

Tiger Woods – from a caddies perspective



Brad Daymond, Tiger Woods & Peter Montgomery at the 2009 JBWere Australian Masters

Call of a Lifetime

I remember it well, it was Mid – October and my mobile rang. It was Peter Montgomery, Director of Bonville Golf Resort. He said Hello ‘Coach’, are we ready to go?” Go where, was my response. He then told me that he had been invited by David Greig, his long term manager at the National Australia Bank, to play with Tiger Woods in the Pro-Am at Kingston Heath, prior to The Masters. I was gobsmacked. There are well over a million golfers who would do almost anything to see Tiger, let alone play with him. I had to jump on the bandwagon, “Coach” you say, don’t you mean “caddy”, was my pleading response. Absolutely he said. I couldn’t believe my luck.

Meeting the ‘team’

Fast forward one month, we are in Melbourne, one day prior to the “Big Day”. That night we had dinner at the two “hatted” Taxi Dining Room, where we met the JBWere team of Brad Gale, Managing Director and Alex Rock, Director of Equities. We then met the other invitees, Andrew Roberts, Simon Tripp, and Robert Whyte. There was an air of excitement as we discussed the plans for Wednesday morning.

Early Start to the big day

A 4.30am wake up, 5.30am transfer to course, Breakfast and Registration at 6.30am, Player Briefing at 7.00am, then off to the 1st tee, where Alex, Andrew and Simon would tee off first, with Stuart Appleby, followed by Brad , Peter and Robert, teeing off with Tiger.

It was an early night for all and I am sure that some had more sleep than others. The trip out to Kingston Heath was quiet. It was early, and the players had nothing in their stomachs, apart from a

swarm of butterflies. Once we arrived the players settled into their pre golf routines and with the driving range only available for golf professionals, the putting green received a workout. It was then time to make our way to the 1st tee.

People everywhere

The amateurs and caddies milled around the teebox for a few minutes, taking in the size of the crowd, both surrounding the tee and lining the fairway. The crowd applause signalled the arrival of Stuart Appleby. Introductions were made, then Stuart was away, a pure drive splitting the fairway. The three amateurs, with adrenalin pumping through their veins withstood the first shot jitters, and all three tee shots were well struck, into play. They were away.

Tiger's arrival came with notice. The crowd had spotted him leaving the clubhouse and the cheers and applause started once he was within 100 metres of the tee. He and his caddie, Steve Williams arrived and introductions were made. I couldn't help notice how extremely fit Tiger is. His waist looks to be about 28" and then he broadens out with a muscular upper half. Steve, his caddy also looks extremely fit, which when you consider their schedule (7 weeks of tournament golf straight in three different countries) it makes total sense.

Tiger's first tee shot was a low 3 wood up the left side. It was not his best shot and we watched it disappear into the fairway bunker. Due to the sheer thrill of seeing 'The Man' the crowd cheered the shot as if they had never seen better. Now it was time for the amateurs. They had watched all three of the amateurs hit good shots in the first group. But they did not have to do it in front of arguably the best sportsman on the planet! Whether it was the adrenalin, or their focus, I am not sure but each of the amateurs hit good tee shots, duly recognised by the excited crowd, Peter's surprisingly straight and long, for him. Although I was hopeful as to how Peter would perform in front of such a huge crowd and playing in front of Tiger, I was well aware of the worst case scenario. I knew that Peter had played international sport at the highest level for many years but I figured that was many many years ago. However, he seemed very calm and had assured me leading up to the event that he would be right on the day.

I gave Peter an iron for his second shot on the tight Par 5 and he hits it a bit heavy to the right, leaving a longer than desired shot out of the right rough to a narrow green. A well struck six iron jumped off the club, landing on the front fringe and released up the green, stopping 10 foot shy of the hole. (Tiger lays it up out of the fairway bunker, 40 yards short of the green.) Soft hands with the sand wedge allow Tiger to float the ball in to the flag, where it comes to an exact stop on the second bounce 8 feet from the hole. The other two amateurs play the hole well but aren't in a position to score for the team, as only the best score on each hole counts. Peters' 10 footer never looks like

missing and we are away, a birdie 4 at the first hole, and 4 points for the team. Tiger makes his 8 footer for birdie 4, scoring 3 points. Peter and I share a knowing glance. That was special.

