

Treating the "Tiger"

In the Jan. 16, 1995 issue of *DC*, we highlighted the four celebrity chiropractic patients that would ride on the Chiropractic Centennial Foundation's float in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California. The youngest of the four celebrity patients was a 17-year-old from Southern California in his freshman year at Stanford University. His name was Eldrick Woods, but everyone called him "Tiger."

People were saying nice things about the kid's golf game. He had won the 1994 U.S. Amateur Golf Championship, joining the illustrious company of such former U.S. amateur champions as golfing legends Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus.

Just before riding on the Chiropractic Centennial Float at the 1995 Tournament of Roses Parade, Tiger told *DC* about his experience with chiropractic: "Being a chiropractic patient has really helped me a lot. When I was in a growth spurt, my back became very sore, and I was weak. My chiropractor really helped me. Not only did he adjust my spine, he also gave me strengthening exercises to do. If you are tall and gangly like I am, or play sports, I would recommend chiropractic."

That same year, chiropractic's centennial year, Tiger won his second U.S. Amateur title. Nicklaus and a few others had won the U.S. amateur title twice, but nobody had won it three times.

With Tiger's anticipated leap into the professional ranks imminent, the youngster had one more shot at a U.S. amateur title and history. It would be a storybook transition into the big leagues: "Once upon a time there was a 'Tiger' ...

After Tiger won the 1996 U.S. Amateur Championship for his record breaking three titles (consecutively, no less), he joined the professional golf ranks and signed an eye-opening \$40 million endorsement deal with Nike. At this writing, he is the PGA's 1997 leading money winner, having already won four titles this year, including winning the prestigious Masters in Augusta, Georgia in record fashion.

After the Master's victory, Tiger took a month's respite, including spending some time as the guest of golfing buddy Kevin Costner up in Bend, Oregon, where Kevin was filming his next movie production. While in Bend, Tiger also received some chiropractic care. Being told that Tiger was having some back and hip pain, Jeffrey Spencer, MA, DC, CCSP, of Grants Pass, Oregon, offered his services, which were readily accepted. He headed for Costner's rented home to assess Tiger's condition.

Dr. Spencer, a member of the U.S. Olympic cycling team in 1972 (Munich Games), knows the physical demands placed on athletes, and the injuries that ensue. He is well versed in sports rehabilitation, having completed the sports diplomate program at LACC, coupled with an extensive practical experience of adjusting and treating a wide diversity of athletes and competitors, from Olympic competitors at the Atlanta Games, to auto racing champions Al Unser Jr. and Paul Tracy.

Dr. Spencer took Tiger's history, noting that Tiger was a bit different from most other golfers he'd adjusted. "He is extremely athletic, well-muscled, and has inherently good posture and movement

mechanics," Dr. Spencer noted, adding that he exhibited extreme flexibility and tremendous strength and agility.

"Most golfers," observed Dr. Spencer, "have a tendency to develop tight muscles and postural changes that create significant strength imbalances, which place great stress on the joints and muscles." Tiger detailed his regular fitness program, including daily exercises for the shoulders and low back. Dr. Spencer noted that many of the exercises Tiger does are stabilization exercises taught in LACC's postgraduate sports rehabilitation course.

The golfer's main complaint related to his sacroiliac joint. Dr. Spencer characterized SI joint pain as common in many top athletes. Joint mobilization, adjusting, and muscle stretching and stabilization exercises were done. Dr. Spenser treated Tiger twice over two days, and suggested a few exercises to Tiger's conditioning program.

Adjusting the "Tiger" might give any doctor cause for some nervousness (Nike, too), but in the hands of the chiropractor, the adjustment is given with precision and expert technique, and the body does the rest, whether it's Tiger or a mere mortal Sunday afternoon duffer.

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