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Q: When Is A Tiger A Cheetah?

A: When He's a Dog

by Robert Jay March; Monday, December 7, 2009

The first time I became aware of *Eldrick Tont "Tiger" Woods* was when I was 26 years old and he was 3. I watched as he appeared, with his late father *Earl Woods*, on *The Mike Douglas Show* as a "golf prodigy," putting against *Bob Hope*. At the time, he seemed to be the sweetest child on the face of the planet, and, being an expectant father who had just recently lost his own father, I found myself inspired by him, and hoped for a great future for him. After all, how could such a talented child fail? How could such a sweet child who was so close to his father ever do anything wrong?

I can't give you a precise air date for the program because, in those days, satellite distribution did not yet exist, and syndicated programs were distributed by bicycle messengers, hauling 2-inch video tape cartridges from city to city. What aired in January in one market might not air until July in another.

Nowadays, information travels a lot faster. As this is being written, six women have come forward claiming to have had affairs with Tiger Woods. The elapsed time between each woman's declaration and the whole world's knowing of it was virtually zero.

On November 27, 2009, Tiger Woods crashed his car into a fire hydrant near his home. *The National Enquirer* had already run a story about his alleged affair with *Rachel Uchitel*, and the accident, coupled with rumors that it occurred due to Wood's fleeing his home to escape an angry, golf-club wielding wife flashed around the world at the speed of, well, a man fleeing from a golf-club wielding wife. Since then, we've learned about *Jamie Grubbs*, *Kalika Moquin*, *Jamie Jungers*, *Cori Rist* and *Mindy Lawton*, with rumors of more to come.

One thing Woods and I have in common is that we are both Buddhists. He was born into the faith, while I converted 38 years ago. Twelve years ago, I adopted

a life-style of celibacy: partly for religious reasons, and partly because, like Woods, I was having difficulty leaving my putter in the bag when that was where it should be. Much like an alcoholic who does not dare touch a drink, while others can drink responsibly, I found that "putting the cork in the bottle" for good was the only way to deal with a serious flaw in my character. On the other hand, I can safely discuss the wisdom of this decision with Jose Cuervo or Jack Daniels, and keep it brief.

Buddhism teaches us to divest ourselves of attachments, because attachments are at the root of all pain. Material things can act as anesthetics, muting that pain while not addressing the cause. Due to his talent, Tiger Woods has gained an abundance of material things in his young life, but apparently not the maturity to deal with them. When one gets so much so early, one can easily develop the delusion that one is living a charmed life; that delusion inevitably leads to disaster. When one has so much ready cash, it always attracts those who are only interested in the size of your wad. What do you expect when one of your mistresses stars in *"Tool Academy?"*

A couple of days after the initial revelations, Woods issued a self-serving statement, wherein he said, "the virtue of privacy is one that must be protected in matters that are intimate and within one's own family. Personal sins should not require press releases and problems within a family shouldn't have to mean public confessions." What planet are *you* living on, dude?

I learned the hard way, a long time ago, that the only way to protect your secrets is not to have any. When you make your living in the public eye, the public's eye is always on you: when it's convenient and when it's not. *Especially* when it's not.

It has been reported that, as a result of his infidelity, *Elin Nordegren Woods* has renegotiated her prenuptial agreement

with Tiger. The original prenup granted her \$20 million provided the marriage lasted for 10 years. Now, reports say that the amount has been increased to \$80 million, and that she got an immediate additional \$5 million as a "signing bonus." Who negotiated this deal, *Jerry Maguire*? In exchange, Elin will keep her mouth closed. Oh, you can count on that, my man; hermetically sealed. This relationship sounds more like a mergers-and-acquisitions deal than a marriage, but I think I can safely say that there won't be much merging going on anytime soon.

Tiger's father Earl was an inspirational man. He attended *Kansas State University* on a baseball scholarship, and broke the Big Eight Conference "color barrier." He was good enough to be offered a contract by the *Kansas City Monarchs* of the Negro Leagues, which he turned down so he could finish college. When he was not allowed to get off the bus for a game in Mississippi, the entire team supported him and left without playing. Earl Woods served two full tours of duty in the Vietnam War, and was part of the *Green Berets*. He went on to become a Professor of Military Science & Tactics at CUNY.

One can only wonder if recent events would have played out as they did (or if they would have occurred at all) had Earl Woods still been around to talk some sense into his son. Regrettably, Earl died in 2006 of prostate cancer. Tiger might have been better off if Earl never taught him how to play golf. At Stanford University, Tiger majored in Economics, where he was nicknamed "*Urkel*" after the character on the ABC sitcom *Family Matters*.

Somehow, I can't see Ms. Uchitel, et al. doing the Urkel Dance with a nerdy economist. However, I can envision Tiger asking "You love me, don't you?" of the betrayed Elin, as Urkel would have asked *Laura Winslow*. Elin might reply, "Sure, baby, \$80 million worth...and counting."