

Tiger Woods: Winning is the Only Thing

By Randy Grills

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During last October's game one of the American League Championship Series between my World Champion Boston Red Sox and the Cleveland Indians, slugger's David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez combined at-bats went 10 for 10 in reaching base. The Sox went on to win the game 12 – 3 and when Red Sox third baseman, Mike Lowell was asked about that 10 – 10 stat, Lowell said "It's ridiculous."

In 2008, with 24- hour-a-day cable and life in perpetual information overload, we are exposed to incredible happenings every day that no one bats an eyelash at. For instance, nobody cares at all about a NASA shuttle mission – today going into space is matter-of-fact . . . mundane really. In sports, athletes doing things that are brilliant, things that are ridiculously good are hard to truly appreciate because the highlight reel runs every twelve minutes.

Guys like Roger Federer and Tiger Woods are more than great for their time, they may be the greatest of all time . . . and we're living it in HD with surround sound. They win so much relative to the competition it's like getting excited about another shuttle launch. That's a shame. Tiger's won more than 27 percent of the time he's teed-it up. How's that for a stat? Jack Nicklaus with whom Tiger is compared won at about a 12 percent clip – awesome in its own right. Tiger's contemporaries on tour live in the single-digits when it comes to winning percentages.



To make it to the PGA Tour is a big deal. To win is *really, really* difficult. To win 60 golf tournaments by the age of 31 – that's ridiculous! How then, is Tiger closing so fast on golf's immortals and beating by a staggering percentage the incredible talent playing today's PGA Tour? I believe it's as simple and as complicated as discipline.

Tiger Woods, more than any other player today, has the discipline to conquer the ethereal . . . the intangible. Sure, Phil Michelson and Ernie Els are gifted with natural talent and Vijay Singh will hit practice balls until his hands are numb and everybody seems to be putting down the bag of chips and heading for the gym. But Tiger has the discipline to do it all; he has the technical skills, physical conditioning, and mental skills to be better because the others can't, or are unwilling to do it all.

Among those attributes, the skills that most separate Tiger from everyone else in golf are his mental skills; mental control is the intangible -- the ethereal that you can't dig out of the dirt or measure in yards. You can't see it or touch it but you have to work at it every bit as hard as beating balls, practicing six footers, and building core strength.

Tour players tell me they know the mental side of the game is plenty important but in the end *you can either hit the shot or you can't and the folks that play golf for a living are the ones who can*. Plenty of golfers are confident, even cocky – down right fearless. Many have decent mental habits and keep their sports psychologist on speed dial. Tiger however, truly gets it. He commands it. Now, I've met Tiger, that is to say we've been introduced in passing, so I don't really know the man or how he thinks, but I'd bet the ranch he believes in his heart it's his mental skills that make him dominant and it's not something you're born with, it is something you learn and work at – it's discipline. Tiger Woods has the discipline to work at something where the only way he knows it works is by winning.