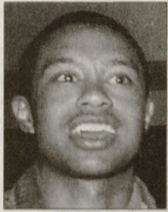


WOODS

Continued from Page 9

Woods hit the same approach toward the flag with the same spin, and it nearly appeared, too.



WOODS

Alongside the green, as the tie cut leader Gogel's lead to 2, Harmon ordered aloud, "I'd like to know what Gogel's heart is like when he's that on the scoreboard."

He didn't have to wait long. When last round ended, a posse of Woods' peers lined up to get better, stronger, healthier, higher. David Duval is more cut. Tom Lehman trimmed down by swearing off sodas. The weight machines in the PGA's mess trailers "clang" all day and the caddies "whirr" mixing high-protein shakes. So far, none of it has worked. The long-term prospects don't seem much better; at least that's what Jack Nicklaus thinks.

"Guys will elevate their games because of how he's played. They'll have to elevate their games, and I think he'll probably receive more competition. That's no different than what I had. People would say, 'How well will Jack do next year?' And somebody else would come along," Nicklaus recalled.

Then he ticked off the names of Arnold Palmer, Gary Player, Tom Weiskopf, Johnny Miller, Lee Trevino and Tom Watson, all the guys. I kept elevating my game as they elevated their games. I would certainly expect Tiger to do the same."

A quick run-through of the names Woods has smoked on this run: Phil Mick-

elson, Ernie Els, Davis Love III, Miguel Angel Jimenez (on Jimenez' home turf in Spain), Els again, and Gogel, the only rookie in the bunch. If someone is going to force Woods to elevate his game, they're going about it very quietly.

With 17 career PGA victories, he now trails only Greg Norman (18) and Ben Crenshaw (19) among active members. Three more wins would earn Woods a lifetime exemption — perhaps before his 25th birthday. He is already second on the career money list, trailing Love by just \$32,000.

Each day, the comparisons to Michael Jordan seem less overblown. Beyond the wealth and the endorsements, Jordan had an aura, an edge that was worth a few points every game he ever played in. It wasn't just making his own shots, or getting all the calls going down the stretch. Sometimes, it was the guys he was after hearing his footsteps, short-arming jumpers when it was time to answer.

How many shots is it now worth being Tiger Woods? Every time the question comes up, Woods answers the same way: Ask the other guys.

"He's the kind of guy ... that when he's down, he still thinks he can win. And nobody has really knocked him off that," Love said. "There have been some guys that have played well, pushing him, but right there at the end, every playoff he gets in, he either hits a miracle shot or somebody hits a bad shot."

"He will have his average streak and his great streaks. And he is on one of his great streaks right now."

It's Tiger's world at the moment. The rest of us are just tending the flags.

Jim Litke is the national sports columnist for The Associated Press.

Rocker in New York for appeal hearing

NEW YORK (AP) — With several dozen protesters — and a large inflatable rat — outside baseball's offices, John Rocker's attempt to overturn his suspension began Wednesday with commissioner Bud Selig as the leadoff witness.

The Atlanta Braves reliever, banned by Selig until May 1 for his comments about gays, foreigners and others, was largely silent as he walked into the Park Avenue skyscraper with union lawyers on the warm winter afternoon, saying several times: "Just be patient."

Selig testified on the rationale of his decision and was questioned by union lawyer Gene Orza on what precedents he considered, according to several participants in the hearing who spoke on the condition he not be identified.

Selig, one source said, testified he made his decision because he thought it was the correct penalty and did not consider past suspensions. Selig didn't publicly discuss what he said.

"I just completed somewhere between five and six hours of testimony," Selig said as he left the building in the early evening. "I issued my suspension. It is what it is. Now it's in the hands of the arbitrator."

Atlanta City Councilman Derrick Boazman, who has been critical of Rocker, and Braves president Stan Kasten were the other witnesses to testify before Shyam Das, baseball's new arbitrator.

Kevin Hallinan, baseball's executive director of security, was scheduled to be management's final witness on Thursday. The union will then present its witnesses.

Das is expected to issue a decision sometime this month.

Boazman, who according to the source testified on the effect of Rocker's remarks in the community, brought along a group from Atlanta to protest. They were kept behind wooden police barricades

as the hearing took place 31 floors above.

"It was basically to convey to the masses we were disappointed in the appeal," Boazman said. "We started this whole thing saying Rocker should be released. We still believe that."

Kasten, the source said, testified about the effects of Rocker's remarks on the Braves. The rat, holding a sign "New York Immigrants Against Rocker!" was provided by Local 78 of the Asbestos, Lead and Hazardous Waste Laborers union, which had it nearby for another protest. The rat, which cost \$8,000, has appeared in front of several businesses in New York in the past year.

"At a time when Rocker should be showing all possible remorse for his words and actions, he shows no regret and that he has no regard for any one but himself."

— Bill Fugazy
chairman, National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations Foundation

Rocker, razzed by Mets and Yankees fans during the pennant race and postseason last year, told Sports Illustrated in December he would never play for a New York team because he didn't want to ride a subway train "next to some queer with AIDS." He also mocked foreigners and called a Latin teammate a "fat monkey."

Selig responded Jan. 31 by suspending him for all 45 days of spring training and the first 28 days of the season, fining him \$20,000 and ordering sensitivity training. The players' association, which has been successful at overturning or shortening many suspensions, then filed a grievance.

Bill Fugazy, chairman of the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations Foundation and a close friend of New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, called on Das to deny the appeal.

"At a time when Rocker should be showing all possible remorse for his words and actions, he shows no regret and that he has no regard for any one but himself," Fugazy said. "His appeal clearly demonstrates that he has no concept of what he has done wrong."

Under baseball's rules, the commissioner's office puts on its defense first, then the union calls its witness. Howard Ganz, who is representing owners in their litigation with umpires, was the lead lawyer for management.

Meanwhile, trade rumors have surfaced involving Rocker, but no deal appeared imminent. Among the possible trades mentioned was one involving Seattle, which is trying to deal Ken Griffey Jr.

Mariners general manager Pat Gillick wouldn't comment on the reports.

"The Chicago White Sox are not interested in obtaining pitcher John Rocker," White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf said in a statement. "We have spent a great deal of time over the last two seasons developing a roster of young players who care about the Chicago community and care about our fans. We believe that character counts in building a championship baseball team our fans can support."

The union says the suspension was without "just cause," arguing speech shouldn't be punished, even if it's offensive.

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ANGELA'S ASHES (R) 11:45 3:10 6:30 9:35	NEXT FRIDAY (R) 11:50 2:40 4:45 7:05 10:00 12:20
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