

From Wins to Winces

By Lane Osborne

For years Tiger Woods made a habit out of winning, but for the last year and a half, his new routine seems to be wincing.

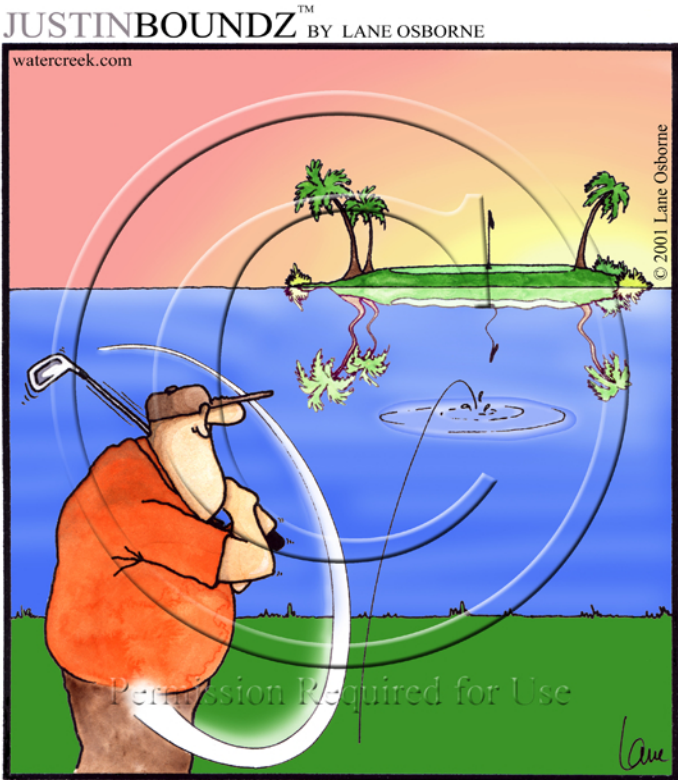
Tiger's most recent "wince" came recently at the TPC at Sawgrass in this year's Players Championship in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida when he re-injured his left knee and achilles and limped to a front nine 42. The round, which seemed to be punctuated by his inability to clear a water hazard that was thirty yards in front of him, came to an abrupt end when he withdrew after nine holes.

Tiger has a long history of physical ailments beyond his knee and achilles, including injuries to his neck, leg, and wrist. But ever since Tiger's private life was made public in the fall of 2009, his most notable injury seems to be a bruised ego.

Golf is a game of confidence. The countless, sordid details of Tiger's personal life, now known to everyone, coupled with a hiatus from the game to address those personal issues led to a ripple effect that Tiger may never overcome. There are legends in the game with every generation that at some point, for whatever reason, have to walk away from the sport. While I'm not in the camp of individuals who feels that the game of golf can't survive without Tiger, I nevertheless hope for his eventual return to form. Tiger needs golf more than golf needs Tiger, but I think at the very least he deserves a chance at redemption and I don't want to see a historical career come to an end due to a self-inflicted wound.

It's hard to believe that the Tiger, who has 71 PGA Tour victories, 14 major championships, and over \$93 million in earnings is the same Tiger we see playing today. Beyond injuries, divorce has clearly been disruptive to his golf game as well. Not the divorce from Elin so much as from swing coach Hank Haney. But, just as it's been widely reported that Tiger is dating again, he's also been seeing new instructor, Sean Foley.

This isn't the first time that Tiger has changed philosophies and retooled his golf swing. After parting ways with Butch Harmon in 2002, he adopted Haney's method to comparable success. But trying to groove a new swing is difficult, especially when life has caught up with you, you're plagued by injuries, and the expectation for greatness is still there. Only time will tell if Tiger still has the fire and determination to get back into the winner's circle. Some pundits have speculated that he needs to ease up in his intense workout regimen while others have suggested that he bite the bullet, like Fred Funk did, and get his bum knee replaced. Whatever Tiger opts to do, I hope he gets well soon.



Ned suffered from an iron deficiency.

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