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by

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How good is Tiger Woods?

I have had the privilege of standing outside the ropes and watching great golfers like Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, and Lee Trevino play, as well as most of the great players up to the modern era, including Ben Crenshaw, Curtis Strange, Davis Love III, Freddie Couples, Ernie Els, and Phil Mickelson.

None of them has impressed me more than Tiger Woods, whom I first saw play as a teenager on his way to winning his second of three US Junior Amateur titles. On that day, he used a two iron off the tee for control, and still outdrove his opponent on every hole, winning his match easily.

Now, some 20 years later, he stands at the pinnacle of the game, poised to break some of golf's most enduring records.

Two such records are (a) the number of major tournaments (i.e., Masters, US Open, British Open, and PGA Championship) won in a career, and (b) the number of PGA Tour events won in a career.

Here is the list of the top 10 leaders in **major championships won**:

Jack Nicklaus	18 won in 25 years on the PGA Tour
Tiger Woods	14 won in 14 years
Walter Hagen	11 won in 21 years
Gary Player	9 won in 21 years
Ben Hogan	9 won in 22 years
Tom Watson	8 won in 25 years
Arnold Palmer	7 won in 19 years
Gene Sarazen	7 won in 20 years
Sam Snead	7 won in 30 years
Lee Trevino	6 won in 17 years

Talk about fast company; Tiger is there and closing in on Jack's record. When will Tiger catch, and ultimately surpass, Jack?

Well, Tiger is always the favorite to win every major he plays in, and lately he has won two or three every year.

Simple math says that with eight major championships up for grabs in the next two years, **2010 could be the year that Tiger surpasses Jack Nicklaus' record in major championships.**

Here is the list of the top 10 leaders in PGA Tour events won:

Sam Snead	82 won in 30 years on the PGA Tour
Jack Nicklaus	73 won in 25 years
Tiger Woods	67 won in 14 years
Ben Hogan	64 won in 22 years
Arnold Palmer	62 won in 19 years
Byron Nelson	52 won in 17 years
Billy Casper	51 won in 20 years
Walter Hagen	44 won in 21 years
Cary Middlecoff	40 won in 17 years
Gene Sarazen	39 won in 20 years
Tom Watson	39 won in 25 years

Tiger won 65 PGA Tour events in 13 previous years on tour, or slightly less than 5 per year. **Recently back from a nine month recovery from knee surgery, he won in his third tournament of the year at the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill, and on June 7, 2009 he won his seventh start at Jack Nicklaus' Memorial Tournament, shooting a final round 65 in which he hit every fairway in regulation to overcome a four shot deficit and win by one. Now he has 67 tour wins.**

Of course, Tiger wins more per year now than he did when he was just starting out. But, let's be conservative and say that he wins 5 tournaments per year on average for the next several years. At that rate, **Tiger could pass Jack Nicklaus for second place in PGA Tour career wins with his 74th victory in 2010, and could pass Sam Snead for the top spot in the record book with his 83rd victory in 2012.**

As an avowed Tiger watcher, I look forward to Tiger Woods making golf history by surpassing Jack Nicklaus' major championship and career PGA Tour win marks in 2010, and taking over the top spot in the PGA Tour record book by surpassing Sam Snead's career win mark in 2012.

Mark your calendars. This will be fun to watch!

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