What a great day to be a golf fan. Padraig Harrington shot his second straight 66 on Sunday to take his second straight major, winning the PGA Championship at Oakland Hills in suburban Detroit by two strokes over Sergio Garcia and Ben Curtis. It was a thrilling back and forth finish that was decided by Harrington hitting clutch putts on each of the last three holes en route to a 32 on the back nine of the course they call "The Monster". Mitch recaps the tournament for us.

Padraig Harrington shot his second straight 66 on Sunday to take his second straight major, winning the PGA Championship at Oakland Hills in suburban Detroit by two strokes over Sergio Garcia and Ben Curtis.

Perhaps it was pre-ordained, given the fact that the conditions were more reminiscent of a British Open. Rain washed out the entire third round for most of the leaders, forcing them to play 36 holes on Sunday, in weather that would have made the most stoic Scotsman smile; heavy clouds, high wind, sporadic rain, and temperatures in the mid 60s. It was a complete turnabout from last year at Southern Hills in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when the year's final major was held in blistering 100 plus degree heat.

This year, the only heat was on the final groups, as "The Monster" at Oakland Hills had been living up to its name, making this tournament look more like a U.S. Open, with only three players, J.B. Holmes, Henrik Stenson and the 54 hole leader, Ohio's Ben Curtis, entering the last round under par.

In those blustery conditions, the hard hitting Holmes quickly dropped out of

contention with a triple bogey on the first hole, leading to a meltdown 81 for the round. Also in the final two groups, Stenson was unable to make a charge, nor was Charlie Wi, playing in his first ever major.

Curtis held the lead throughout the front nine, but all the attention was on the group in front of them, with Garcia sprinting out of the gate with a birdie on number one, and an eagle on the par 5 second hole. Harrington was almost an afterthought, four strokes behind Curtis after his eighth hole.

But Curtis ran into a rough stretch around the turn, bogeying 8, 9, and 11. Things tightened as Garcia continued to play steady golf, exhibiting a calmness that had not been seen before from the mercurial Spaniard; not only with his demeanor, but also with his putter

Then Harrington caught fire, birdeying 10, 12, and 13 to pull into a tie with Garcia, one stroke ahead of Curtis. However, both Padraig and Ben dropped shots over the next few holes, giving Sergio a one shot lead going into the treacherous final three holes, and setting up drama we hadn't seen since Tiger and Rocco went at it at Torrey Pines.

On the nearly 90 degree dogleg 16th, Sergio put his second shot into the water, but hit a great shot from the drop zone to save his bogey, making it a three way tie, as Harrington stayed in it by nailing a pressure 12 footer for par.

Sergio recovered on 17, sticking his drive on the par 3 to within six feet, inside of Harrington's excellent tee shot that stopped 14 feet away from the hole. But there the tournament changed, as Harrington once again sank the difficult putt, while Garcia, who had putted so steadily the entire weekend, failed to convert his birdie, giving the Irishman a one stroke lead with one hole to play.

Suddenly, we're having a repeat of Carnoustie in the 2007 Open, with both Sergio and Padraig butchering the 72nd hole, at least when it came to their tee shots. Now the 18th at Oakland Hills is an easy hole to butcher, a 498 yard par 4 with seven fairway bunkers in play for where the average pro must put his drive. Padraig ended up in one of them, and Sergio barely missed, but had a tough lie and tougher stance in the rough right above one of the bunkers. Harrington then caught his shot fat, leaving him in the rough with over 100 yards to go, while Sergio's tough lie made it so that his second shot ended up in a greenside bunker.

With Garcia needing to beat Harrington by a stroke on the last hole to force a playoff, he needed an up and down from the bunker, along with hoping that Harrington couldn't get up and down for par from his precarious position.

It was too much to hope for. Garcia got out of the bunker to within 10 feet, while Harrington knocked his third shot onto the green 18 feet away, meaning that if Harrington missed his putt, Sergio would have a chance to force the playoff...but it was not to be, as Harrington completed the putting clinic that he had started on 16, burying the putt and closing out Garcia.

Due to catching an unlucky bounce on 17 into the thick rough, Curtis bogeyed the hole, and was left with needing to hole out his second shot on 18 to force the playoff. He came within 20

feet of doing so, but that wasn't enough, and Harrington joined Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, and Nick Price as the only back-to-back major winners in the past 25 years.

Harrington also becomes the first European to win the PGA Championship in 78 years, since Tommy Armour did so in 1930.

Garcia and Curtis ended up tied for second; but despite the disappointment of being a runner up, it was a definitive tournament for both men. For Garcia, he showed a newfound maturity level; both in his game, and in his reactions to adversity. In his interview after the tournament, there was no whining, or blaming others. Garcia was classy in his answers and quick to credit Harrington for his win.

For Curtis, he had been battling the title of "fluke champion" ever since he snared the Claret Jug in 2003. Even though he had won two other tournaments, and had numerous top ten finishes since then, he was still being lumped in with the Rich Beems, Shaun Micheels, and Todd Hamiltons of the golfing world. With this finish, he has proven that he does belong in that elite group that can be considered "contender" in any major he enters.

Despite the absence of Tiger Woods, Harrington must now be considered a serious challenger to Phil Mickelson as the Number Two golfer in the world. He has now won three majors in six attempts, which is far better than any of the other challengers to Tiger who have one three; Mickelson (three titles in a period of nine majors), Vijay Singh (three titles over twenty-five majors), and Ernie Else (three in thirty-four). Given Harrington's newfound confidence, there is no reason to think that he won't be able to stand up to the pressure of going one-on-one with Tiger starting at the 2009 Masters.

I can't wait to watch.