

Quoting from below, “players who were paired with Woods during the 1998-2001 period scored 0.462 strokes per round worse than normal”

Dominance, Intimidation, and 'Choking' on the PGA Tour

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Abstract

Extending the work of Connolly and Rendleman (2008), we document the dominance of Tiger Woods during the 1998-2001 PGA Tour seasons. We show that by playing 'average,' Woods could have won some tournaments and placed no worse than fourth in the tournaments in which he participated in the year 2000, his best on the PGA Tour. No other PGA Tour player in our sample could have come close to such a feat. We also are able to quantify the intimidation factor associated with playing with Woods. On average, players who were paired with Woods during the 1998-2001 period scored 0.462 strokes per round worse than normal. Although we find that Woods' presence in a tournament may have had a small, but statistically significant adverse impact on the entire field, this effect was swamped by the apparent intimidation factor associated with having to play with Tiger side-by-side.

We also demonstrate that Phil Mickelson's performance in major golf championships over the 1998-2001 period was not nearly as bad as was frequently mentioned in the golf press. Although Mickelson won no majors during this period, he played sufficiently well to have won one or two majors under normal circumstances. Moreover, his overall performance in majors, relative to his estimated skill level, was comparable to that of Tiger Woods, who won five of 16 major golf championships during our four-year sample period. Thus, the general characterization of Woods as golf's dominant player over the 1998-2001 period was accurate, but the frequent characterization of Phil Mickelson choking in majors was not.

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