

KERR-IFIC



Staff photos by David Smith

Spectators cheer Cristie Kerr after she won the U.S. Women's Open at Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club on Sunday in Southern Pines.

LEADERS

Final scores



-5

CRISTIE KERR
71-72-66-70 - 279



-3

ANGELA PARK
68-69-74-70 - 281



-3

LORENA OCHOA
71-71-68-71 - 281



-2

SE RI PAK
74-72-68-68 - 282



-2

IN-BEE PARK
69-73-71-69 - 282

Kerr wins her first major title

By Dan Wiederer
Staff writer

SOUTHERN PINES — The scene unfolding in front of Natalie Gulbis at dusk Sunday was far from typical. For the first time possibly ever at a major golf tournament, Gulbis stood in the open, alone and uninterrupted.

With a bottle of Chateau Lafayette sparkling wine in her right hand and a stack of commemorative plastic cups in her left, the bubbly 24-year-old was itching to celebrate.

Just one problem: Cristie Kerr, the guest of honor and freshly crowned U.S. Women's Open champion, stood 40 feet away, engulfed in a sea of photographers, autograph seekers and order-keeping security.

"C'mon, Cristie, no more autographs," Gulbis called. "You need to join me for champagne."

This is what happens when you win the biggest championship in women's golf as Kerr did Sunday, firing a final-round 70 to edge Lorena Ochoa and Angela Park by two strokes.



Kerr broke a five-hole tie with Lorena Ochoa with a birdie putt on No. 14.

With a 72-hole total of 5-under par, Kerr was suddenly the belle of the ball, finally a major champion.

For nearly an hour, she stood on the final green of her greatest career triumph, happily posing for photographs and wearing out her left wrist and red Sharpie

See **OPEN**, Page 9C

BY THE NUMBERS

1

Three-putt by Kerr during the Open

16

Birdies by Kerr over four rounds

32

One-putts on Pine Needles' tricky greens

41

Times Kerr hadn't won a major before Sunday

71

Percentage of fairways she hit during the four days

\$560,000

Kerr's share of the U.S. Women's Open purse

All-American girl steps out of shadow

SOUTHERN PINES — The names atop the early leaderboard at Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club were so foreign that it almost didn't seem like a U.S. Women's Open anymore.

Amidst the constant stream of Parks, Kims, Hungs and Shins, the call went out.

Where are all the American girls?

Sunday afternoon, we finally got our answer.

Cristie Kerr of Miami, the all-American girl with an all-American smile and a golf game to boot, stepped out of the Carolina pines and into the spotlight by winning the all-American tournament on the week of July 4.

And she did it wearing a red shirt, a blue skirt and a white hat that gave her the look of a walking, talking American flag.

"Yes, that was planned," she said afterward.

But even as Kerr was busy stirring all that national pride by gallantly outdueling the



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world's No. 1 player, Mexico's Lorena Ochoa, to win her country's national championship and first major title, you couldn't help but get the feeling that something still just wasn't right.

While an American girl did win the U.S. Women's Open — the first time in three years that's happened — it just didn't seem like it was the right American girl.

Easy to overlook

That distinction figured to go to Morgan Pressel, Paula Creamer, Brittany Lincicome or, yes, even Michelle Wie — all precocious teens with fire in their eyes and cute ribbons

See **FRIEDLANDER**, Page 9C



U.S. WOMEN'S OPEN FINAL-ROUND SCORECARD

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
PAR	5	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	5	3	4	4	36 - 71

Leaders

Cristie Kerr	5	4	2	4	3	4	4	5	4	35	5	4	4	3	3	5	3	4	4	35 - 70 -- 5
Angela Park	4	5	2	4	3	4	4	5	4	35	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	5	3	35 - 70 -- 3
Lorena Ochoa	4	5	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	34	5	4	4	3	4	5	3	5	4	37 - 71 -- 3
Se Ri Pak	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	35	5	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	33 - 68 -- 2
In-Bee Park	5	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	35	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	34 - 69 -- 2

Notables

Morgan Pressel	5	5	2	5	3	4	5	4	4	37	4	4	4	3	5	5	4	5	6	40 - 77 -- +3
Annika Sorenstam	5	5	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	36	5	4	6	3	4	6	2	3	4	37 - 73 -- +8

○ Birdies △ Eagles □ Bogeys ◻ Other

Staff graphic

Open

From Page 1C

for fans. All the while, the oft-swarmed Gulbis waited to the side.

At 29 years old, Kerr is no longer young enough to be considered part of the Tour's up-and-coming youth revolution. Born and raised in Florida, she doesn't have the international appeal of players such as Ochoa, Annika Sorenstam or Se Ri Pak.

