

Who Will Step Up

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As Tiger is now out for the remainder of the 2008 season what and Who will drive the PGA Tour and 2nd Annual FedEx Cup. It is no secret that Woods drives revenues, ratings, and a whole lot more. This past week NBC had 13.8 millions viewers for Sunday's primetime final round, more than double any other single program. How will the PGA tour and Tim Finchem (Commissioner) repackage the sport for the next 6+ months and how will they fill the void Woods occupies. The rest of the elite talent on the PGA tour will have to step up and not one at a time then to fall away from the leaderboard the next several weeks, the way Trevor (Immelman) and Sergio (Garcia) have after their respective wins (Masters and TPC).

Will Phil provide any answers, perhaps, he has amassed 2 wins and five top 10's but still cannot get it together when it comes to Majors, finishing a disappointing 5th as he was +3 on the weekend at Augusta and then took a 9 on Saturday in last week's US open where he tried to play the same pitch shot 4 times before carding a 4 over, 9 at the par 5 13th. All but destroying his best chance of winning the US Open. Phil cannot and will not play it safe when he knows he has the ability to pull off the improbable.

Sergio, arguably the best ball striker on tour and consequently the worst putter on tour as he is tied for 178th on tour. His lone win of the season coming at the 5th major, The Players Championship was his best putting performance since Carnoustie before he came to the 17th hole on Sunday, the first time. Since that time he has been up and down and not in contention in any of the events he has played except for the one in which he was victorious. Sergio, while still in his 20's has plenty of career left, but if he can't right the ship with his putter now, its only going to be that much tougher as he ages.

Ernie Els, who is far from making good on his three year goal of being Tiger's week/in week out contender had glimpses of greatness at Torrey Pines, but in the end could not pull off the shots and putts he needed to stay in contention. His lone victory was the Honda classic at PGA National where Tiger, Phil, Vijay and Adam were not even in the field, so naturally the worlds best player won amongst a weak field. Each time Ernie has had the opportunity to step up and push Tiger he has fallen short. In his own admission, "he makes you do things you don't want to do,"... like forcing eagle at the last in Dubai earlier this season. Ernie just isn't up for the challenge and most speculate its the knee which has never quite healed as it should have. Still Ernie has all of the tools and perhaps with Tiger's absence he will get the motivation and opportunity needed to at least beat everybody else week in/week out.

Who might have been off the radar but certainly moved his own stock last week was Geoff Ogilvy, once again finding himself near the top of the leaderboard come Sunday at the US Open. Ogilvy currently sits at #4 in the OWGR and 5th in FedEx Cup points. Since the PODS Championship he has finished inside the top 25 in 8 of 10 events, most

recently a T9 at the US Open where his worst round was 74 on Sunday and additionally, he only carded one double bogey all week at the 14th which ranked as the 8th hardest hole at 4.25. He unlike the host of others mentioned here has staved off Tiger and the worlds best this year at the WGC CA at Doral, in fact, his win derailed Tigers consecutive win streak at 5, shortly before the Masters. Ogilvy, while he is not the most outspoken player does possess the skills, talent and model of consistency, the tour could only hope for in Tigers absence. Look for him to play well and contend at Birkdale, Oakland Hills and into the heart of the FedEx Cup Playoffs. Who's knows maybe with enough good finishes and potential wins he will become the everyday contender golf fans have hoped for.