

# IT'S WONDERFUL!

Y. E. Yang at the 2009 PGA Championship

*(announcer)* "From South Korea, Y. E. Yang!"

*(normal crowd)*

When the 2009 PGA Championship was held at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Minnesota, a relatively unknown player, ranked 110th on the PGA Tour, found himself not only playing against Tiger Woods for the win—but paired with Tiger for the final round.

*(announcer)* "From California, Tiger Woods!"

*(huge crowd)*

When asked what his chances were, Yang said, "Tiger has 70 wins. I have 1. So 70 to 1."

Most put the odds closer to a million to one.

Jim Nantz recalled that historic day. "You had the stat at the time. Tiger had won every single one of his majors with a 54-hole lead."

*(pause, music change)*

Tiger was a prodigy. When he was 2 years old, he appeared on the Mike Douglas Show, hitting perfect drives while Bob Hope and Jimmy Stewart looked on. Yang was a construction worker who wanted to be a bodybuilder until he tore ligaments in his knee. He didn't pick up a golf club until he was 19. Tiger had a lot of great coaches, including his father, Earl Woods. Yang taught himself using golf videos. Tiger won the Masters at 21. Yang didn't break par until he was 22.

*(pause)*

Doug Ferguson, writing for the Associated Press, said, "They make the turn, and it's supposed to be a coronation now, these final 9 holes at Hazeltine, and it's not. It was a battle."

*(pause, music change)*

Imagine you're at Hazeltine that day. It's August in Minnesota and the sky is midwest blue. The tournament organizers capped attendance at around 40,000—and it feels like they're all following Tiger and Yang, stacked on both sides of every fairway, surrounding the greens.

*(pause)*

In a red striped shirt, dark slacks and Nike cap, Tiger looks unstoppable. Yang, dressed all in white, can't possibly pose a threat. But after 9 holes, Tiger and Yang are even—until Tiger roars back to reclaim the lead with a birdie on 11.

*(big cheer)*

A.J. Montecinos, Yang's caddie, says, "Playing with Tiger in a major is like playing golf on the inside of the radio with every station going at the same time. It's pandemonium."

*(bigger cheer)*

But the pressure of Tiger's charge, which has claimed so many competitors, seems to have no impact on Yang. The fans notice, and you can almost feel a tide of support shifting to the underdog.

*(pause)*

The 14th hole is 448 yards, a sharp dogleg right that's reachable off the tee. Tiger is thinking eagle but drives his ball into a greenside bunker. Yang lands short, in the light rough. Verne Lundquist, reporting for CBS, notices Tiger turn his back as Yang prepares to pitch, as if he doesn't need to see it. Then Tiger turns to give Yang's shot a quick glance.

*(crisp sound of a chip shot)*

Yang hits a clean bump and run. The ball lands on the sunny part of the green, and as it rolls into the shade toward the flag *(crowds begin)* Verne Lundquist says, "It's a good one... it's a really good one!" The ball drops into the cup for an eagle, the gallery goes crazy *(crowd erupts)*, Yang punches the air, and Lundquist shouts, "It's wonderful!" Nick Faldo, who is a CBS analyst that day, laughs and says, "Verne, you've seen another one!"

*(pause)*

Faldo is talking about the last time something this unexpected happened in a Major. It was the 1986 Masters at Augusta National. Jack Nicklaus, 46-years-old and considered out of the hunt, made his legendary charge—and Verne Lundquist was there. When Nicklaus sank his birdie putt on 17 to take the lead, Verne's shout of "Yes, sir!" immortalized the moment. Now, 13 years later, Lundquist was on hand to call another miracle.

*(pause)*

Jim Nantz says, "Yang knocked it in for an eagle 2, and it was a game changer. All of a sudden, it was like, This could actually happen!"

*(pause)*

As Yang walks on the green, you glance at Tiger, and he looks concerned. Of course, he's still Tiger Woods, the #1 player in the world. He makes a clutch putt for birdie, but now Tiger is one down, chasing Yang with four to play.

*(pause)*

They both bogey the 17th. Yang is still one-up, but a bogey for Yang is worse than a bogey for Tiger. CBS commentator David Feherty says, "It really looked like it was going to be Yang's day, but then again, it's against Tiger Woods who's used to pulling the rabbit out of the hat."

*(pause)*

That's what Yang's family must be thinking in Seoul. They stayed up all night so they wouldn't miss the final round. All across South Korea, thousands of people—including President Lee Myung-bak—woke at 4 AM to watch Yang compete against Tiger. That bogey on 17 was felt halfway around the world.

*(pause)*

They come to the 18th hole, a long Par 4. Tiger hits a beautiful shot down the right side. Yang pulls his shot a little, landing in the first cut of rough on the left.

*(pause)*

You're right there in the gallery when Yang and his caddie AJ walk up. Tiger's in perfect position to attack the green. But Yang has a decision to make. There are trees between him and the hole. Plus, the pin is back-left, which brings the greenside bunkers into play. He's got to lay-up with a 4-iron. You hear AJ ask, "3 or 4?" and can't believe it when Yang nods and says, "3." With a slender one-stroke lead over Tiger Woods, Yang is going for it!

*(pause.... swing, ball strike).*

*(crowd low buzz)*

Yang hits that 3-iron 210 yards...

*(crowd builds)*

... over the trees, over the bunkers...

*(crowd builds)*

... and right at the flag. The ball hits the green just shy of the pin and rolls to 10 feet.

*(crowd explodes)*

Nick Faldo and Verne Lundquist take turns shouting over the crowd. "Oh! My goodness! What a golf shot!"

*(pause)*

Yang makes his birdie putt and punches the air. He looks more like Tiger than Tiger himself. He lifts his golf bag over his head—fulfilling his old dream of being a bodybuilder and his new dream of winning a major, both at the same time.

Later, Yang described how he felt when he found out he'd be paired with Tiger Woods in the final round. He said, "My heart nearly exploded." Saturday night, he could barely sleep.

*(pause)*

But on Sunday morning, he had an epiphany. Yang said, "It's not like you're in an octagon where you're fighting against Tiger and he's going to bite you, or swing at you with his 9-iron. The worst that I could do was just lose to Tiger."

In other words, there was nothing left to worry about. Like Lee Trevino used to say, "Reality is reality." All Yang had to do was go out there, be himself, and play.

And that's exactly what he did.

*(music out)*