

Maybe Mickelson will lend Tiger his beeper

Even fatherhood is going to change Tiger Woods only so much.

So stop reading, Phil Mickelson, and you, too, Ernie Els, Vijay Singh and Retief Goosen, and do something more productive with your time, like practice. You won't find much farther down the page to be encouraged about anyway.

Bookies in Vegas are already laying 2-to-1 odds that his kid will be beating yours 20 years from now, whether it's on a course or a court, inside a diamond or a board room.

Those changes, though, will be more interesting to the rest of us, if only because they'll make Woods that little bit easier to relate to. Not just because he'll be advertising minivans soon instead of luxury sedans, or because he'll rush to the first tee some days with milk stains smeared across one shoulder of his impeccably tailored polo.

Like lots of other people, a baby at home will translate into more distractions, more demands on his time and tugging at his heartstrings.



Jim Litke

And there's little reason to think Woods plans to stop at one. In December 2004, soon after marrying former model and nanny Elin Nordegren, he was asked about starting a family.

"It will be a life change; there's no doubt about that," Woods replied. "For me it will be bigger than it will for Elin, just because she's had siblings."

"I've never had siblings before. I've been an only child, so for me to grow up with someone else, it will be different, because I've never had that."

"When we have, obviously, hopefully, more than one, then it will be really difficult, because I've never dealt with that," he added. "I've only dealt with just myself." Yet, consider this: Of all



AP PHOTO

Golfer Tiger Woods and his wife, Elin Nordegren, are expecting their first child this summer.

Tiger's considerable gifts and acquired skills, the most otherworldly is his ability to focus the second he slips a few golf tees in his pocket. And that is not about to change, ever.

The first clue Woods could wrap himself in an impenetrable cocoon came on the final Sunday of the 1997 Masters, when he walked out the backdoor of Augusta's clubhouse staring at the first tee and didn't even blink, let alone nod, in the direction of a petite woman in a fire-engine red dress who screamed "Go Tiger!" in his ear.

And she was his mom, Kultida.

The latest clue came at the end of last summer's British Open. Anybody who watched the tears literally pour out of Woods after he tapped in the winning putt had to marvel at how he carried himself the previous four hours.

Woods never displayed so much as a flicker of emotion when Chris DiMarco closed to within one shot with five holes left, nor when he responded with three straight birdies to beat DiMarco back, a stretch of golf Woods knew would have thrilled the father he'd buried not quite three months earlier.

Somehow, Tiger kept both the gathering sadness and satisfaction at arm's length until the task was completed.

That was another thing that Earl Woods would have loved. He spent 20 years in the military, did two tours of Vietnam, trained with the Green Berets and waged psychological warfare on young Tiger nearly every time the two ventured out on the golf course. Earl jangled coins during his son's backswing or rolled golf balls across his line just as Tiger

was about to putt. And those were some of the gentler tactics. "I wanted to make sure," Earl once said about the unorthodox golf lessons, "that he'd never run into anybody who was tougher mentally than he was."

So it will be interesting, too, to see how Tiger raises his own cub. Does he or she play golf? "I'll certainly introduce it to him," Woods said during that same 2004 interview. "Hopefully it will take."

How well it takes remains to be seen. There's a long history of sons following their fathers into the game, but only Young Tom Morris, who won four majors between 1868 and 1872, was an unqualified success.

Julius Boros, Dave Stockton and Al Geiberger are among those whose sons won a PGA Tour event, The sons of greats Jack Nicklaus and Johnny Miller; on the other hand, couldn't hold onto their tour cards long enough to make a name for themselves.

The more immediate concern, though, is how impending fatherhood will affect Woods' schedule. And the guide there, as in so

much else of Tiger's career, is to look at how well Nicklaus, who continued to win while spending time with five children, balanced competing demands.

Woods got married and won two majors the next year. He lost his father, and after missing the cut at the U.S. Open, won two majors and six tournaments in a row.

Woods hasn't revealed a due date, but a good guess is sometime between the U.S. and British Opens. He just might celebrate by winning both.

When Amy Mickelson was expecting the couple's first child around the same time in 1999, Phil showed up at Pinehurst for the U.S. Open wearing a beeper. Even though he had yet to win his first major, Mickelson swore he'd fly the several thousand miles back to Scottsdale, Ariz., the second it went off, even if he was leading by five strokes at the time.

Now all Mickelson has to do is loan the beeper to Tiger, then wait for the right moment.

