

BASKETBALL

Indiana out of poll after one week in top 25

For Indiana and Southern California, it was a short stay in the AP top 25.

The Hoosiers and Trojans dropped out of the media poll a week after they made their season debuts. Both lost their first games as ranked teams.

Florida and Wisconsin are Nos. 1 and 2 for a third consecutive week, but the rest of the top five got a slight makeover, which has become a weekly occurrence.

Defending national champion Florida received 45 first-place votes out of a possible 72. Wisconsin, 21-1 for the first time in school history, received 24 first-place votes, and North Carolina got three first-place votes.

Completing the top 10 were No. 6 Kansas, followed by Pittsburgh, Duke, Oregon and Texas A&M.

Moving back into the rankings was Texas, which fell out of the top 25 last week for the second time this season.

Butler is No. 13, and Notre Dame is 21st.

BASEBALL

Bonds, Giants agree to one-year contract

Barry Bonds and the San Francisco Giants completed a \$15.8 million, one-year contract Monday night after the slugger spent hours at the ballpark being examined by team doctors.



BONDS

A baseball official confirmed the deal, speaking on condition of anonymity because the club had not yet announced it.

The contract was finalized nearly two months after the sides reached agreement on financial terms Dec. 7, the final day of baseball's winter meetings. Bonds had to pass a physical, and the parties had to work out complicated language regarding Bonds' behavior and what would happen if the slugger were to be indicted.

A federal grand jury is investigating whether Bonds perjured himself when he testified in 2003 in the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative steroid distribution case that he hadn't knowingly taken any performance-enhancing drugs.

DENVER

Owner: Rockies not giving up Helton 'for nothing'

Colorado Rockies owner Charlie Monfort insists the team isn't looking to dump salary in its talks to trade Todd Helton to the Boston Red Sox.

Monfort said the Red Sox would have to part with pitching prospects in addition to third baseman Mike Lowell and reliever Julian Tavarez, players they've already offered in exchange for the 33-year-old slugger.

"This is Todd Helton we're talking about," Monfort said Monday. "We're not just going to give him up for nothing."

The Rockies would like to obtain promising relievers Craig Hansen and Manny Delcarmen from Boston.

"Tavarez and Lowell are good, and they'll help us this season, but we need to get something else pretty good in return," Monfort said.

TENNIS

Tennis great Sampras to play on over-30 tour

Pete Sampras will play tournament tennis for the first time since 2002, competing on a tour for players over 30.



SAMPTRAS

Sampras' Outback Champions Series debut, which will come May 2-6 at Boston University's Agganis Arena, is to be announced formally today. The 35-year-old Sampras will appear in at least one other event on the tour in 2007.

"This is kind of my first dive into the waters, so to speak, to see how I feel and play a match I really want to win," said Sampras, owner of a record 14 Grand Slam singles titles.

"I still love the sport — I practice two, three times a week — but I don't miss the grind. This is a time to catch up with old competitors, old friends, and see if I still have a few things left in the bag," he said.

It's the latest step in a gradual return to a sport Sampras dominated for the better part of a decade, then pretty much disappeared from after winning his final match, against Andre Agassi in the U.S. Open final in September 2002.

New season, same old Tiger

Even after long winter break, Woods is still at the top of his game

By DOUG FERGUSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN DIEGO

The clubs finally came out of the closet after a winter break, and Tiger Woods laid out his plans for the new year. He didn't talk about the Grand Slam. He didn't say anything about his PGA Tour winning streak.

And he sure didn't mention the FedExCup.

"The only thing that matters to him is getting better," swing coach Hank Haney said.

Haney said this a week ago today, waiting in darkness behind the first tee on the South Course with a dozen or so fans for the world's No. 1 player to show up at Torrey Pines for his first practice round of the year.

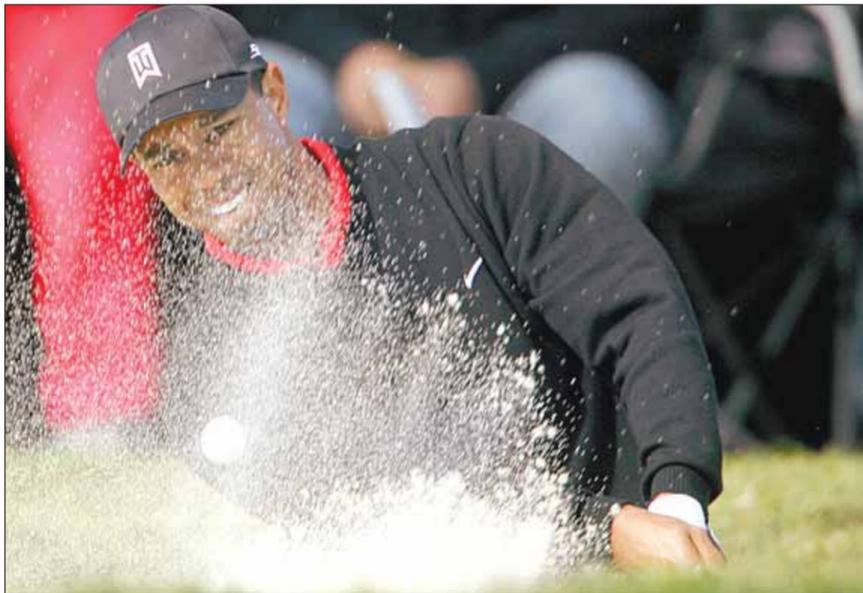
Five days later, with the grandstands full and the fairways two-deep with fans, Woods captured the Buick Invitational for his seventh straight PGA Tour victory, the second-longest streak on the PGA Tour behind Byron Nelson.

