

DONALDSON OVERCOMES HEAT FOR 2-STROKE LEAD

CHONBURI: On a day in which the oppressive heat sapped the strength of even the strongest players, Jamie Donaldson held on to a two-shot lead in the second round of the Thailand Golf Championship at Amata Spring Golf and Country Club yesterday. The Welsh Ryder Cup star fired a four-under 68 to keep two clear of a charging Martin Kaymer who moved into second spot with an excellent seven-under 65, the best round of the day.

Spain's Sergio Garcia, who shot 69, led the chasing pack a further two strokes behind, along with the impressive English youngster Matthew Fitzpatrick who shot an excellent 67 and Thailand's Chinnarat Phadungsil with a 69. In joint sixth place were Korea's Byeong-Hun An with a 67, and

Thailand's Panuphol Pittayarat who shot 66. Donaldson, who fired a magnificent 63 in the opening round, admitted the tropical heat was a factor. "It was a great temperature to start with, but it got really hot on the back nine," he said. "It was tough out there and a case of trying to stay hydrated and not drop sweat on the ball." The Welsh star said he was pleased with his performance, considering the conditions.

"I dropped a couple of shots out there today, but overall, I have been playing nicely. I've just got to keep doing what I've been doing." Kaymer also had problems with the heat, although it did not seem to affect his play. "It was like a sauna out there," he said. "They say you get nicer weather in the morning, but that was not really the case

today. But the good thing is that the ball goes further." The German, who was runner-up in this event last year and would dearly love to win the trophy, said he was very pleased with his performance. "I played really well. I think seven-under today is a very good score."

Kaymer said his strategy for the weekend would be hitting the fairways. "Driving will be the key," he said. Garcia said the key to his round was "having plenty of water to drink. I got through a lot of bottles." The Spanish star said he really felt the heat on the last six holes. Garcia said he was relatively happy with his score. "I gave myself plenty of chances but did not put them all away. But I felt I played pretty good through the round." One of the pre-tournament

favorites, big-hitting Bubba Watson, was some way back after shooting a 70. He admitted he was not at his best and was happy to make the cut.

"The best moment was at the 17th island green. I almost hit it in the water, but then sunk a much-needed birdie," he said. Defending champion Lee Westwood felt he was still in with a chance after shooting a 68, although he is well behind the leaders. "I've played pretty well," he said. "But I've been wasting too many putts. I still have a chance for a weekend charge up the leaderboard." Thai fans were pleased to see their local hero Thongchai Jaidee have a much better second round, ensuring he would make the cut and climb the leaderboard after shooting a five-under 67. — AFP

GAUDREAU SPOILS RISTOLAINEN'S HAT TRICK, FLAMES BEAT SABRES

KANE EXTENDS STREAK BUT HAWKS LOSE TO PREDATORS

CALGARY: Johnny Gaudreau returned after leaving with an apparent injury and put Calgary ahead late to spoil Rasmus Ristolainen's hat trick in the Flames' 4-3 win over the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night. Gaudreau exited in the first period after a collision but returned for the second. In the third period, he worked a give-and-go with Sean Monahan, then zipped a low shot through Chad Johnson's pads with 4:50 left for the 4-3 lead. Monahan had two goals and an assist, and Markus Granlund also scored in Calgary's fourth straight win. Jonas Hiller stopped 27 shots. Ristolainen scored three goals in the final period, including a tying tally with 5:45 remaining. That one came when he banked a shot from the corner off the skates of Flames defenseman Dennis Wideman and past Hiller.

PANTHERS 4, CAPITALS 1

Jaromir Jagr moved into a tie for fourth on the career goals list with a first-period score that sparked Florida to a win over his former team. Jagr gave the Panthers the lead 51 seconds into the game. Dmitry Kulikov's long shot from the point was deflected by Jagr and bounced into the net. The goal was Jagr's first since Nov 21 and the 731st of his career, tying him for fourth on the career list with Hall of Famer Marcel Dionne Logan Shaw, Aaron Ekblad and Brandon Pirri also scored for the Panthers and Jonathan Huberdeau had two assists. Al Montoya had 19 saves. Alex Ovechkin scored for Washington and Philipp Grubauer stopped 23 shots in his first start in nine games.

