

Nathan Crace's

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Spare Me the Disparity

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Much has been made in the past ten years about the impact of Tiger Woods on the game of golf. There are any number of takes on the topic. There's the version that he has brought the game to the masses of children who would not have been exposed to it before. Of course, having golf's number one player in the world who looks like he has the build of an NFL linebacker makes the game much cooler to the youth of today than say a Tim Herron—no offense Lumpy.

There's also the crowd among some players who complains (although quietly) that Tiger's impact on the game is that he wins too much and it's not fair to everyone else. Give me a break! In reality, anyone with a lick of sense can see that Woods' popularity with the corporate world has been a huge and much-needed infusion of cash into the arm of the Tour. And you have to wonder if there hasn't been some trickle down effect to the Nationwide, LPGA, and Champions Tours as well. The money on all of the tours continues to grow each year and Tiger has to be given some of the credit—if only in a 'round about way.

But for all of the money being thrown at these guys these days, there may actually be some validity to the complaint that the disparity between Woods and, well, everyone else may be too much to overcome. He can't give everyone two a side and every time someone like Mickelson starts making it interesting, they get in their own way and do something stupid that seems to set them back the rest of the year. Meanwhile, Tiger overhauls his swings to the chagrin of the pundits and wins more Majors while he works through his "slump."

But don't take it from me. The numbers tell the real story of the disparity on Tour these days. At the end of the 2006 season, Woods finished at the top of the money list again. This time with \$9.9 million in winnings! Just a little shy of \$10 million! Jim Furyk was second with only \$7.2 million and do you even know who was third with a paltry \$4.9 million? Give it a try.....wrong! Adam Scott. And the best part? Woods did it in only 15 starts compared to Furyk's 24 and Scott's 19—though he finished with half of the money Tiger walked away with.

Now move over to the Nationwide Tour. The 2006 money leader on this tour made a tidy \$382,443—or just a hair over \$9.5 million less than Woods. But what's a million or two among friends? The man who finished atop the Nationwide Tour, Ken Duke, edged out his second place finisher Johnson Wagner by a mere \$10,000 and some change. Or about the amount that Woods has earned since you started reading this column. Or actually, probably since you started reading this paragraph....depending on how fast you read.

There's no doubt Woods has had a positive overall affect on the game and now he's doing what a lot of other Tour players have taken a shot at: golf course design. With the exception of a few players, I never really understood the theory behind this phenomenon. I can understand the name recognition to some extent, but how much do these guys really know about design? And as busy as they are globetrotting, how can they possibly devote the time required unless they just rubber stamp their names to the work of someone else behind the scenes. Everyone who plays golf dreams of designing a course, but you wouldn't hire LaDanian Tomlinson to design your stadium. Of course, the royal family in Dubai where Woods' first foray into design is taking shape shouldn't have any budget issues.

Now if only he can work the same magic for the purses in the golf design industry that he did for the purses on the Tour...well, then, we may be on to something...

Nathan Crace is a golf course architect and member of the Golf Writers Association of America whose freelance "Lipouts" column appears in a number of regional and national golf publications. If you would like to read past columns from the archives, log on to www.lipouts.com. Copyright 2006.