



## Ryan Fox Wins the 154th Open Championship: Kiwi Holes Dramatic Birdie on Birkdale's 18th to Claim the Claret Jug

### Description

New Zealand's **Ryan Fox won the 154th Open Championship** at Royal Birkdale on Sunday 20 July 2026 in the most dramatic fashion imaginable, holing a 12-foot birdie putt on the 72nd hole to edge out American Cameron Young by a single stroke. At 39 years old, Fox claimed his first major title in a finale that had the Birkdale grandstands and golf fans worldwide on the edge of their seats from the moment he turned for home.

### How the Final Round Unfolded

Sam Burns had entered the day as overnight leader following his sensational round of 62 on Moving Day, one of three rounds at or below that mark across a remarkable week at Birkdale. Fox, who had matched the record with his own 62 on Saturday, began the final round just a stroke behind Burns and alongside the hard-charging Lucas Herbert. The stage was set for a Sunday shootout worthy of the Claret Jug.

Burns found the Birkdale links far less cooperative under final-round pressure, and his overnight lead gradually evaporated as the afternoon wore on. Fox, playing with the calm authority of a man who had spent a career narrowly missing out on the sport's biggest prizes, steadied himself through the front nine before catching fire on the back stretch. Four birdies in his final six holes including clutch conversions at 13, 14, 16 and 17 pushed him to the summit.

For the full drama of how the week reached this climax, see our [Moving Day report](#) and our account of the [record-setting Round 2](#).



Ryan Fox, champion of The 154th Open Championship at Royal Birkdale. Source: The Open official website (theopen.com)

## The Putt That Made History

As Fox stood on the 18th tee at Royal Birkdale, Young was already in the clubhouse on nine under par – the clubhouse lead – having produced a composed final round of his own. Fox needed a birdie at the last. No pressure.

He powered his drive into the centre of the fairway and then – with the precision that has characterised his game at its best – struck an approach shot that landed some 12 feet from the flag. The putt broke left-to-right, and Fox struck it with exactly the right weight. When it fell into the centre of the cup, the New Zealander dropped to his knees in disbelief, arms raised, as Birkdale erupted around him.

The final score: Fox at ten under par, Young at nine under, and a week that had rewritten the Open record books now had its champion.

## Ryan Fox: A Career Defined by Near-Misses

Fox is the son of All Blacks and New Zealand rugby legend Grant Fox, but he has spent his career carving his own legacy in golf. A four-time winner on the DP World Tour – including the prestigious 2023 BMW PGA Championship at Wentworth – he added two PGA Tour titles in 2025 at the Myrtle Beach Classic and the RBC Canadian Open. He had come agonisingly close to major glory several times before. At the 2022 Dutch Open, a rival holed a 40-foot putt to beat him in a play-off. Birkdale this week was the resolution to that long wait.



Lucas Herbert, who shot a record-equalling 62 in Round 2, was one of the week's standout performers at Royal Birkdale. Source: The Open official website (theopen.com)

## A Week That Rewrote History

The 154th Open at Royal Birkdale was remarkable even before its final-round drama. Three separate players — Herbert, Burns, and Fox — posted rounds of 62 across the championship week, equalling the lowest single-round score in Open history (first achieved by Branden Grace at the same venue in 2017). Herbert and Burns did so in the second round; Fox matched their feat in the third. That any player managed to win after such a compressed leaderboard speaks to the quality of a course that demands precision from tee to green.

Fox becomes only the third New Zealander to win a men's major championship, joining Sir Bob Charles (1963 Open) and Michael Campbell (2005 US Open) in that select group. At 39, he also joins a proud line of late-blooming major winners — and Birkdale will forever be synonymous with the day the Kiwi finally got his hands on golf's oldest trophy.

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