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Manassas, VA 20112

Tiger Woods 2.0
By
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Is it me, or are we seeing a whole new Tiger Woods? Am I the only one who thinks he sounds much friendlier? It's now as if he truly appreciates playing golf. He interacts with the fans more.

During Tiger's glory years, it almost seemed he was not enjoying himself on the golf course. But I suspect his overall feeling about the game was not enjoyment but the desire to win at all costs, even when he was injured. He has said the competition drove him—he loved competing and winning. He still does, but there is a difference now!

An old American Express "Rainy Day" advertisement typified his determination to be the best. The opening scene shows a window on a rainy day, with the camera pulling back and panning through an empty living room where the TV is showing cartoons. Stanford memorabilia covers the couch and walls, and Tiger Woods's voice says, "On a rainy day is a

time to be home, be a kid." The camera pans to the next room, and through an open bay door, the viewer sees the outdoors, where Tiger Woods is hitting golf balls in the rain.

When Tiger returned to professional golf, he was now a veteran of the PGA Tour. Many golfers he was competing against grew up watching Tiger Woods. Interviews/press conferences with Tiger were friendly, although he's still cautious and never fully relaxed. However, you could tell there was something different about Tiger's demeanor. Age and injuries had brought a new perspective to his golf game.

Maybe it's due to age – he's now in his late 40s, and he has rediscovered the game he loved. It's clear Tiger missed the competition, and he missed the friendships with his fellow PGA Tour golfers the most.

Other moments showed that Tiger seemed to be enjoying the game. For example, at the PGA Players' Tournament one year, Tiger was paired with Kevin Na, a young golfer with a habit of "quick-walking in" a putt. During the final round with Tiger, Na did a quick walk-in putt, almost beating the ball into the cup. The TV camera caught Tiger laughing at the action. Tiger then mimed the "quick walking-in" by grabbing the ball just after it fell into the cup, laughing. It even shocked golf announcer Dan Hicks, who commented, "Now do you think that Tiger would have done that a few years back (i.e., Tiger 1.0)? I don't care what situation he was in. That is the modern Tiger."

Another way Tiger 2.0 has changed is to watch how he interacts with his son, Charlie, at the PNC Parent-Child Championships. It's well documented that he's a doting father to his two children. Watching him interact with his son is the most human I've ever seen, Tiger. The love for his son is clearly shown. Tiger's positive reinforcement after every shot can't be faked. It's evident that Tiger is so proud of Charley's accomplishments in golf.

Tiger 2.0 is now a mature elder statesman of the PGA Tour, and we should thank him for it. He showed how much he loves the game of golf. He didn't take the money to join LIV

Golf. The history and traditions of the game of golf mean so much more to him than money.

Simply put, I like the Tiger Woods 2.0 version.

This column and photograph were adapted from a chapter in my book, "Golf a la Cart Version 2," now available on Amazon or by contacting me. It's also available as a digital print at my Etsy Store. To purchase a print, go to the Golf Photography Gallery Section of pbsstudios.com

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