

## PIERCY, FRASER SET PACE WITH 66S AT DORAL MICKELSON ONE OFF PACE AFTER SHOOTING 67

**MIAMI:** American Scott Piercy and Marcus Fraser of Australia upstaged the biggest names in the game as they charged into a tie for the lead after the opening round of the WGC-Cadillac Championship in Miami on Thursday. Piercy and Fraser fired matching six-under-par 66s on the daunting Blue Monster course at the Trump National Doral Resort, ending the day a stroke in front of five-times major winner Phil Mickelson, who birdied four of his last nine holes. Englishman Danny Willett, Australian Adam Scott and Americans Jason Dufner and Charley Hoffman opened with 68s in

the first of the year's four elite World Golf Championships events while world number one Jordan Spieth carded a 69.

"It's very demanding off the tee, there's trouble on every single hole, so you have to stand up and really commit to a shot," Spieth told Golf Channel after carding five birdies and two bogeys. "And it's not done from there. A lot of times we play courses where there is a miss (for the green) where you can still make par but on quite a few holes out here you just can't miss it. "I'm very pleased to get in under par on this golf course. This course normally gets my num-

ber but I beat it today." American Spieth attracted the biggest galleries of the day in a high-profile grouping with second-ranked Australian Jason Day and third-ranked Northern Irishman Rory McIlroy.

Day offset four birdies with four bogeys to return a 72 while McIlroy spoilt an encouraging start week when he double-bogeyed his final hole, the par-three ninth, to shoot a 71. "I was leaving a lot of putts short. But I guess to be expected," said four-times major winner McIlroy, who this week switched to an unconventional cross-handed putting

grip. "It's the first day competitively with a bit of a new grip with the putting. Disappointed with the finish, just get out there tomorrow, try to pick up those shots quickly again and start from there." Piercy, a three-times winner on the PGA Tour, twice got to seven under but twice slipped back as he recorded two bogeys in five holes over the tough closing stretch. "The last five holes, I was a little off," said the 37-year-old American. "I had the wind off my left which sometimes isn't my favorite and just hit a couple of weird shots." — Reuters



**NEW ORLEANS:** New Orleans Pelicans guard Norris Cole (30) takes the ball away from San Antonio Spurs guard Patty Mills during the first half of an NBA basketball game on Thursday, March 3, 2016. — AP

## CURRY LEADS WARRIORS TO 44TH STRAIGHT HOME WIN

**OAKLAND:** Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors matched one record set by Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls as they closed in on the bigger mark. Curry scored 33 points in his return from an ankle injury and the Warriors tied Chicago's NBA record by winning their 44th straight regular-season home game, 121-106 over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Thursday night. "That's an amazing accomplishment," Curry said. "It's a compliment to us as a team, our coaching staff and obviously our fans who bring that atmosphere every night to give us the ultimate home-court advantage." Five days after tying the NBA record with 12 3-pointers in an overtime win at Oklahoma City, Curry went 5 of 15 from long range in the rematch.

But he got more than enough help from his bench to help the Warriors (55-5) move 50 games above .500 in their quest to break the Bulls' single-season mark for victories. The Bulls won 44 consecutive home games from March 30, 1995, until April 4, 1996. That helped them set the record with 72 wins in 1995-96, a mark the Warriors remain on pace to surpass after beating the Thunder for the third time in as many tries this season. Kevin Durant scored 32 points, Russell

Westbrook had 22 and Serge Ibaka added 20 for the Thunder, who have lost six of eight since the All-Star break.

### SPURS 94, PELICANS 86

Kawhi Leonard capped a 30-point, 11-rebound performance with a huge 3-pointer in the final minute as the San Antonio Spurs extended their winning streak to seven games with a 94-86 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Thursday night. LaMarcus Aldridge had 26 points and Danny Green scored 11 for the Spurs, who trailed 86-82 before closing the game on a 12-0 run during the final 3:10. Leonard was 12-of-22 shooting, including 6 for 10 from 3-point range. The Pelicans missed their last six shots and allowed the Spurs to grab a pair of critical offensive rebounds that led to five second-chance points during San Antonio's game-ending run.

### HEAT 108, SUNS 92

Dwyane Wade scored 27 points, Goran Dragic added 25 against his former team and Miami never trailed on the way to beating Phoenix for its third straight victory. Luol Deng scored 12 and Hassan Whiteside grabbed 11 rebounds for Miami,

which led by as many as 21 in the first half. Rookie guard Devin Booker kept the Suns in the game, scoring 15 of his 34 points in the fourth quarter. Alex Len had 12 points and 13 rebounds for Phoenix, which tied a club record by losing its 17th consecutive road game. The Suns have dropped 30 of 33 overall.

### KINGS 104, MAVERICKS 101

Rajon Rondo had 18 points and 12 assists in his first game in Dallas since an ugly split with the Mavericks last season as Sacramento ended a 22-game regular-season losing streak on his old home floor. Booed almost every time he touched the ball, Rondo was the steady hand the Kings needed late. He missed a January loss at Dallas when Sacramento blew a lead in double overtime to keep alive the Mavericks' longest home winning streak against one opponent. DeMarcus Cousins had 22 points and 13 rebounds as the Kings snapped a four-game losing streak with just their fifth win in the past 17 games. Chandler Parsons scored 28 to lead the Mavericks, who had a three-game winning streak snapped in the finale of a six-game homestand, their longest of the season. — AP

## JANG AND LEE LEAD AS KO SLIPS BACK IN SINGAPORE

**SINGAPORE:** Top-ranked Lydia Ko carded an ugly 74 as she slipped nine shots off the pace set by South Koreans Jang Ha-Na and Lee Mi-Rim at the HSBC Women's Champions yesterday. The 18-year-old, seeking her first win at the tournament in Singapore, has much ground to make up at the par-72 Sentosa course after an unsatisfying first two rounds.

Defending champion Park In-Bee was also five shots back from Jang and Lee, who fired 66 and 67 respectively for matching aggregate scores of 136. Park, who didn't card a single bogey as she romped to the title last year, struggled to a 73 on another windy day at the resort island course. Jang shot to the top of the leaderboard after shooting four birdies and an eagle on the par-five seventh, before Lee joined her at the top.

"First round and second round, two eagles, so I feel very comfortable," said Jang. "Today I'm very comfortable on the front nine and I told myself, 'Don't do too much thinking, just be patient. There are two more days, so I have to concentrate more.'" Like Jang, Lee had a flawless day and carded five birdies to move six places to the top. But the windy conditions affected her drives and she said she had to be sharper on the greens.

Lee said: "I feel that my swing right now is not good, but my short game is better and I am scoring well." Norway's Suzann Pettersen and Pornanong Phatlum of Thailand are trailing the leading pair by a stroke. Pettersen, who fired 69 to go with her opening round of 68, said she was in a good position heading into the weekend. "I've been playing some solid golf, hitting good golf shots and maneuvering myself around this golf course in a pretty easy way," said Pettersen. "I'm hitting the ball better and better each day, which is for me my bread and butter usually. It's nice that I feel comfortable and being able to hit the shots you see and execute. "For me, it's a good starting point, but still got a job to do on the weekend." — AFP