

SPORTS

Woods' presence puts LVI on Tour map

By Lee Brown
Sentinel-Voice

This week tournament officials are expecting the largest spectator galleries in the history of the Las Vegas Invitational, but not because of Las Vegas' great golf weather or because the city is a great place to visit. They are expecting record crowds because of the presence of the PGA Tour's rookie sensation, Eldric "Tiger" Woods.

Woods, 20, who turned professional nearly a month ago after he capped off a history-making amateur career, which saw him become the first player to win three consecutive amateur titles, officially committed to participate in the 14th annual PGA Tour event last Friday. Though he has played here before, he should feel right at home as the LVI will be Woods' first pro tournament on the West Coast.

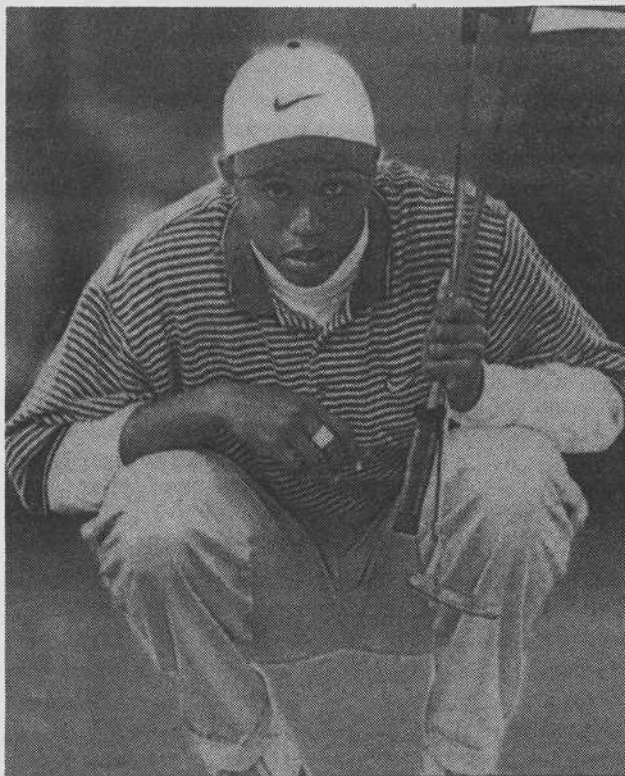
"I've got to score low," Woods said during a practice round Monday. "Here in Vegas,

tradition is you've got to shoot really low numbers. I hope my game will be good enough to where I can produce that."

The Las Vegas Invitational, with a purse of over \$1.6 million, runs through Sunday. Play will take place at the Tournament Players Club at Summerlin, the Desert Inn Golf Club and the Las Vegas Hilton Country Club. The Invitational's final two rounds will take place this weekend at the Summerlin site.

The phenom nearly attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) on a golf scholarship, before choosing Stanford to play his college career.

Making his fifth start as a pro, Woods is in search of either his first professional win or a big payday — either of which would secure his PGA Tour card for next year. He has already earned more than \$140,000 in his first four pro starts and is currently 128th on the money list. In his four starts he finished 60th; 11th;



Tiger Woods studies the green for his next putt during last month's B.C. Open. Woods is playing in this week's LVI.

Woods is tied for fifth; and two weeks ago, tied for third in the B.C. Open in Endicott, N.Y.

"It's nice being in contention, knowing that you have a chance to win. That's always a good feeling," said Woods of his play in his four starts as a pro. "That I have learned. I've learned how to get into that position, now I've just got to learn how to win out here, and that's just going to take time and hopefully it will happen soon one week."

The would-be Stanford junior opted to skip last week's Buick Challenge, citing fatigue and utter exhaustion from his grueling schedule since his announcement he was turning pro, as his main reason for foregoing the Tour event.

Woods, known for his long drives and accurate putting, has attracted large galleries everywhere he's played, both as an amateur and a pro.

Life on the Tour has become somewhat of a double-edged sword for Woods, however. Unfortunately, with that type of attention he has drawn comes a lack of privacy. On the other hand, his outstanding play has given him the notoriety he's earned, which in turn has enabled him to sign a \$40 million endorsement contract with Nike, in addition to deals with Calloway and Titelist — money that will allow him to pursue his goal of becoming one of the greats of the game, without having to deal with the financial pressures of being on the Tour.

"The day it (golf) becomes a job, is the day I quit," said Woods. "It's always fun. Granted, I'm playing for a living now, but it's still fun. I go out there and horse around. That's all I do, is just have a good time. It's just something that I love to do, and the great thing is I get to do it on a daily basis now."