Looks like he's getting better.

"What we're witnessing is something special," said Mark O'Meara, who played two groups behind Woods on Sunday, although he finished his final round on the ninth green. "We've been watching history being made these past 10 years."

The immediate history is Nelson's streak of 11 straight victories in 1945, thought to be as untouchable as Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak or UCLA's basketball team winning 88 straight games under John Wooden.

What seemed so improbable now looks possible, depending on where Woods plays next when he



AP PHOTOS

Tiger Woods blast his third shot from a greenside bunker on the sixth hole during the final round of the

Buick Invitational on Sunday in San Diego. Woods shot a 6-under 66 on the day to win the event.

returns from the Middle East.

Woods flew across 11 time zones Sunday night to get to the Dubai Desert Classic, where he is defending champion. And while he will have a slightly shorter trip home to Florida on his Gulfstream V, he said it was tougher on his body coming back.

"We'll see how it goes," he said, meaning he will either play Feb. 15 at Riviera in the Nissan Open or the following week at the Accenture Match Play Championship at a new venue in Tucson, Ariz.

Woods made his PGA Tour

debut at Riviera at age 16 in 1992 and missed the cut with rounds of 72-75. It is the only tournament he has played at least four times without winning, and it must gnaw at him that it is a hometown event. He has had only one serious chance of winning, closing with a 70 in 1999 and finishing two shots behind Ernie Els.

During his most recent great streak in 1999-00, he won nine times in 15 starts on the PGA Tour and only once finished out of the top five during that stretch, a tie for 18th at Riviera. His past two top 10s, he got there with rounds

of 65 and 64 on the final day. A year ago, he narrowly made the cut and then withdrew when he got sick.

Assume he skips Riviera.

The Match Play is always a crapshoot, although Woods won twice when it was at La Costa. His next two starts likely would be Bay Hill, where he has won four times; and Doral, where he is the two-time defending champion. That would take him to Augusta National with a chance to reach 11 in a row.

Suddenly, "untouchable" becomes a remote possibility.

Woods, Federer dominate sports like no other players



Roger Federer celebrates after his straight-sets defeat of Fernando Gonzalez in the men's final at the Australian Open on Sunday.

By EDDIE PELLIS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

They crisscross the globe, dominating on almost every continent, one whacking a small, white ball better than anyone in the world, the other whaling away on a fuzzy green one.

Tiger Woods and Roger Federer are making history in their respective sports, owning golf and tennis the way few ever have. Over the weekend, they wrote new chapters in their march toward sports history.

No. 1 in golf, Woods won his seventh straight PGA Tour event on Sunday in San Diego, a record eclipsed only by Byron Nelson back in the 1940s when the competition wasn't as tough.

No. 1 in tennis, Federer won the Australian Open a half a

world away, marking his 10th grand slam victory and furthering his quest to become the best tennis player ever.

Their excellence has united them over the years. They have become friends, and neither lets his own accomplishment go unnoticed by the other.

"He'll text me and say he won one there," Woods said in an interview Sunday on ESPN. "Now, I've got to text him and say we're all even."

It's a friendly rivalry between two men who never have to play each other; the 31-year-old golfer and his 25-year-old counterpart on the tennis circuit.

They are athletes who dominate in individual, sometimes lonesome, sports, men who recognize the commitment and sacrifice that must be made, even if the games they play may seem foreign to the other.

Last year, Woods was in Federer's box to watch his U.S. Open victory. A few months later, Federer walked the course with Woods at a golf tournament in China.

Though many wonder how the joys of fatherhood — his wife, Elin, is due with their first child this summer — might affect him, Woods conceded his charge toward the top of golf's record book might be a more realistic quest than Federer's.

"The only thing going for me is I've got longevity in my corner," Woods said, acknowledging the reality that golfers can play on a top level into their 40s, while tennis players fade out much earlier.

Not so long ago, Nelson's record of 11 victories seemed untouchable. Nelson racked up those wins under very different circumstances, before golf reached the heights it's at today

and before seemingly every player had a swing guru and a personal trainer.

As in golf, excellence in tennis can be judged either by dominance in the majors or by week-in, week-out success. Either way, Federer passes the test.

During the recently completed two weeks in Melbourne, he became the first man since Bjorn Borg in 1980 to go through a major without losing a set. Federer tied a 73-year-old record by making his seventh consecutive final in majors. He needs only four more Grand Slam wins to match the record held by Pete Sampras.

Federer already has enough points in the tennis standings to ensure he will break Jimmy Connors' record of 160 straight weeks atop the men's rankings by the end of next month.

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