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Tiger Watch—The Records

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, Fred 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 practically 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.

A. The Majors

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?

Tiger is always the favorite to win every major he plays in, and in recent years he had won two or three every year. However, Tiger failed to win a major in 2009.

Nevertheless, with five PGA tour wins to his credit so far this year suggesting that Tiger is back, and with eight major championships up for grabs in the next two years, **2011 could be the year in which Tiger surpasses Jack Nicklaus' record in major championships.**

B. PGA Tour Wins

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 | 71 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. Since then Tiger has notched wins at the **AT&T National**, the **Buick Open**, the **WGC Bridgestone Invitational**, and the **BMW Championship**; bringing his current total to six PGA tour wins in 2009 and 71 overall.

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 Tiger could pass Sam Snead for the top spot in the record book with his 83rd victory at some point in 2012.**

As an avowed Tiger watcher, I look forward to Tiger Woods making golf history by surpassing Jack Nicklaus' major championship win mark in 2011, 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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