SPORT BRIEFS

REBELS TO FACE UNR SATURDAY

The UNLV football team is in the middle of preparations for their showdown with intra-state rival the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) Saturday at Sam Boyd Stadium. UNLV head coach Jeff Horton is downplaying last year's violent skirmishes that marred UNR's 55-32 win in Reno. Horton and the Rebels were widely criticized for the pregame and postgame brawls that broke out last October. Horton says he plans to see a different atmosphere when the two teams square off Saturday at 1 p.m. "I think it will be a great afternoon of football," Horton said.

SCOTT RETURNS TO THE LAKERS

INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Byron Scott is back with the Los Angeles Lakers, having signed a partially guaranteed contract for the league minimum of \$247,500 after weeks of considering other teams and other countries but always dreaming of coming home. Scott's return gives the Lakers 16 players heading into training camp Friday in Honolulu, meaning four must be cut or develop a convenient injury within the next four weeks. In other NBA news, Reggie Miller, the Indiana Pacers' career scoring leader, signed a new contract Monday and joined the team for the start of training camp in North Carolina.

DEFENSIVE END SMITH WALKS OUT ON RAIDERS

OAKLAND, Calif. — Defensive end Anthony Smith has left the Oakland Raiders, his attorney said last weekend.

"(Smith) has made a decision not to play for the Oakland Raiders," attorney Zachary Jones said from Washington, D.C. The Raiders confirmed Smith was not with the team in Chicago last week.

JOHNSON TO MISS START OF SEASON

PHOENIX — Phoenix Suns guard Kevin Johnson likely will begin his final NBA season in a familiar framework — the injured list. Johnson underwent abdominal hernia surgery last Friday and will be sidelined for up to two months.

SAN JOSE STATE PLAYER ARRESTED AFTER GAME

PULLMAN, Wash. — Police arrested San Jose State safety Ashanti Hayes in the Spartans locker room after Washington State's 52-16 win. Hayes, 21, a former Cougars player who left Washington State after two years in 1994, paid a \$1,050 bond and was released, said Pullman police. Police dispatcher Billie Shinnall and campus police officer Brian Jacobson said the misdemeanor warrant was for failure to appear in court on a charge of possession of marijuana while Hayes was a Washington State student.

JURY DEADLOCKED IN MURDER TRIAL

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — The murder trial of a man accused of killing an Atlanta Braves replacement player ended in a mistrial after the jury said it could not reach a verdict. Circuit Judge Roger Colton declared a mistrial after jurors sent out the second of two notes saying they were deadlocked. No date has been set for Neal Evans' second trial. The deadlock came after 19 hours of deliberation, two nights in a hotel, several hours of re-reading testimony and a few exasperated notes to the judge.

YANKEES TO BENCH GOODEN

BOSTON — Dwight Gooden will not be on the New York Yankees' playoff roster, at least for the first round, manager Joe Torre said. Gooden (11-7) spent last season suspended for violating baseball's drug policy. He lost his first three starts for the Yankees, then won nine of 10 decisions including a no-hitter against Seattle. But the former Cy Young Award winner has won just one game in his last 10 starts. Torre had already announced that David Cone would start Game 1 and Andy Pettitte Game 2.

TYSON TO PAY EX-TRAINER \$4 MILLION

ALBANY, N.Y. — Mike Tyson has been ordered by a federal jury to pay his former trainer Kevin Rooney more than \$4.4 million, a judgement denounced by the heavyweight champion and his supporters. Rooney had sued Tyson for \$49 million, claiming the fighter had broken a lifetime contract by firing him in 1988. Outside the courthouse, nearly two dozen demonstrators brought to Albany by New York City activist Al Sharpton to support Tyson chanted "No justice, No peace!" Tyson said he would appeal what he termed a "peculiar" and "unjust" verdict. The boxer also indicated he would have given Rooney \$4 million if he had just asked for it and not sued him.

KING WINS BID FOR HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE FIGHT

MEXICO CITY — Don King Productions won the right to promote the Lewis-McCall World Boxing Council heavyweight title fight with a \$9.5 million bid. Losing out were Main Events at \$6.15 million and Cedric Kushner Productions at \$5.2 million. No date has been set yet for the bout between Lewis, the No. 1 contender, and McCall. Mike Tyson, who is also promoted by King, agreed to surrender the WBC title when he fought Bruce Seldon for the WBA crown last month. Tyson's camp claimed the conflict involves competing exclusive cable television contracts: Lewis with HBO and King-Tyson with Showtime.

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