The crowd races from the green to gain vantage points on the 2nd hole. As we enter the tee box I estimate the crowd again to be 15 deep and about 500- 600 people in total, just at the tee box.

Thousands line the fairways and have already surrounded the green in anticipation of Tiger's arrival.

Over the next 4 holes we get into a flow. Tiger casually birdies both the 3rd and 4th holes to move to 3 under after 4. As we walk down the fairways we chat with Tiger.

Chatting with Tiger

We talk throughout the day about a variety of matters , ranging from health issues/obesity (especially in children), Golf being introduced into the Olympics , golf club and golf course design , hybrid golf clubs vs. long irons , Rugby , Cricket, children. We also enjoy the ongoing banter between Steve and Tiger. When Rugby is the point of discussion, Tiger casually asked Steve (a very proud Kiwi) how many World Cups the Kiwis have won!!, knowing full well that answer is only one. These two are a great team, with a great understanding of each other. Steve is much more than just a caddy. He is also part friend, psychologist, adviser , confidant . The list goes on, and boy can he read a green!

Tiger in trouble

Trouble strikes at the sixth hole, where Tiger attempts to reach the short Par 4 with his 3 wood, only to leave it too far left, then come up sort of the green in 2. The other 2 playing partners also find grief, so it is up to Peter, whose second shot catches the front edge, spins back, rolling off the front apron, 2 metres short of the green. The putt looks to break both ways, so I ask Steve Williams to assist in the read. It looks to me like the 45 foot putt is overall straight but Steve stares down the line, weighs it up then confidently states; "One foot to the right and slower up there than it looks". Peter hits a firm putt, starting it one foot to the right of the cup, it goes further to the right before breaking back to the left and into the hole for his second birdie and a super 3 a 4 for the team. The crowd recognize the putt with generous applause. So it's Tiger with 3 birdies and Peter with 2. Is this really happening?

In cruise control

Tiger takes it up a notch with birdies at both 7 and 8 to move to 5 under. Having never seen the front nine at Kingston Heath I marvel at just how good he really is.

He was in cruise control, hitting irons off most tees to avoid the bunkers, then attacking the flags. Credit also to his magnificent putting. The Kingston Heath greens are fast and have many tricky

undulations. His caddy, Steve, assists Tiger with the reading of the greens and is obviously a great asset to Team Tiger.

The birdie on the 173metre 8th could have been 1 better as Tigers pure 6 iron never left the flag, climbed to its peak then landed 4 feet short of the hole before bouncing, hitting the flag and dropping down 6 feet to the left. I was in awe by now.

Friendly nature

Throughout the day, Tiger was very friendly and he has a charming nature. He interacted with both his fellow players and the caddies, as well as Brad Gale's children, who followed our group on some of the holes. Considering that Tiger was here to win a tournament and this was only the first time he had set foot on the front nine of Kingston Heath , he was extremely generous with his time.

Tiger tamed by amateurs

The next two holes were dominated by the amateurs, Peter with 5 a 3 on the 9th, then Brad Gale with a magnificent chip in for a 3 a 4 on the 10th hole. The highlight for the amateurs was still to come, on the short 11th, a Par 3 of 146 metres.

Tiger knocked his ball onto the front left corner, a good 45 – 50 feet short of the hole. Brad Gale fired a short iron to 4 feet from the hole, Robert Whyte knocked his to 20 feet left of the cup and Peter, not to be outdone, flushed a 5 iron to 10 feet. The crowd acknowledged what would be a rare occasion for 3 amateurs knocking it closer than Tiger. Peters putt looked left to right, about a foot to me, plus downhill. We watched Robert hit his putt from a similar line to Peters and it didn't move much to the right at all. Now I was confused. Time to call in the expert. Steve studied the putt, then announced, "inside right lip". Considering I thought it was left to right, this baffled me but you never doubt an expert. Peter followed Steve's advice and in went birdie number 3, and another 4 pointer. Tiger bogeyed with a 3 putt. He smiled and shook his head in a friendly manner of disbelief at Peter who had just made his third birdie for the day.

