

Headline  
Date  
MediaTitle  
Section  
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Frequency  
Circ / Read

**Tiger Woods 101 grads send beautiful woman home**  
**24 Feb 2010**  
**The Edge Financial Daily**  
**Sports**  
**none**  
**Daily**  
**25,000 / 40,000**

Language  
Page No  
Article Size  
Color  
ADValue  
PRValue

**English**  
**L-28**  
**335 cm<sup>2</sup>**  
**One Spot Color**  
**3,704**  
**11,113**



## Talking Sports with Scott Soshnick

### Tiger Woods 101 grads send beautiful woman home

SPORTS leagues and their unions, post-Tiger Woods, have a chance to alter their rookie programmes, which are designed to help first-year players adapt to the changes that come with moving from the school to the pros.

Forget the skits, which are really warnings. Cancel the role playing that centres on how to handle relationship discord. Nix the veteran who, through no fault of his own, never had a prayer of penetrating the skulls of young know-it-alls sold on invincibility.

Oh, and send the beautiful woman in the tight dress home. Her loitering by the front door is no longer required.

OK, let's begin.

Dim the lights. Quiet the fellas, most of whom deep down think they have nothing to learn about life as a professional athlete. They're here because they have to be here. Says so in the collective bargaining agreement, the same document that enumerates just how many millions they're to be paid.

Now roll tape. And let it sink in. Let the athletic marvels pursuing riches and fame spend the next 13 minutes watching Woods squirm, digesting just how far a global icon can sink.

Talk about compelling reality TV. This wasn't some hypothetical fall from grace.

Can't happen to you? Think again, sport.

Today's lesson in Tiger Woods 101 is that no one, not even the most famous athlete on the planet, is immune from becoming a punch line. Today's lesson centres on accountability, responsibility and backlash.

"I knew my actions were wrong," Woods said last week, speaking for the first time since news of his rampant infidelities hit the tabloids. "But I convinced myself that normal rules didn't apply."

Tiger Woods thought he could get away with whatever he wanted to.

"I was wrong," he said while trying to make things right.

Let that sink in.

Odds are good the stars of tomorrow have already seen the confessional. It was hard to miss. Practically every network carried it live.

Even Wall Street took a break for Woods, who could teach some of the money manipulators a thing or two about entitlement and playing by the rules.

New York Stock Exchange volume fell to about one million shares, the lowest level of the day at the time, in the minute before the face of golf began speaking. Trading shot to about six million when he finished saying sorry.

My initial reaction was that Woods wasted our time. He could have conveyed the same sentiments in a press release. Then I watched it again. And then a third

time, which is when his riff about rules hit home.

Woods was wrong.

The same rules don't apply to athletes. That's changing, albeit slowly. What's changing, and fast, is the public's tolerance for their transgressions.

Maybe it's just the sheer abundance of athletes screwing up.

Try telling Plaxico Burress the same rules don't apply to athletes. Or Michael Vick and Gilbert Arenas. Tiger's dalliances cost him a lot more than just a few endorsement millions, which isn't much to the first athlete billionaire. It also cost him a reputation and maybe even a family.

The union that represents National Basketball Association players has included me among the guest speakers at its Rookie Transition programme, where everyone gets a chuckle out of the role-playing exercise where a wife or girlfriend is spending too much money.

The rookies laugh, yes. Whether they learn, well, that's another story.

The union shook things up a few years back by hiring a model to loiter near the conference centre. Let's just say that she was popular. There was nothing but silence when that same woman walked into the meeting room and told the boys-being-boys that she was HIV positive.

No one was laughing.

Watching Woods can have the same effect. It's just so startling to see where Woods is, especially when you consider that he was darned near universally loved and respected.

"I only thought about myself," Woods said.

Wouldn't it be something if athletes stopped for a moment to consider someone else before loading that gun and, like former Super Bowl hero Burress, tucking it into the waistband of his pants?

Wouldn't it be something if LeBron James, who shares a Dec 30 birthday with Woods, thought about someone else, like his two sons, before revving his Mercedes to 101mph?

Woods said he worked hard his entire life and figured that he deserved to enjoy all the temptations around him. "Thanks to money and fame, I didn't have to go far to find them," he said.

There's a lot that comes with fame and fortune. Foolish doesn't have to be included.

Dim the lights. Roll tape.

"I've had a lot of time to think about what I've done," Woods said.

Give the new guys 13 minutes to sit there and consider what it is they're going to do.

*Scott Soshnick is a Bloomberg News columnist. The opinions expressed are his own.*