-run homers for Colorado.

Shortstop Edgar Renteria's error kept the Rockies' first inning alive. With the bases loaded, Jeff Cirillo hit a sacrifice fly, and Gant followed with a homer, the 1,500th hit of his career.

"The fan returned the ball to me," Gant said. "It's a special day. I'm very proud of the moment. That means you've been around the game a long time to be able to get 1,500 hits."

Asked if the hitting was becoming contagious, Gant said, "Most definitely, with the type of guys we have in our lineup. They grind out every at-bat no matter what the score is. They're up there to hurt you."

After the Rockies made it 6-0 in the second, St. Louis' Mike Matheny led off the third with a 424-foot homer.

But Colorado countered with five runs in its half, including Helton's three-run homer to the opposite field, chasing Morris. With two outs, Neifi Perez tripled off Mike Timlin and scored on Brent Mayne's single.

Ray Lankford homered off Mike Myers in the ninth, his third homer in two days.

Notes: Mark McGwire and Jim Edmonds of the Cardinals were given the day off. McGwire complained of soreness in his knees after lifting weights on Wednesday, and Edmonds has a sore foot.

Gant's homer was the 1,500th in Rockies history.

Morris missed the entire 1999 season after undergoing elbow surgery. He worked 31 games out of the bullpen in 2000.

baseball scoreboard

By The Associated Press				
AMERICAN LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	3	0	1.000	—
Toronto	3	1	.750	1/2
Baltimore	2	1	.667	1
Boston	1	2	.333	2
Tampa Bay	1	2	.333	2
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	2	0	1.000	—
Chicago	1	1	.500	1
Cleveland	1	1	.500	1
Detroit	0	2	.000	2
Kansas City	0	3	.000	2 1/2
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Seattle	2	1	.667	—
Texas	2	2	.500	1/2
Anaheim	1	2	.333	1
Oakland	1	2	.333	1
Wednesday's Games				
Seattle 10, Oakland 2				
Boston 3, Baltimore 0				
N.Y. Yankees 8, Kansas City 2				
Cleveland 8, Chicago White Sox 4				
Toronto 11, Tampa Bay 8				
Texas 7, Anaheim 3				
Thursday's Games				
Toronto 11, Tampa Bay 0				
Minnesota 9, Detroit 5, 10 innings				
N.Y. Yankees 1, Kansas City 0				
Baltimore 2, Boston 1				
Anaheim 10, Texas 3				
Today's Games				
Tampa Bay (Rupe 0-0) at Boston (Ohka 0-0), 11:05 a.m.				
Minnesota (Mays 0-0) at Kansas City (Meadows 0-0), 12:05 p.m.				
Detroit (Micki 0-0) at Chicago White Sox (Parque 0-0), 12:05 p.m.				
Toronto (Loaiza 1-0) at N.Y. Yankees (Parker 0-0), 3:05 p.m.				
Baltimore (Mercedes 0-0) at Cleveland (Burba 0-0), 3:05 p.m.				
Seattle (Moyer 0-0) at Texas (Helling 0-1), 2:05 p.m.				
Anaheim (Wise 0-0) at Oakland (Mulder 0-0), 8:05 p.m.				
Saturday's Games				
Baltimore (Hentgen 0-0) at Cleveland (Colon 0-				

1), 11:05 a.m.				
Toronto (Michalak 0-0) at N.Y. Yankees (Hernandez 0-0), 11:05 a.m.				
Detroit (Holt 0-0) at Chicago White Sox (Buehrle 0-0), 12:05 p.m.				
Minnesota (Redman 0-0) at Kansas City (Suppan 0-1), 12:05 p.m.				
Anaheim (Valdes 0-0) at Oakland (Hudson 0-0), 2:05 p.m.				
Tampa Bay (Harper 0-0) at Boston (Crawford 0-0), 4:05 p.m.				
Seattle (Tomko 0-0) at Texas (Davis 0-0), 4:05 p.m.				
Sunday's Games				
Tampa Bay at Boston, 11:05 a.m.				
Toronto at N.Y. Yankees, 11:05 a.m.				
Baltimore at Cleveland, 11:05 a.m.				
Detroit at Chicago White Sox, 12:05 p.m.				
Minnesota at Kansas City, 12:05 p.m.				
Seattle at Texas, 1:05 p.m.				
Anaheim at Oakland, 2:05 p.m.				
NATIONAL LEAGUE				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia	3	0	1.000	—
Montreal	2	1	.667	1
New York	2	1	.667	1
Atlanta	2	2	.500	1 1/2
Florida	0	3	.000	3
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	3	0	1.000	—
Cincinnati	2	2	.500	1 1/2
Chicago	1	2	.333	2
Pittsburgh	1	2	.333	2
St. Louis	0	3	.000	3
Milwaukee	0	4	.000	3 1/2
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB

Colorado	3	0	1.000	—
San Francisco	3	0	1.000	—
Arizona	2	1	.667	1
Los Angeles	2	2	.500	1 1/2
San Diego	0	3	.000	3
Wednesday's Games				
Montreal 3, Chicago Cubs 2				
Philadelphia 7, Florida 3				
Atlanta 3, N.Y. Mets 2				
Pittsburgh 6, Cincinnati 5, 10 innings				
Houston 8, Milwaukee 6, 12 innings				
Colorado 13, St. Louis 9				
Arizona 7, Los Angeles 2				
San Francisco 8, San Diego 7				
Thursday's Games				
Cincinnati 4, Pittsburgh 1				
Chicago Cubs 2, Montreal 1				
Colorado 11, St. Louis 2				
N.Y. Mets 7, Atlanta 1				
Houston 8, Milwaukee 2				
Los Angeles 7, Arizona 5				
San Francisco 8, San Diego 2				
Friday's Games				
Chicago Cubs (Tavarez 0-0) at Philadelphia (Wolf 0-0), 11:05 a.m.				
N.Y. Mets (Rusch 0-0) at Montreal (Thurman 0-0), 5:05 p.m.				
Atlanta (Maddux 0-0) at Florida (Grilli 1-0), 5:05 p.m.				
Cincinnati (Bell 0-0) at Milwaukee (D'Amico 0-0), 6:05 p.m.				
Pittsburgh (Olivares 0-0) at Houston (Dotel 0-0), 6:05 p.m.				
San Diego (Eaton 0-0) at Colorado (Bohanon 0-0), 7:05 p.m.				
St. Louis (Hermanson 0-0) at Arizona (Reynoso 0-0), 8:05 p.m.				
San Francisco (Estes 0-0) at Los Angeles (Prokepec 0-0), 8:10 p.m.				

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