For far too long, she had felt unappreciated, a consistent LPGA standout shoved into the corner of the attic like a box of old photographs.

"I don't know if slighted is the right word," Kerr said. "But maybe overlooked a little bit."

Until Sunday.

Good history at course

Oddly enough, Kerr felt this victory coming. Something inside her told her long ago that her first major championship would be a U.S. Women's Open and that the course would be Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club.

The premonition traces back 11 years to the first time the Open was held here. At 18, she was low amateur in 1996, then followed five years later by posting a fourth-place finish on these same hallowed grounds. When she left in 2001, she left with a surreal belief that she would one day win here.

"I know that's odd to say," Kerr admitted. "But when I stepped on the grounds this week, it was just magic."

Kerr has held the Pinehurst and Southern Pines area in high regard. Something about the Pine Needles course, she said, just suits her.

As proof, she shot 66-70 over her final two rounds. She also used her new Ping Craz-e g5i putter to blister the complex Donald Ross greens, tallying 32 one-putts compared with just one three-putt for the tournament.

Her biggest putt Sunday came at No. 14, a twisting 15-footer which she struck with confidence and followed to the hole as it dropped.

"I can't remember a week where I walked in more putts," Kerr said. "Like Jack Nicklaus, knowing they're in. That's not normally my move. But it is now."

That birdie broke what had been a five-hole tie with Ochoa and sent the often emotional Kerr sauntering to the winner's

MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH

All three LPGA majors this year have been won by a player who had never won a major before. Not since 1995, when Annika Sorenstam won her first major, has each LPGA major been won by a first-timer. The 2007 major breakdown:

Tournament	Winner	Current age
Kraft Nabisco	Morgan Pressel	19
McDonald's LPGA	Suzann Pettersen	26
U.S. Women's Open	Cristie Kerr	29
Women's British Open	Aug. 2-5	

MONEY AND MAJORS

Cristie Kerr's win Sunday removed her name from the conversation of the best LPGA player who has never won a major. The LPGA's all-time money leaders with majors won.

	Earnings	Majors
■ 1. Annika Sorenstam	\$20,523,094	10
■ 2. Karrie Webb	\$13,234,781	7
■ 3. Juli Inkster	\$11,649,100	7
■ 4. Se Ri Pak	\$9,418,970	5
■ 5. Meg Mallon	\$8,847,814	4
■ 6. Beth Daniel	\$8,774,421	1
■ 7. Rosie Jones	\$8,355,068	0
■ 8. Laura Davies	\$8,065,646	4
■ 9. Lorena Ochoa	\$7,864,648	0
■ 10. Cristie Kerr	\$7,686,310	1

circle with a surgeon's calm.

"Cristie can get very uneasy and very upset very quickly out there," said her caddie, Jason Gilroyed. "When things get tough, her attitude can change drastically. But I didn't see any of that this week. I've never seen her this at ease."

Both Kerr and her husband called the championship promenade surreal and different. Because of the incessant weather delays that disrupted the tournament early on, the only day Kerr played 18 holes was Thursday. In some ways, the jumbled schedule may have been a bonus.

"She didn't have to sleep on the (third-round) lead," said her husband, Erik Stevens.

What's more, Kerr's burst to the top of the leaderboard Saturday — she made five birdies in a span of eight holes and sank six consecutive putts during one stretch — was somewhat under the radar, hardly televised and seen only by a gaggle of spectators.

That proved fitting for the 11-year veteran who secured her 10th career victory Sunday and went past the \$7.5 million mark in career earnings, yet didn't make her first trip to the tournament's press room until the championship cup was in her possession.

"Cristie's been out on Tour for 11 years now. Sometimes

people forget about her," Stevens said. "Now all of her hard work can be validated."

By the time Gulbis had popped the cork on the celebratory bath, Kerr was at ease, cracking jokes and smiling from ear to ear. It had been a far different mindset 50 minutes earlier when she stepped to the 18th tee realizing she had a two-stroke lead and a 413-yard walk through the door of her childhood dream.

With her heart pounding out of her chest, she told Gilroyed to feel her pulse.

"I felt like a guppy out there," Kerr said. "I was just gasping for air."

Gilroyed told her to relax and to appreciate the moment. Walking to the 18th green, a sea of spectators rushed into the fairway to watch the finish. Kerr took one nostalgic look back.

"It was pretty awesome," she said. "Whoever took that picture, I want it."

Then, some 21 years after completing her first serious round of golf in Florida with a score of 123, she made a textbook U.S. Women's Open par — driver, 9-iron, two putts — to fulfill her dreams.

"It's all pretty amazing," she said.

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