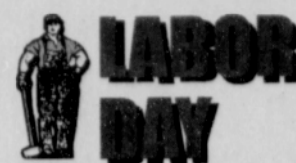




Metro/Sports



Woods wraps up player of the year

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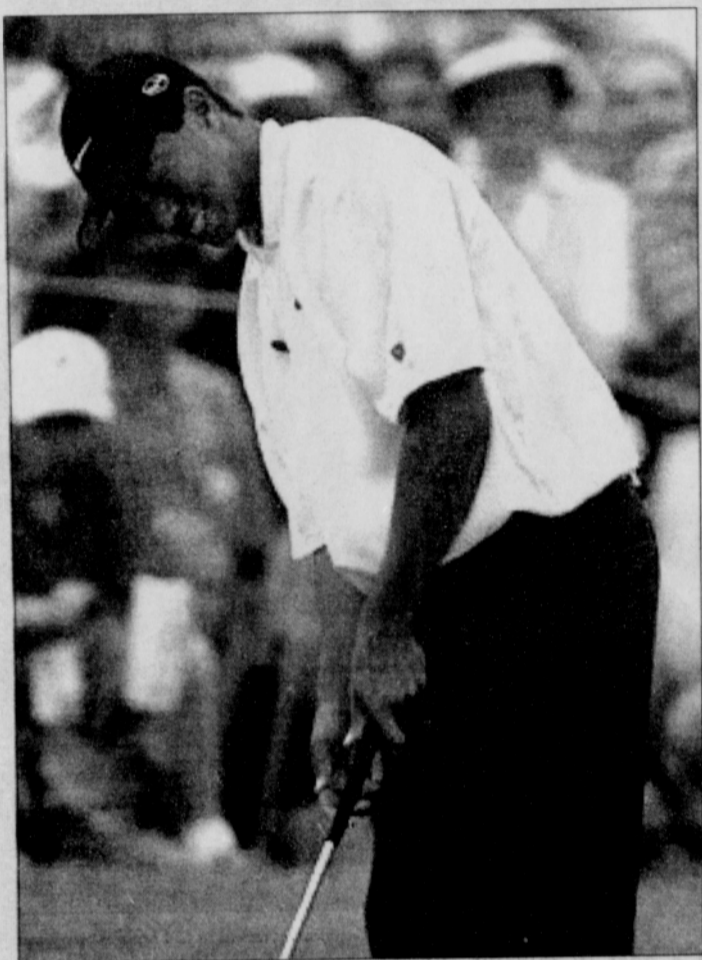
Tiger Woods has won the PGA Player of the Year award before, just never in August. The PGA of America announced Woods as the winner Tuesday. He has been so dominant, winning three majors and eight PGA Tour events, that no one has a mathematical chance of catching him. Woods won the award, which is decided by points, for the third time in four years. He already has a record 255 points after his victory in the NEC Invitational at Firestone. Phil Mickelson is second with 64 points. Players earn 30 points for winning a major, 20 points for The Players Championship, and 10 points for every other PGA Tour victory. Winning two majors carries a 50-point bonus, and three majors is worth an additional 75 points. Woods became the first player since Ben Hogan in 1953 to win three majors in one year. Also, 20 points are available for the player who leads the money list and has the lowest scoring average. Those also appear to be a formality. Woods, who last year won the Vardon Trophy with a record 68.43 adjusted scoring average, is on pace to shatter that mark. He currently is at 67.38, while Ernie Els is next with a 69.37 average.

Weary Woods ready for some rest and relaxation

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Even the best need a break, and Tiger Woods certainly deserves one. After Woods (pictured) loses to Sergio Garcia in a made-for-TV match, he admits he's weary and is going to take a break. But a tired Tiger is better than no Tiger at all, as viewership of the duel increases by 16 percent over last year's Woods-Duval match-play contest. And although Tiger may be taking a break, that doesn't mean you armchair Tigers have to as well.

