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On Tiger Woods

by Tom Doak, Renaissance Golf Design, Inc.

What would a golf page be without something about Tiger Woods?

I met him once, four years ago, at a charity event at Riviera. It was already clear then he would be an outstanding player -- mature way beyond his years, a beautiful swing, and absolutely in love with the game.

Even before he got to the Tour, it should have been obvious he'd succeed greatly -- those three U.S. Amateurs are major championships in Jack Nicklaus' book, which already gives Tiger as many as any active player other than Nick Faldo -- one more than Greg Norman or Ben Crenshaw or John Daly, two more than Ian Woosnam or Tom Kite, and three more than Davis Love III or Phil Mickelson. Like other great athletes before him -- Nicklaus, Reggie Jackson, Kirk Gibson, Joe Montana, or Michael Jordan -- Tiger plays at his best when the adrenaline is flowing.

What could stop him? Only three things:

1. A back injury -- anyone who swings that hard could be in for a short career.
2. If he loses his enthusiasm for the game amidst all the fame and riches -- but I don't think that's going to happen.
3. Great golf courses. I think Tiger will overpower a lot of courses on the PGA TOUR, but the jury's still out on whether he'll dominate the majors. Those courses where he won his Amateurs are regular Tour-type venues; major championship sites are different. The thick U.S. Open rough punishes missteps severely -- remember Tiger's snowman on the 16th at Oakland Hills? -- but even the wide-open Augusta National and burnt-out British links can bring disaster on players who get over aggressive and miss a green in the wrong place. And it doesn't take many failures for the media to give you a complex.

But I'm rooting for him. If people accept that Tiger can be the best player in the world by the time he's 25, maybe they'll stop telling me I have to wait until I'm 50 to be the best architect.