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# No surprise, Woods expects to dominate at the Masters

By Doug Ferguson  
 The Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — If anyone in the Masters is intimidated by Tiger Woods, take heart. There was a time when even Woods, the No. 1 player in the world, found himself in awe of another player and wondered whether he was good enough to win.

"I was 11 years old," he said Tuesday.

Woods said he was paired with a 12-year-old in a junior tournament when they came to a 290-yard par 4. The big kid drove the green, and tiny Tiger took a gulp.

"I was taken back by that and felt there was no way I could compete," he said.

He wound up beating him that day, and came away with a valuable lesson.

"There's no point being intimidated on the golf course," Woods said. "I know what I can accomplish. I know what I can do on the golf course. I know the shots I can pull off, and I've got to believe I can do it."

Woods has made a believer out of just about everyone lately.

He arrived at Augusta National as a heavy favorite to win his second green jacket in four years, and for good reason.

Woods has won 10 times since

the last Masters. No one else has won more than twice, while David Duval, Ernie Els and Davis Love III have combined to win nothing.

Who else since 1945 has won six straight PGA Tour events? And the most daunting performance of all is that Woods has finished first or second in 10 out of his 11 events.

Perhaps that's why Woods didn't even blink when someone asked him how it affected his preparation for the Masters knowing he was the guy everyone was watching.

"People are talking about that every week I play," he said. "That hasn't changed. You become the center of attention when you're playing well."

One thing that has changed is the course.

It is not the same Augusta National on which Woods romped in 1997 in becoming the youngest Masters champion (21) with the lowest score (270) for the largest margin of victory (12 strokes), among the 20 records he owns.

They move a couple of tee boxes back 25 yards and grew rough for the first time last year, which looks more like peach fuzz compared to the U.S. Open but is still enough of a nuisance to lower the scoring.

This year, the rough has encroached on what used to be the

most generous fairways in golf, which changes the shape of drives on some holes.

"You can't go out there and take driving for granted like you used to around here," Woods said. "You have different angles. It's going to be quite a challenge."

That was never more evident than late Tuesday afternoon, when six-time Masters champion Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman, playing in his 20th Masters, stood on the 11th tee and tried to figure out where to hit their drives.

Showing them the way was 19-year-old Aaron Baddeley, the Australian amateur who has been coming to Augusta for, oh, about a week now.

"The changes might not look important from the outside, but when you're playing the course, it's quite different," said defending champion Jose Maria Olazabal.

Not everyone favors the new look. Among the harshest critics is Phil Mickelson, who is coming off a playoff victory over Gary Nicklaus in Atlanta.

"I don't think it's the place of anybody who can't break 90 to be changing the golf course from those original designs," he said.

The change that might have the biggest impact is what Woods has done with his swing since he last won the Masters.

# McGwire could play Wednesday

■ Feeling better, Big Mac said he expects to get back into the lineup soon

By R.B. Fallstrom  
 The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — A day after he hobbled out of Busch Stadium with his body contorted into an L-shape due to a lower back strain, an upright Mark McGwire felt so much better he was able to joke about the injury.

"I may be a hell of a manager someday because that was a great move by me taking myself out of the lineup," McGwire said Tuesday.

His replacement at first, Craig Paquette, hit a three-run home run in the first inning of the St. Louis Cardinals' 7-1 season-opening victory over the Chicago Cubs. His stand-in cleanup hitter, Fernando Tatis, had an RBI single and two steals.

McGwire felt he might have saved himself from more serious injury by deciding, just before game time, not to play. He left in the third inning for Barnes Hospital, where an MRI showed no disc problems. Doctors were able to quiet spasms.

"The positive side of it is I'm glad it happened when I was running," McGwire said. "If I was swinging it could have been way more severe because there's so much more torque."

He was optimistic about his playing chances on Wednesday, the Cardinals' second game of the season. And if not then, he's certain it won't be a long setback.

"Today, I feel so much better. Yesterday I walked out of here and I was completely crooked," McGwire said.

Missing opening day is a disappointment he'll get over. He did get to participate in the pregame parade.

"When you look at it over the long run, it's one game," McGwire said. "The doctors did a great job eliminating the spasms that I feared, and I'm moving around a lot better."

McGwire, 36, has hit 135 home

runs during the last two years and 245 in the last four. He appeared in 153 of 162 games.

Normally, trainer Barry Weinberg is the final authority on whether McGwire plays. This time, McGwire took himself out after feeling something pop on his final wind sprint.

"It's the movement I fear every day," McGwire said. "There was a pop and it grabbed and I said 'That's it.'"

McGwire also sat out the final two spring training games due to back woes. He visited an acupuncturist Saturday night.

"It hadn't been right for over a week, but it was playable," McGwire said. "There's a playable and a non-playable, and the movement that happened before the game made me non-playable. There was no way."

Notes: About a dozen players, or about half the roster, participated in a brief optional workout Tuesday. Players haven't had a day off since March 22, the only break in the spring schedule. "Today is kind of an errand day," manager Tony La Russa said. "But if somebody wants to come down, we're here for them." ... Pat Hentgen, who was among those working out, opposes Kyle Farnsworth on Wednesday. Hentgen was 1-2 with a 7.08 ERA in spring training. He'll be followed in the rotation by Garrett Stephenson, opening-day winner Darryl Kile on Saturday and rookie Rick Ankiel on Sunday.

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## Golfers

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Lavoie led the team at both the Pac-10 Championships and the NCAA Championships. If there is such a thing as a good pressure golfer, Lavoie is it. The Ducks will get to know

Tempe, Ariz., very well over the next two weeks. The Karsten Golf Course in Tempe is the site of the Thunderbird Invitational next Saturday and Sunday. It's also the site of the Pac-10 Championships April 18 through 20.

Oregon plays in the U.S. Intercollegiate May 6 and 7.