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The Big Miss: My Years Coaching Tiger Woods



Synopsis

The Big Miss is Hank Haney's candid and surprisingly insightful account of his tumultuous six-year journey with Tiger Woods, during which the supremely gifted golfer collected six major championships and rewrote golf history. Hank was one of the very few people allowed behind the curtain. He was with Tiger 110 days a year, spoke to him over 200 days a year, and stayed at his home up to 30 days a year, observing him in nearly every circumstance: at tournaments, on the practice range, over meals, with his wife, Elin, and relaxing with friends. The relationship between the two men began in March 2004 when Hank received a call from Tiger in which the golf champion asked him to be his coach. It was a call that would change both men's lives. Tiger "only 28 at the time" was by then already an icon, judged by the sporting press as not only one of the best golfers ever, but possibly the best athlete ever. Already he was among the world's highest paid celebrities. There was an air of mystery surrounding him, an aura of invincibility. Unique among athletes, Tiger seemed to be able to shrug off any level of pressure and find a way to win. But Tiger was always looking to improve, and he wanted Hank's help. What Hank soon came to appreciate was that Tiger was one of the most complicated individuals he'd ever met, let alone coached. Although Hank had worked with hundreds of elite golfers and was not easily impressed, there were days watching Tiger on the range when Hank couldn't believe what he was witnessing. On those days, it was impossible to imagine another human playing golf so perfectly. And yet Tiger is human "and Hank's expert eye was adept at spotting where Tiger's perfection ended and an opportunity for improvement existed. Always haunting Tiger was his fear of "the big miss" "the wildly inaccurate golf shot that can ruin an otherwise solid round" and it was because that type of blunder was sometimes part of Tiger's game that Hank carefully redesigned his swing mechanics. Hank's most formidable coaching challenge, though, would be solving the riddle of Tiger's personality. Wary of the emotional distractions that might diminish his game and put him further from his goals, Tiger had developed a variety of tactics to keep people from getting too close, and not even Hank "or Tiger's family and friends, for that matter" was spared the treatment. Toward the end of Tiger and Hank's time together, the champion's laser-like focus began to blur and he became less willing to put in punishing hours practicing "a disappointment to Hank, who saw in Tiger's behavior signs that his pupil had developed a conflicted relationship with the game. Hints that Tiger hungered to reinvent himself were present in his bizarre infatuation with elite military training, and "in a development Hank didn't see coming" in the scandal that would make headlines in late 2009. It all added up to a big miss that Hank, try as he might, couldn't save Tiger from. There's never been a book

about Tiger Woods that is as intimate and revealing as one so wise about what it takes to coach a superstar athlete.

Book Information

File Size: 3758 KB

Print Length: 274 pages

Publisher: Crown Archetype (March 27, 2012)

Publication Date: March 27, 2012

Sold by: Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B006V3E2PE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

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Customer Reviews

To say this book was eye opening is to make a big understatement. I have followed Tiger's career from his junior days, and have marveled along with the rest of the world at his accomplishments and at the amazing style in which he accomplishes them. But, as a former collegiate player, and once upon a time low handicapper, there were many things about Tiger's game that greatly puzzled me, as I thought I could see rather obvious flaws in his game that even lesser lights, let alone the Nicklauses, Hogans and Palmers didn't have. The most obvious one, the one that everyone now knows about, is the incredible amount of head movement in his driver swings that has robbed him of any chance for superior performance off the tee. Well, this book explains at least some of the reasons why Tiger has allowed this and other flaws into his game over time. Even more stunning to me was his fixation with becoming a Navy Seal, and how his Seal training has likely been the source of his severe physical problems. Think about it: Tiger is far from the only long hitter to play the game. Weiskopf, Nicklaus, Norman, Bubba, J.B., Dustin Johnson, etc etc. I cannot think of one

other long hitter in golf history who has had such severe injuries at such a young age as Tiger, so I am now of the opinion it is more likely his Seal training that has devastated his body, not his powerful golf swing, as we have been led to believe. There are many, many inside facts that Haney has access to due to his long, intimate association w/ Tiger, and even though the book bogs down at times with self-serving prose and some gratuitous, voyeuristic details of Tiger's life, I have a much fuller insight into why Tiger does what he does.

I have to admit that I bought this book more for the gossip aspect, but enjoyed it for the insight into an elite athlete whose career I've followed since the beginning. When Tiger first won the Masters, he seemed invincible in a sport that didn't allow anyone to dominate for long. Then when he fell from grace and seemingly couldn't find his way back either professionally or personally, I was more than curious as to why. Hank Haney gives us insight into Tiger's greatness, and the 'why' behind the fall. If character dictates fate, then it would seem inevitable that Tiger couldn't sustain his dominance forever, or in the golf world, not really than long when you look at the careers of some of the other great players. Whether Haney should have written about Tiger is open for dispute, but I'm glad he did. This is not a tell-all book as much as it is an insight into one of the greatest golfers to ever swing a club. Maybe it should have been written after Tiger has left the earth, but then I would have missed it and I'm really glad I had the chance to see what it takes to make a champion. Haney coached Tiger for six years, and yet he was still in awe of Tiger, putting up with Tiger's anti-social behavior because of it. "It went along with the sense of destiny his father had passed to him--that he was put on this earth to do something extraordinary with his special qualities, to "let the legend grow". But those qualities, foremost among them an extraordinary ability to focus and stay calm under stress, also included selfishness, obsessiveness, stubbornness, coldness, ruthlessness, pettiness, and cheapness. When they were all at work in the competitive arena, they helped him win. And winning gave him permission to remain a flawed and in some ways an immature person. . .

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