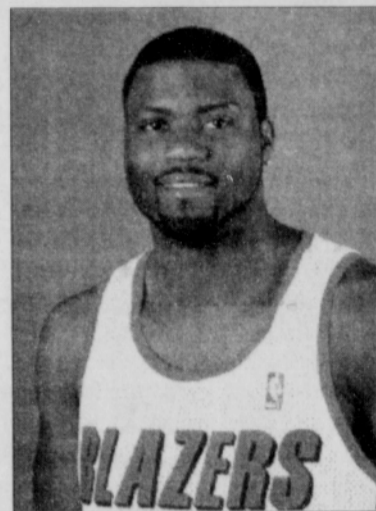
Tiger Woods misses his birdie putt on the first hole against Sergio Garcia during the 'Battle at Bighorn' in Palm Desert, Calif. Monday



Rider vows to change his ways

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Isaiah Rider says he's changing his ways. Honest. Rider, who signed a free-agent contract with the NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers last Friday, vowed to end the tardiness problems that have plagued him since his first NBA practice in 1993. "I have my head on straight," Rider said Monday at an introductory news conference. "I'm really happy, confident and not reluctant to be in this situation. "It's up to me to dig myself out of the hole. We'll see in seven or eight months what the outcome is. To me, this is an easy transition - come in, do my job and be a good citizen." Rider said he will live in a location equally convenient to the Lakers' practice facility in El Segundo near Los Angeles International Airport and Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles, where the team plays its home games. He also said his new home would enable him to drive on surface streets, avoiding the crowded freeways. "An adjustment of 20 or 30 minutes a



day in my life will be the significant part of my turnaround," Rider said. "Coaches know I don't come dragging in in the morning." Rider's constant tardiness caused him to clash with coaches in Atlanta last season and Portland before that. He was also late to his first professional practice seven years ago with the Minnesota Timberwolves. General manager Mitch Kupchak said Rider demonstrated sincerity about changing his ways by rejecting Miami's \$2.25 million contract offer last week before signing with the

Lakers for \$736,000 - the minimum salary for players with seven years experience. "To me, it's the first step," Kupchak said. "He's acknowledging he's looked at the situation, he knows what he needs and he's made a sacrifice, which is probably the most important thing." Rider said it wasn't a difficult decision to accept the lower offer. "For me, it wasn't about money," he said. "This is an opportunity I thought I couldn't pass up, with premier players, a good supporting cast and an organization that's been No. 1 for years." Both Rider and Kupchak said the one-year contract will provide sufficient motivation for the 6-foot-5 player to solve his problems. Rider averaged 19.3 points, 4.3 rebounds and 3.7 assists for Atlanta last season, near his career averages of 18.1 points, 4.1 rebounds and 2.9 assists. The Hawks waived him a month before the season ended. Meanwhile, as Rider arrived, Kupchak was casting doubt about the return of free-agent forward Glen Rice, saying, "I wouldn't say it was likely," that Rice will be re-signed.

Serena Williams advances at U.S. Open

REUTERS

Defending champion Serena Williams launched her U.S. Open title defense with a straight-set victory on Tuesday at the National Tennis Center. The fifth-seeded Williams defeated 19-year-old Tina Pisknik of Slovenia, ranked 62nd, 6-3 6-2. Williams advanced to a second-round match against Nadejda Petrova of Russia, a 6-1 6-2 winner against Czech Daja Bedanova.

Sydney Games will be showcase for women

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At the Munich Games in 1972, there were 96 women in the U.S. Olympic contingent. Nearly 30 years later, in the 2000 Summer Games, the number will increase to about 270 competing against 4,100 women from around the world. Columnist Jim Litke says Marion Jones (pictured) and the rest of today's female athletes have their opportunities thanks to the sacrifices of reluctant pioneers like Francie Larrieu Smith, who ran the 1,500-meter heat in Munich and will lead the Americans into the stadium in Sydney at the opening ceremonies on Sept. 15.

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