

# SLICE OF LIFE



By Terry Moore

Well the result—Tiger winning again—was no surprise but all in all the FedEx Cup was a qualified success. The Tour wanted to generate some fan and media interest in a “playoff model” that followed the final major of the year—the PGA Championship—and on this score it worked. It always riled the Tour that none of the five majors (I include the Ryder Cup in the usual mix) were “owned” by the Tour or its players and that all gain more media attention and revenues than its own Tour events. Try as it might, the Players and Tour Championship are prestigious events but neither is deemed a “major” by the general golf public and media. So the FedEx Cup was a worthy experiment that definitely worked to retain the Tour’s lucrative television contract intact. And this time around, the public was indeed interested in the Tour after the PGA Championship.

There were some bumps in the road, however. For starters, there were some awkward and unseemly criticisms of the FedEx Cup including some selfish sniping at the

deferred compensation set-up. I mean, how bad was it for some of these pampered millionaires, with their courtesy cars and weekly creature comforts, to be complaining about a plan that any tax attorney or CPA would say richly rewards them with someone else’s money? On top of it, was the unfounded criticism that players were not informed of some of these provisions. Baloney, said Player Policy Board rep Stewart Cink. Tour players were kept in the loop all along, insisted Cink, with regular communiqués and meetings, most of which was hardly attended by the all too busy superstars. Hand it to Cink for sticking up for the Tour and giving a deserved retort to the whiners.

Then there was the matter of certain Tour stars—namely Woods, Mickelson and Els—skipping one of the three playoff events leading up to the Tour Championship at East Lake. First, Tiger skips the opening Barclays saying he needed to take a break after playing two weeks in a row. Tim Finchem says he’s “disappointed” but really can’t do anything else when the Tour always claims it merely services “independent contractors.” Then almost as a slap at the Tour and Finchem, Mickelson decides to skip the BMW event at Cog Hill and announces his decision and dismay with Finchem on national TV following his exciting victory (against Tiger, no less) outside Boston. He voiced some unspecified issues against Finchem and the Tour. Ok, so what were they? Well, here’s my take on it. I think the Tour’s brain trust in fact suggested to Tiger he could take a pass at the Barclay’s because it real-

ized if Tiger won there, he would have essentially clinched the Cup and made it irrelevant in generating playoff excitement. Before then, Finchem and the Tour must have strongly encouraged Tiger, Phil and Co. to play all three of the inaugural playoff events plus the finale for the sake of the tourney sponsors as well as the mega-sponsor FedEx. (Recall last year when Tiger and Phil both skipped East Lake.) So when Phil sees Tiger taking or getting a week off, he wants to know why the unspoken rules were changed and decides to ask for something in return that Finchem can’t or won’t deliver. So hence, Phil decides to take his ball and head home.

Finally, there was the shameful condition of East Lake GC. The bent grass greens were no match for the hot, humid summer weather of Atlanta and the greens were toast. Usually, this event is held in November when cooler temps prevail. As the East Lake super observed, no one asked him about what would happen to the greens if the event were moved up two months and in the summer heat. I mean, Augusta National closes for the season every May and doesn’t re-open until November for exactly this reason. Oh well, it really didn’t matter when it comes to the best player in the world competing. Tiger can sink putts on heavy shag carpeting.

And that’s why the inaugural playoff set-up and FedEx Cup turned out so well. We all stayed glued to the tube these past few weeks to see Tiger Woods continue his amazing dominance and command of the game. **MG**