PREDATORS 5, BLACKHAWKS 1

James Neal, Craig Smith and Filip Forsberg each scored in the first period and Nashville beat Chicago even though Patrick Kane extended his franchise-record points streak to 24 games. Kane scored his 18th goal this season at 5:43 of the third. He'll have a chance Friday night against Winnipeg back in Chicago to match Sidney Crosby's 25-game streak, set in 2010-11, for the longest since 1992-93. The Predators lost their challenge for goaltender interference on Kane's tally. Nashville goalie Pekka Rinne thought he had covered the puck with his glove when Chicago center Marcus Kruger came in, knocking it away. Kane had the easy tap-in from the side. Rinne even skated out near the blue line trying to argue his case with the officials.

Neal sealed the victory with his second goal unassisted at 14:55, and Eric Nystrom scored a short-handed empty netter with 1:14 left.

JETS 6, BLUE JACKETS 4

Mathieu Perrault had a goal and three assists, Dustin Byfuglien and Drew Stafford each had a goal and two assists and Winnipeg held off Columbus. Rookie Connor Hellebuyck made 25 saves and improved to 4-0-0. Mark Scheifele, Adam Lowry and Blake Wheeler also scored for Winnipeg. Bryan Little had a pair of assists and Scheifele also had one. Cam Atkinson scored consecutive goals to pull Columbus within 5-4 in the third period before Wheeler scored into an empty net. Boone Jenner and Scott Hartnell each added their 12th goals of the season, and Alexander Wennberg had three assists. Curtis McElhinney stopped 29 shots for Columbus and fell to 0-5-1. McElhinney started in place of Sergei Bobrovsky, who suffered a groin strain on Tuesday and is expected to be out three weeks.

RED WINGS 3, CANADIENS 2

Darren Helm's second goal with 6:01 left in the third period broke a tie and lifted Detroit to a comeback win. Helm scored 1:12 after Justin Abdelkader pulled Detroit into a 2-all tie, scoring off his right skate on a goal that stood after video review. Petr Mrazek made 21 saves for the Red Wings, whose 12-game point streak matches their longest since 2010. The Atlantic Division-leading Canadiens have lost four straight, their worst skid in a season that started with a 9-0 record and 18 wins in their first 24 games. Montreal's Tomas Fleischmann scored a go-ahead goal 4:30 into the third period, but goaltender Dustin Tokarski could not make enough saves to seal the win.

FLYERS 4, BLUES 2

Claude Giroux capped Philadelphia's three-goal second period with his 11th of the season in a win over St Louis. Michael Raffl and Matt Read also scored in the second and Ryan White added an empty-net goal to help the Flyers snap a two-game skid. Michael Neuvirth made 35 saves. Robby Fabbri and David Backes scored and Brian Elliott made 25 saves for the Blues. St Louis has lost four of five games in December. After Fabbri opened the scoring 1:35 into the



ST LOUIS: Philadelphia Flyers right wing Wayne Simmonds (left) tries to jump clear of a teammate's shot as St Louis Blues goaltender Brian Elliott defends in second-period action during an NHL hockey game on Thursday, Dec 10, 2015. — AP

second period, the Flyers responded with three consecutive goals. Raffl scored just 2:20 after Fabbri when he tipped in a centering pass from Brayden Schenn for his third of the season and first goal in 11 games. Giroux also picked up an assist on the goal.

LIGHTNING 4, SENATORS 1

Nikita Kucherov had two goals, Ben Bishop made 30 saves and Tampa Bay beat Ottawa. Valtteri Filppula and J.T. Brown also scored for

the Lightning. Ottawa got a goal from Cody Ceci. Kucherov opened the scoring from the slot off a pass from Steven Stamkos during a 5-on-3 power play with 7.5 seconds left in the first. The two-man advantage came after both Chris Wideman and Mark Borowiecki were given minor penalties with 1:16 left in the first. Kucherov made it 3-0 on a rebound of his own shot at 8:33 of the third. Ceci got his first goal in 15 games to end Bishop's shutout bid with 7:54 to play in the third. — AP