

All I Want for Christmas — 2008*By: Nathan Crace Date: Nov. 14, 2008*

It's that time of year once again. A chill is in the air, college football is winding down, college basketball is starting up, and local retailers are preparing their Valentine's Day and Easter displays. All of this, of course, pales in comparison to the most scintillating read in all of sports: The *Lipouts* Christmas wish list for golf. What started in 2005 as a way to meet a deadline on the day before Thanksgiving has become a regular piece now (and still a way to make a deadline that keeps creeping up every year it seems) and so, without further ado, herewith is this year's list. As always, for those of you keeping score at home, this list is primarily golf-centered (world peace, etc. is a given each year), so relax and enjoy the read:

6. A Healthy Tiger Woods. While his peers on the Tour may have enjoyed his extended time off, what would an abbreviated career for Woods do to the professional game? Or the game in general? No doubt about it, Woods has reinvigorated the game of golf and made it popular with the youth beyond the blueblood country club set. Many superstars have had their career cut short by injury or worse, but none of them were Tiger Woods. He says he hasn't touched a club since the US Open so it will be interesting to see how long it takes to knock the rust off. Being a perfectionist, what if he decides he can no longer hit it the way he wants to and retires early to play with his kids (a new baby is on the way) and work on course design? We'll see....

5. A President's Cup Win for the United States. Like most golfers on this side of the pond, I enjoyed seeing the United States finally win the Ryder Cup back at Valhalla in LOO-A-VUHL, Kentucky (my home town) this fall, but following it up with a President's Cup win would be nice. The win for the States this year helped breathe life back into an event that we Americans were getting tired of losing, so it will be interesting to see if the International team can focus that type of energy in 2009.

4. A Better Formula for the FedEx Cup...Again. When the end-of-the-year spectacular is over before it begins and Camillo Villegas maybe-should-have-won but he didn't because Vijay Singh was too far ahead after two quick wins, it's a little anti-climatic. Especially when all Vijay had to do was show up at the last two events, make the cut, and not break his leg to win the pot o' gold at the end of the FedEx rainbow. What changes should be made you ask? I don't know. I went to public school, but I do know that something needs to be done to make every FedEx event count. Last year, I predicted that there would be a major overhaul in the FedEx Cup after the 2008 season—they started tinkering with it after the first year. Look for more adjustments with plenty of input from the big names they must keep happy to be successful.

3. Respect for Padraig Harrington. Harrington was recently awarded the PGA's Player of the Year for 2008, making him only the second person not named Tiger Woods to win the award since Mark O'Meara in 1998 (Vijay Singh won it in 2004). The fact that there was even discussion after his PGA Championship win was a testament to Woods' strength in the game. However, when you consider that Harrington won the British Open AND the PGA Championship in 2008 and that he has won 50% of the last six majors (going back to his 2007 British Open win), it was easy for me. Giving the POY to Woods this year after a shortened season would have been as crazy as Singh winning the FedEx Cup after winning just the first two events.....hum.

2. A New Race for #1 in the World Rankings. If Woods stays off the Tour until the US Open and Phil Mickelson wins an event or two early on (or even the Masters), he will overtake Woods in the top spot. What's crazy about that is the fact that Tiger was sooooo far ahead of everyone else, that he had to nearly break his leg and take a year off for someone to overtake him!

1. Continued Support from You the Readers. As hard as it is for me to believe, this is my 89th column for *Lipouts* and I've been writing this (what began as a rambling personal view of my thoughts about Ian Woosnam carrying too many clubs in the 2001 British Open) for more than seven years. Now *Lipouts* is carried by a number of golf publications regionally and even nationally from time to time and of course worldwide at Lipouts.com. We even began a relationship with an online golf publication based in South Africa this year called Universal Golf Magazine (universlagolfmag.com) for original content that does not appear in *Lipouts*. I truly appreciate each of you who take the time to read the column and those who send emails—even the ones telling me how wrong or ignorant I am. I try to answer all of them. Merry Christmas!

Nathan Crace is a golf course architect and member of the Golf Writers Assoc. of America whose freelance "Lipouts" column is based, at times, on topics submitted to the author by readers like you. If you have a topic you would like to see discussed or wish to read past columns from his archives, log on to www.lipouts.com and let him know or email him at nathan@watermarkgolf.com. Copyright 2008.