The crowd which had continued to grow was enjoying the experience.

Normal transmission resumes

Accordingly, Tiger restored order with a straightforward birdie on 12, before Peter added another par and 3 points to the team total with a great two putt from off the green at 13.

Tiger then hit the shot I will remember most, to set up a possible eagle on 14. He had a blind shot of 225 metres over a rise, then downhill to a green which is tucked left and protected with an array of bunkers. He and his caddy Steve, had a chat about what shot was required before settling on a

“stinger” 2 iron. Tiger is famous for his “stingers”, a low flying missile created by keeping his hands in front of the ball at impact. He hit this one perfectly. It took off like a missile just clearing the rise and an adventurous cameraman laying in amongst the bunkers, by about 4 feet. It landed about 20 metres short, released up the green, stopping 15 feet from the hole. It was special. The eagle didn't drop but a tap in birdie kept the tally ticking over.

Securing a win

The team brought it home over the last 4 holes with Robert Whyte making a superb par on 17 to ensure another 3 pointer on the card. All players finished the 18th hole with 2 pointers, in front of a huge crowd and grandstands filled to capacity.

Everyone shook hands on the green, then we had a private moment with Tiger giving him some gifts before he was off for his media commitments. Peter seemed relieved at the completion of play that he had only hit two spectators during the round who both escaped unscathed.

The post mortem

The amateur players were also inundated by the media with 30 minutes of interviews required before we could sit down over an ale and let it all sink in. The golf post mortem can sometimes be overdone but not in this case. We marvelled at how Brad Gale had played the back nine in one under par, making special mention of how well he hit his driver all day. We congratulated Robert on his much needed pars which contributed 3 pointers to the team at vital times. We shook our heads almost in disbelief at how Peter was able to make 3 birdies, each for 4 pointers and 3 pars (all together 21 points for 6 holes!) on such a unique occasion. Peter said afterwards “that was the best I have scored in 50 years of poor golf”.

It was obvious that the team had played extremely well and combined fantastically. They were announced as the winners of the pro-am, by a whopping 4 shots, and just to top it off, Brad won the Longest Drive as well.

Other memories of a grand day

Basically, we had spent 5 hours in Tiger's “bubble”. A very special place. To see how special is to be standing next to him on the teebox and look at the hundreds of people surrounding the teebox , staring at Tiger , mesmerised by him and everything he does. Amazing.

From a personal point of view there were other highlights, away from the game of golf. The Bonville logo on my shirt was recognised on numerous occasions, and the Bonville property was well known and respected by many that I talked to. I had people telling me that they knew of Bonville as the

course in Australia which had the most similarities to Augusta National. It was also mentioned to both Peter and I that Bonville is the most beautiful course they know. The coup de grace was when our Driver (who took us from the Hotel to the Airport), saw the Bonville plastic bag I was carrying and said "I've been to Bonville many times, it is my favourite course in Australia". He had no knowledge of mine or Peter's relationship to the course so that was very pleasing.

The other satisfying moment was on the Thursday, the day after the pro-am, when we were being hosted in the JBWere corporate suite, overlooking the 18th green . In attendance were the bosses of JBWere and about 30-40 invited VIP'S. The MC announced that they had two very special invited celebrities to entertain the VIP'S. The two celebrities entered. It was Australian sporting legends John Eales and Grant Hackett. One being the Marketing Face of Bonville and the other, a member who was here recently. The JBWere bosses were astonished that we not only knew the two celebrities, but that they were both members and good friends of Bonville.

These experiences outside of the game highlight the growing awareness of Bonville and the Coffs Coast in both Golf and Business circles. Very pleasing from my perspective.



Peter Montgomery presents Tiger Woods with a rare 1976 Montreal Olympic Village golf putter.