

Tiger likes to lie low on hard issues

APPARENTLY, PLAYING PERFECT GOLF ISN'T ALL Tiger Woods is supposed to do.

Playing—and winning—his first tournament of the year this weekend, Woods was embroiled in a two-week-old controversy surrounding comments made by Golf Channel anchor Kelly Tilghman, who joked that if his competitors wanted to best him, they should “lynch him in the back alley.”

It should be no surprise to anyone that Woods quickly forgave Tilghman, a longtime friend, and declared the remarks to be of “no harm.” But despite this, the issue continued to play out more than two weeks after the initial remarks, as Tilghman apologized on air this weekend and Woods was questioned about it right at the start of his pre-tournament press conference.

The bigger concern here is that there are still those that expect Tiger Woods to be an outspoken advocate of the black community—someone along the lines of Jim Brown or Muhammad Ali. However, Woods has never been that guy. Even when Fuzzy Zoeller hoped he wasn't serving fried chicken and collard greens at his Masters victory dinner in 1997, the 21-year-old Woods refused to accept an apology, but never raised a bigger furor over it—the media did that for him. And while Woods' position as one of the most famous athletes on the planet, a media darling, and a man with hundreds of millions in endorsements would give him the perfect platform as an advocate, he has always refused to use it.

It hasn't always even been racial issues—when Augusta National, the site of the Masters, was being protested by women's groups over its male-only membership in 2003, he denied cries for him to boycott the course—but those are the ones that stir up the most trouble. Woods is widely credited for the surging popularity of golf in the non-elderly-Caucasian-male demographic, and some see that as a sign he also needs to lend his support to those alternate demographics.

But while Woods may be the richest and most famous black athlete in the world since Michael Jordan retired, it needs to be remembered that he's only one-quarter African-American and even calls himself “CaublinAsian,” a reference to his Caucasian, black, Native American, and Asian heritage. In fact, Woods is a practicing Buddhist, which suggests that he identifies more with his mother's Asian heritage. But because of his skin colour, the man is expected to use his influence for social activism.

Whether it's his mixed heritage, his soft-spoken personality, or even, as Dave Chappelle once joked, a fear of losing all of his endorsements, the fact remains that Tiger Woods has never shown an interest in showing himself into the centre of controversy. He'd rather let it pass him over while he continues to rack up wins on the PGA Tour—Sunday's puts him fourth on the all-time list, and he's only 32. Instead of making a big deal of Tilghman's remarks, the media probably should have remembered this. After all, if he's not offended, no one needs to be offended for him.

PAUL OWEN
Managing Editor

Chargin' their thetans

EARLIER THIS MONTH, A HIVE MIND OF BASEMENT-dwelling troglodytes declared open warfare on the Church of Scientology. The notorious group, “Anonymous,” is famed for its previous exploits of terrorizing MySpace poets and popularizing cat macros.

What started with a series of denial-of-service attacks on Scientology websites has expanded to a massive online campaign of Digg spamming, and has gone so far as organizing public gatherings to protest the Church in London. This is serious business.

While I've never been a fan of Scientology's questionable methods, and while it's relevant to my interests to see that someone is finally calling them out, I'm not so sure that Anon's means can justify their desired end. The rest of the Internet sees what they're doing here, and their reputation doesn't add much to their credibility. While they may have won most of the battles henceforth, it's only a matter of time before Scientology fires back and plays the religious persecution card, if only for the epic lulz.

MIKE KENDRICK
Design & Production Editor



CONAL PIERSE

LETTERS

Opposing views don't threaten my faith

I think that Sarah Stead's article about Ezra Levant and the Muhammad cartoons makes a fundamental error in defining freedom of religion (re: Levant vs AHRCC: where to draw the line on free speech?" 24 January).

As a Christian, I quite frequently see my beliefs criticized and mocked, often within this paper, and often within the classroom. Nevertheless, I don't feel my freedom of religion has been compromised—even if I find some of the views I speak of distasteful. I can still worship my God, and speak about the Christian faith without systematic discrimination.

I don't believe that people like Richard Dawkins, Phillip Pullman and Christopher Hitchens should be censored for the sake of my freedom of religion, because I know that sword cuts both ways; some of my views could meet the same fate. Anyone in Canada with religious convictions—including Muslims—should be thankful they have the freedom to hold views that aren't accepted by mainstream society, but with that freedom, they should try to respect others' freedom as well.

MICAH BROWN
Economics III

Students also at fault for poor state of gyms

As the Chair of the University of Alberta Recreation Action

Committee, I believe that Mr Heise is absolutely right in throwing the Van Vliet Fitness Centre into a “Burlap Sack” (17 January). It's overcrowded, outdated, and due for a major makeover. However, I still believe that there's a point that he clearly overlooked: we as students are as responsible for the Fitness Centre falling behind as anyone else.

We missed our chance to make changes in the 2006 PAC Yes referendum, and while the argument of whether that campaign was well-thought out or not remains, we need to make a proactive movement for change. Fitness and Wellness facilities are popping up in Universities all over Canada, and all are helped to be paid for by their main patrons: the students.

We as students need to make the issue of our degrading fitness facilities a priority, and we need to be willing to be active participants in the process of obtaining these centres. Until we do, we'll continue to fall behind when compared to Canadian Universities, and we will continue to wait in absurd lines to get on an elliptical.

ERIC KERKHOVEN
Phys Ed IV

Suggestions for I-Week

I always enjoy returning to your delightful campus and participating in classes and activities.

A major recommendation, however, would be to add more substance over style, and that the activities regarding International

Week be advertised and marketed more open and freely.

ROBERT S
Student at Large

Pashtun politics more complicated than shown

If Hasnain Khan wishes to describe himself as an expert on Pashtun cultural nuances, the least he could do is be correct about them.

First of all, in his article “A course not worth following,” 24 January, Mr Khan notes that “Pashtuns have never subjugated themselves to foreign aggressors.” Certainly, this is true. However, what he fails to mention is that Pashtuns have never subjugated themselves to centralized government: not under the British, not in neighbouring Pakistan, and most certainly not under the Taliban.

In fact, the Taliban, while ruling Afghanistan, used the same tactic the British previously used (and the Soviet Union rejected) known as “encapsulation,” wherein control of the Pashtun tribal areas was more or less left to the tribal Jirgas in favour of controlling the more manageable areas of the country. While sovereignty over that particular region was claimed on an official basis, it was never exercised.

In the Taliban's particular case, this was for a very good reason. Under the Taliban, Afghanistan was subject to Sharia law. The Pashtun tribes, however, traditionally reject Sharia in favour of Pashtunwali, a code of justice unique to the Pashtun. Even if they constitute a majority amongst the Taliban, the Taliban certainly

don't constitute a majority among the Pashtun. The continued preeminence of Pashtunwali throughout that particular region proves it.

One also has to consider the ethnically homogenous makeup of Afghanistan's inland regions in particular. While the Pashtun are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, they constitute only 40 per cent of the population. The remaining 60 per cent have historically rejected anything resembling Pashtun rule of Afghanistan (which the Taliban regime resembled only on a superficial basis). Likewise, however, they've rarely agreed on how they would govern themselves.

If Mr Khan wishes to make the case that Afghanistan's culture and history complicates the current war in Afghanistan, that case certainly can be made. However, he owes it to his readers to make that case correctly, a test that the article in question doesn't pass.

PATRICK ROSS
Arts IV

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