K.T. Kim, Masters champion Charl Schwartzel and Ryo Ishikawa built big leads early as the raucous Australian crowd came to life. Geoff Ogilvy knocked in a 60-foot putt on the 12th hole in the fourth match as the scoreboard filled up with blue numbers.

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — The winning point for Tiger Woods. A perfect record for Jim Furyk.

And validation for U.S. captain Fred Couples.

The Americans won the Presidents Cup as a team, 19-15, avenging their worst loss ever in any cup competition 13 years ago on a Royal Melbourne course that lived up to its reputation as among the greatest tests in golf.

Yet even as they gathered around the gold trophy at the closing ceremony Sunday afternoon, all of them dressed in red shirts and blue blazers, it was hard to ignore the singular achievements.

Couples was criticized in some corners for picking Woods, who had fallen out of the top 50 for the first time in 15 years and had gone two years without winning. Even the International team captain, Greg Norman, said he would have taken PGA champion Keegan Bradley.

So perhaps it was only fitting that it was Woods who blasted out of a deep bunker on the 15th hole to within 2 feet to put away Aaron Baddeley and give the Americans the point they needed to win the Presidents Cup.

Couples was among the first to greet him, shadow boxing with the guy he called "the best player in the world forever."

"I'm thankful that he picked me," Woods said. "Greg is probably not happy about it after I closed out the cup today. But it's great to be a part of this team. I'm thankful that Freddie believed in me to be a part of this team. This is just a great bunch of guys."

Woods was solid for five matches, even though he was rewarded with only two points. On another tough day of strong winds and super slick greens, he made six birdies — the most in any of the 12 singles matches — and earned the clinching point for the second straight time.

"A lot of people have asked why I picked him and how he was going to play," Couples said. "Certainly I couldn't answer how he was going to play, but this week I think he showed to himself that his swing is back and he's healthy. And that's more important to me. Obviously, we want to win the cup. But it's more important for me to have people realize that he can play the game."

If there was any concern, it might have been Furyk.

Furyk had his worst full season since he was a rookie, failing to win a tournament or come even close, only securing a spot on the team in the final hour. He teamed with Phil Mickelson three times, Nick Watney once and was at his best by himself against Ernie Els to become only the fourth player to go 5-0 in the Presidents Cup.

The others were Woods in 2009, Shigeki Maruyama in 1998 and Mark O'Meara in 1996.

"Knowing Phil for as many years as I have ... I'm guessing he asked to play with me, because I struggled so much this year and played poorly — the worst of anyone sitting up here right now," Furyk said. "I assume that he asked to play with me because he felt like he could get a lot out of me this week, that maybe he could pump some confidence into me. And he did that."

The Americans took a 13-9 lead into the final day — only the U.S. team at the Ryder Cup in 1999 at Brookline had come back from a deficit that large to win — and Couples decided to put his veterans at the back of the lineup.

There was early cause for concern.

K.T. Kim, Masters champion Charl Schwartzel and Ryo Ishikawa built big leads early as the raucous Australian crowd came to life. Geoff Ogilvy knocked in a 60-foot putt on the 12th hole in the fourth match as the scoreboard filled up with blue numbers.

"I started to think, 'Wow, this is going to be some day,'" Couples said.

But veterans Woods, Furyk, David Toms and Steve Stricker didn't let him down. Stricker, competing for the first time in nearly two months because of a neck injury, closed out Y.E. Yang for the final point.

The Americans not only won the cup for the fourth straight time, but it was the third consecutive win by at least four points. They now lead the series 7-1-1 and earned a small measure of revenge for the last time Down Under.

Ogilvy and Schwartzel led the way for the International team, each with a 3-1-1 record. In one of

the more classier moments, Haas decided not to concede a 15-foot putt to Ogilvy on the last hole, even though he had three putts to win the match. Haas wanted to give him the chance to make it before his home crowd in Melbourne. Ogilvy missed.

It was a tough way for Norman to go out in his second stint as International captain — both losses to Couples, this one on a Royal Melbourne course in his native Australia where the Shark is revered.

He had five Australians on his team, and used his captain's picks on two players who grew up on the sand belt courses of Melbourne. Baddeley went 1-3-1, while Robert Allenby was 0-4, the first captain's pick since John Huston in 1998 to not win a point.

Norman attributed yet another loss to the foursomes matches, where the Americans had an 8-3 advantage.

"The last three years have gone so similar," Ogilvy said. "We go into singles needing a miracle."

As for Woods?

"He stepped up to the plate. He putted extremely well," Norman said. "Any player hates to see another great player struggle, because we all know what it's like to go through the ins and outs of the game. At the end of the day, you want to see the player who has dominated the game come back."

Norman didn't change his opinion of Couples' selection, though.

"I probably still would have gone for Keegan Bradley because he's a major champion," Norman said.

Norman could only watch as Woods hit his bunker shot that secured the match, and the final point, before congratulating Couples. It's getting to be quite a familiar image in an event that began in 1994 and has had a distinctive Stars & Stripes look to it.

"It would be fun to win one of these things," Ogilvy said. "It's the best time of the year until you realize you're not going to win."