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• Warm

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1)

during the winter months was considered net profit a few years ago, club owner Ron West said.

Money earned during the regular golf season was used to cover expenses.

"It does make a big difference," West said. "Any revenue this time of year is like manna."

On Friday, 105 golfers played The Legends course; and on Saturday, that number jumped to 130.

"We've been very fortunate to have nice weekend weather, especially after the two major holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas, when a lot of people have been off from work," Bishop said. "This time of year, you want the nice days to be on weekends, and we've been lucky so far. Hopefully we won't pay for this in April, but sometimes that happens."

This winter has been the best from a course operations standpoint since 2001, which was aided by the El Niño weather effect, which tends to bring warmer weather to the Midwest.

That year, Royal Oak's grass stayed green all winter, and the

course saw more play in January than March, West said.

This year, the grass is still green, and West said it might even still be growing.

Even if the weather prevented golfers from hitting the course, the pro shop at The Legends would still be open. The same goes for Royal Oak and Hickory Stick.

They'd be booking future outings and recruiting new members while they got ready for the 2007 golf season, which peaks May through September.

But having more traffic on the course means more people visiting the pro shop, providing added economic benefit separate from greens fees and cart rentals.

"It's quite a blessing to see any activity in the month of December on the golf course," Clark said.

Hickory Stick, the Legends and Royal Oak winterized their irrigation systems and mowed the greens in late November and early December to prepare for winter weather.

Mild temperatures and a snow-free stretch have helped keep the courses in good condition.

But despite the lack of snow, frost remains an issue.

Players must wait for the frost to evaporate, which usually hap-

pens around 11 a.m., before they can start playing.

Clark said one of the biggest challenges he faces during winter is educating golfers on the damage frost can do to a course. Walking on frosty grass can break the blades and damage the cell structure of the plants.

When the snow does come, some courses will continue to allow play.

At Royal Oak, West actually promoted snow golf, which requires using an orange ball and a one-pound coffee can, which serves as the hole.

"We have guys that will play in two or three inches of snow," he said. "With the lakes frozen over and the ground frozen, it's a different kind of game."

"We've got several guys that will play in the winter, all winter, as long as it's not bitter cold. The wind seems to hurt us more than anything. It can be sunny and 25 (degrees), but if that wind kicks up, it kind of slows them down."

Despite the promising early returns, course professionals are still wary of what Mother Nature might have in store.

"Winter just started officially a few weeks ago," West said. "It's been mild so far, but it's not over yet."

Round of golf fun even during winter

By MATTHEW GLENESK

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No snow on the ground means Duane Foist can be found on the golf course.

And true to form, with the temperature reaching 52 degrees Tuesday afternoon, the Franklin resident was swinging away at Hickory Stick Golf Club in the Center Grove area.

"I'm retired. I don't have anything else to do," he said.

Tom Lloyd of Mooresville, who played in Foist's foursome, calls the mild weather fantastic.

Foist, Lloyd, Dan Thurston and Bud Thorne all golf regularly during the winter.

"We're diehards," Thorne said.

Foist and Lloyd's cutoff temperature hovers around 32 degrees.

Thorne, 73, is a bit more adventurous, with stipulations, however. "If it's 25 degrees and the wind isn't blowing, we'll play," the Indianapolis resident said. "If it's blowing, I'm not playing."

Thurston, 66, of Mooresville, rounded out the foursome. His affinity for cold-weather golf is weaker than his partners'.

"I don't golf as much in the



STAFF PHOTO BY MATTHEW GLENESK/mglensk@thejournalnet.com

From left, Duane Foist of Franklin and Dan Thurston and Tom Lloyd of Mooresville enjoy a round of golf at Hickory Stick Golf Club on Tuesday.

winter time as these guys do because my cutoff is 40 degrees with no wind," he said.

Windbreakers, long johns, sleeveless parkas and raincoats are necessities for winter golfers. Earmuffs and gloves are optional, depending on one's ability to withstand the cold.

"I can't be without something covering my ears and hands," Thurston said. "That's the most important piece of clothing."

Golf carts are suited with a clear plastic covering that blocks

the wind, and some carts are even fitted with portable heaters.

Thorne and Thurston didn't feel the need for the heater Tuesday, unlike Lloyd, 62, and Foist, 63.

For the quartet, manageable temperatures and favorable conditions help keep the retirees active.

"If I wasn't out here playing golf, I would be sitting home with my wife watching TV probably," Lloyd said.

Which is better? "Golf," Lloyd said. "That's a guarantee."

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