At The BMW Championship: Golfer Jim Furyk Abruptly Abandons Play After Completing Only 59 Strokes Of The Mandated Par Of 71, Possible Rules Violation. Golfing World Stunned.

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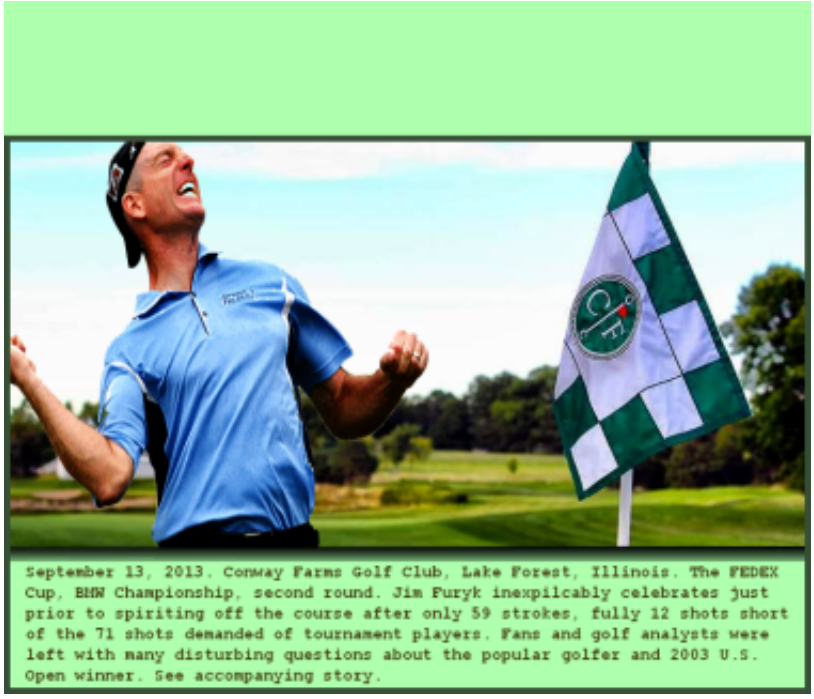

September 13, 2013. Conway Farms Golf Club, Lake Forest, Illinois. The FEDEX Cup, BMW Championship, second round. Jim Furyk inexpilcably celebrates just prior to spiriting off the course after only 59 strokes, fully 12 shots short of the 71 shots demanded of tournament players. Fans and golf analysts were left with many disturbing questions about the popular golfer and 2003 U.S. Open winner. See accompanying story.

Michael Mathew Bloomer, September 13, 2013, reporting from the BMW Championship, Conway Farms Golf Club, Lake Forest, Illinois

Today, Jim Furyk, 43-year-old winner of 26 professional golf tournaments, hurried off the Conway Farms Golf Club course as an altogether stunned group of golf enthusiasts, analysts, and fellow professionals tried to make sense of what he had just done. He had quit. Given up, a mere 12 strokes short of the requisite par 71 demanded of tournament players. And he did this in the BMW Championship, a crucial step towards the overall FEDEX Cup which carries a $10,000,000 bonus. Ten *million*.

This was not the James Michael Furyk admired as one of the better craftsmen and stalwart gamers of his era. In what turned out to be his final golfing moment this afternoon, Mr. Furyk stepped up to a three-foot putt on the green of some random golf hole and, as he nearly always does, stroked the ball directly into the target for his 59th swing of the day. Uneventful. Mainstream Jim Furyk. Polite applause.

However, immediately after retrieving his ball from the bottom of the cup and straightening up,

he enthusiastically pumped his fists and smiled broadly as he spun around and around like a child on a playground. He acknowledged the somewhat flabbergasted crowd and threw his cap to a young golf aficionado, so hard in fact, that it knocked the tiny lad on his keester. And off he went, sprinting toward the parking lot, leaping the fence, soon out of sight.

Thus, the man called "The Grinder" ground to a halt just 12 shots shy of the course requirement. Like Casey at the bat, Furyk struck out. Unlike Casey, he celebrated the dubious feat. Imagine Casey stepping out of the batter's box after strike two, waving his hat to the crowd, and then joyously skedaddling to the right field bullpen, there throwing himself through its exit to the street. That's the golfing equivalent of what Jim Furyk did this day.

Golf analysts flailed for answers. What happened today to Mr. Furyk, a winner of 26 professional contests since his 1992 arrival on scene? How did this come to pass? A man with the 2003 U.S. Open and the 2010 FEDEX Cup under his belt had apparently crashed into some invisible wall. He knew the rules of golf. At Conway Farms Golf Club, par sits at 71. It always has. And 71 strokes means 71 strokes, not 59, or 60, or 70. What psychic turmoil

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roiling within Mr. Furyk, a man consistently cool under pressure, had escaped public notice?

Ergo, bewildered fans, analysts, and golf psychiatrists scratched their heads when Furyk cut his round 12 strokes short today. He was clearly in good *physical* health. As he bear hugged his long-time caddy, Mike "Fluff" Cowan, the long-time bagman was visibly confused. Fluff, the man who best knows Jim Furyk, the golfer, offered no explanation. In fact, standing nearby the green from which Furyk had fled, he insisted for more than an hour that his player would return to complete the round's 71 strokes. It was only when he saw Mr. Furyk's car leave the course parking lot with horn tooting merrily that he yielded to reality and slumped toward the clubhouse.

Known as "The Grinder," Furyk stands to relinquish that moniker given today's embarrassment.

FEDEX and BMW Championship officials, as of this writing, had issued no official statement regarding Mr. Furyk's breach of PGA rules, but an anonymous six-foot eleven inch tall member of the rules committee that will decide Mr. Furyk's status later tonight in emergency session explained,

> "If the rules committee deems Mr. Furyk to have met the requirements for 'psychotic episode, or break' under Rule 13.9(a), we may permit him to complete the final 12 strokes from the place where he retired from today's round. He would complete the 12 strokes before the starting time of the first group scheduled tomorrow morning, and Rule 13.9(b) would require him to do so at a trot so as to avoid any delay in the starting times for other golfers who had complied with Rule 1.01, the 71 stroke requirement."

The committee's decision looms large. Completing the BMW tournament, the third leg of the four tournament round robin that comprises the FEDEX championship, is mandatory if Furyk is to contend for the overall FEDEX Cup, and a win here at the BMW would advance Mr. Furyk's chance of winning it for the second time in three years. And that $10,000,000 bonus for the overall FEDEX Cup points leader counts for something too, doesn't it?

And so the golf world waits to learn the fate of one of their favorite superstars. This reporter knows of no one who isn't pulling for Mr. Furyk, not even his fiercest competitors, excepting Vijay Singh. And if he is DQ'd from the BMW, everyone (but Singh) hopes Jim Furyk gets the mental health care he needs before returning to the tour as a man at peace with Rule 1.01.

In closing, with confidence, I speak for every non-Vijay Singh golfer and golf fan when I pass along this simple prayer to the PGA steering committee:

All we are saying is give Jim a chance.

We will provide continuing coverage here at Conway Farms GC if this reporter can locate a conveniently located hostel.