

Japan's Hideki Matsuyama fired nine birdies in a scintillating nine-under-par 62 on Sunday (Monday in Manila) to rally from six shots back for a three-stroke victory in the Genesis Invitational at The Riviera Country Club.

Matsuyama, the 2021 Masters champion, notched his ninth US PGA Tour title, breaking a tie with South Korean KJ Choi for most by a player from Asia.

It was all the more meaningful coming more than two years after his most recent title at the 2022 Sony Open, and after a neck injury left him fearing he might not win again.

"Reaching nine wins was one of my big goals, passing KJ Choi," Matsuyama said. "After my eighth win I've been struggling with my injury. There were a lot of times I felt I was never going to win again, I struggled to finish top-10.

"I'm really happy I was able to win today," added Matsuyama, who unleashed a mighty fist-pump when his last putt dropped on the 18th. His 62 is the lowest closing round ever for a tournament winner at Riviera.

Tap-in birdies at the 15th and 16th had seen the Japanese star break free atop a crowded leaderboard that saw five players tied for the lead on the back nine.

He added a birdie at the par-five 17th — shooting six-under on the back nine and capping his round with a two-putt par at Riviera's iconic 18th.

His 17-under 267 left him three strokes clear of Americans Luke List and Will Zalatoris, List carding a 68 and Zalatoris a 69 for 270.

Matsuyama, who was one stroke shy of equaling the course record, had started the day tied for seventh but leapt into contention with birdies at the first three holes.

He opened the back nine with another three-birdie burst, drilling a 10-foot putt at the 10th and firing out of the rough to one foot at the par-five 11th before rolling in a 46-footer at the 12th.

At the 15th his eight-iron approach from 189 yards left him eight inches from the pin and the birdie put him among five players sharing the lead at 15-under.

A six-inch birdie putt at the par-three 16th — where he thought his tee shot was five yards right of his target — saw him take the solo lead.

He was in the fairway at the par-five 17th and after his second shot rolled through the green he chipped to three feet to extend his lead.

His rivals, meanwhile, were falling by the wayside.

List had powered to the lead with an eagle and three birdies on the front nine, but had three bogeys and just one birdie coming in.

Zalatoris, playing on a sponsor's invitation as he works his way back from back surgery that cut short his 2023 campaign, had the solo lead after his fourth birdie of the day at the 13th, but he couldn't keep pace with Matsuyama and fell three adrift with a bogey at 15.

Overnight leader Patrick Cantlay, who had carried a five-shot lead into the weekend and saw it dwindle to two going into the final round, never got anything going and finished with a one-over 72 that put him in a tie for fourth with Canadian Adam Hadwin and American Xander Schauffele.

Hadwin carded a six-under 65 and Schauffele — whose last-group pairing with good friend Cantlay had been expected to provide the day's fireworks — signed for a one-under 70.

Matsuyama will enjoy a sizable boost to his world No. 55 ranking as well as a \$4 million winner's prize from the \$20 million purse on offer at the third of eight signature events on the US PGA Tour schedule this year.

The elite tournaments are designed to showcase the game's best, but top-ranked Scottie Scheffler and world number two Rory McIlroy were never a factor. Tournament host Tiger Woods' first start of 2024 ended abruptly midway through the second round on Friday when he withdrew because of illness.

"A little disappointed that I wasn't able to take a picture with Tiger today," admitted Matsuyama, who received congratulations from the 15-time major champion via X (formerly Twitter) on an "incredible win."

"I was watching all day and seeing a record breaking 62 and coming from six shots back is truly special," Woods posted.

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