

Woods apparently isn't quite ready for PrimeTime

by Thomas Bonk
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Live! From New York, it's... sorry, wrong show.

If you like golf played at night on prime-time network television with nothing really at stake except money, then the "Battle at Bighorn" is definitely the show you've been waiting for.

With the last four fairways at Bighorn Golf Club lit up by floodlights, Sergio Garcia defeated Tiger Woods, 1-up, Monday night on ABC.

More important, here is the real score: Garcia, \$1.1 million; Woods, \$400,000; ABC, potentially big ratings.

The idea in this two-year-old event was to bring golf to a new audience, but it's doubtful that's still possible given Woods' emergence as the biggest and most visible star in sports.

Maybe it doesn't matter. But this time at least, the golf wasn't all that compelling, partly because Woods flew in from Ohio, got in about noon and looked like he rode in hanging onto the wheels. He said he was experiencing flu-like symptoms.

"I've had better days and I've had shorter days," Woods said.

Meanwhile, this experiment looks like it may need a second opinion. Since it was golf in prime time, there were some interesting problems you just don't run across in normal tournaments. One was sheep. Not your routine, dyed-in-the-wool-sheep, mind you, but rare, Bighorn sheep.

As it turns out, the bright orange blimp sponsored by *Monster.com* threatened to spook the 23 sheep who live at the Bighorn Institute adjacent to the golf course. So ABC agreed to keep the blimp from flying directly over the sheep.

One crisis avoided.

There were a couple more that got worked out which nobody knew about. Both players wore microphones and both caddies wore shorts. Now, that probably doesn't seem like much, but we're actually talking groundbreaking stuff here.

In last year's "Showdown at Sherwood," the first episode in this series, the PGA Tour refused to allow ABC to mike Woods and David Duval — not that Duval had anything to say anyway.

The Tour also didn't want the caddies to wear shorts last year, although Woods' caddie Stevie Williams proved to be the ultimate rebel and went ahead and bared his knees, daring the Tour to make an example of him.

Right, that was going to happen. If the suits at the Tour wanted to punish him, they would make him caddie for Craig Stadler.

In prime-time television golf, this serves as controversy. Or color. Or something. As for the lights, Woods said it was sort of funny playing un-

der them. He said it was really eerie at the 18th green.

"There were six flag shadows," he said.

Now, consider the sound. The players didn't need the microphones. Dennis Miller forgets more stuff than these guys ever thought of saying.

You can't blame ABC for anything. It's not as if ABC overhyped the show, with one possible exception: in a single sentence in his opening tease, Al Michaels used "head-to-head," "face-to-face," and "mano-a-mano." He said them back-to-back, of course.

There is no reason to get picky about the actual telecast, although it sounded and looked a lot like the Skins Game, which isn't very interesting anymore unless Woods is in it.

As for Woods' continuing involvement in this series, it's something the Woods Camp is considering. Mark Steinberg, who is Woods' agent at IMG, said he is going to wait to see what the ratings are and how the event goes off before committing again. He didn't say if he planned to check with the sheep.

The way it's going, Woods is becoming omnipresent on television. Chances are, if you flip on the set, you're going to see him holding up a trophy, getting ready to hold up a trophy, selling either Buicks or Nike golf balls or Wheaties, or taped highlights of all of the above.

If it makes any difference, Woods is soon going to be taking a break from tournament golf. He will probably add an event to his schedule and play next week at the Bell Canadian Open at Glen Abbey Golf Club in Oakville, Ontario, and then not play again until the Presidents Cup, Oct. 19-22.

When he does come back, Woods begins an excruciating stretch of seven consecutive tournaments that also includes the National Car Rental at Walt Disney World where he is the defending champion, the Tour Championship where he is the defending champion, the American Express where he is the defending champion, the Johnnie Walker in Thailand, the PGA Grand Slam of Golf in Kauai where he is the defending champion and the Williams World Challenge at Sherwood where he is the owner of the tournament.

There is something that those seven tournaments have in common. Each one is more important than the "Battle at Bighorn." Tell that to the press corps. There were 175 media credentials passed out, which would probably be a record if anyone really cared.

Woods sounded convinced that the Bighorn experience was useful.

"When you do shows like this, it's primarily for the growth of the game," he said. "I'm sure we got more non-golf viewers watching. That's only good for the game."

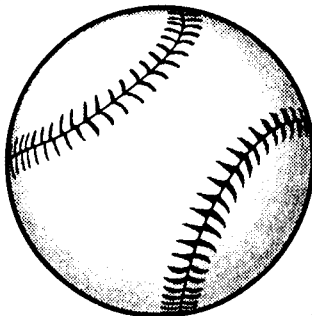
Fair enough. Who's going to argue with Tiger?

start. He didn't expect to collapse from fatigue because of it.

His 100th start came in the Mets' 132nd game. He reached 100 starts in the Mets' 124th game last season.

"I think we've handled the fatigue issue pretty well," he said. "There's no blueprint. There are a lot of things that enter into it besides games. The heat, how the schedule goes, travel and how tough are the innings that you do catch."

"There are days when I'll come in and tell Bobby 'I can go,' and I won't be in the lineup. That's OK. There have been days when I've needed time off. And when you have someone like Todd, who does such a good job, I can get it. It's worked well. I feel pretty strong."



No quick fix in war on sports doping

by Alan Abrahamson
and David Wharton
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With the Sydney Olympic Games just a few weeks away, field testers are knocking on thousands of doors worldwide, checking athletes for steroids and other substances that cheaters use to make themselves bigger, stronger, and faster.

The campaign, orchestrated by a new watchdog group, is the most widespread pre-Olympic testing program in history and could ultimately involve half the Sydney-bound athletes.

Acting with unusual speed, the International Olympic Committee also gave preliminary approval this month to a more sophisticated test that might be rushed into service for Sydney.

These developments provide a rare glimmer of hope in the war on performance-enhancing drugs, a battle that has dragged on for decades and cost millions of dollars while producing few victories.

But even with the surprise visits, skeptics claim, the IOC has a history of testing halfheartedly and, in some cases, covering up positive results to avoid embarrassment. And even with a new test on the way, researchers say, there remains a panoply of performance-enhancing substances that they cannot detect.

So, experts warn, the Sydney Games could be the dirtiest yet, leaving some to wonder if the Olympic movement is doing too little, too late.

"If this was a football game, the cheaters would be leading, 84-3," said Charles Yesalis, a Penn State University professor who has studied drug use by athletes.

No issue cuts to the heart of the Olympics like doping. It runs counter to the ideal of fair play. Fairly or unfairly, it casts a cloud of suspicion over any highly successful athlete. With so many reports of doping, can television viewers really trust that the extraordinary performances they will see from Sydney are the result of hard work and athletic talent, not drugs?

Doping also threatens to further erode the credibility of the IOC, which has the ultimate responsibility for putting on

clean Games and is struggling to emerge from last year's Salt Lake City corruption scandal. And, some experts believe, untold numbers of athletes are risking their health by taking drugs in their quest for gold.

"You have to create a deterrence factor," said Frank Shorter, an Olympic marathon champion who has become an anti-doping activist. "If you can create uncertainty among the cheaters, that would be wonderful."

Performance-enhancing drugs are reputed to have been part of the Games

eled after naturally occurring substances. Though the IOC hopes to have an EPO test in Sydney, there will be no reliable way to check for hGH and other performance boosters such as insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1).

In the past, enforcement has fallen upon a patchwork of groups, including sports federations that test before and during national and international competitions. Some would test for certain drugs, some for others.

The flaws in the system were seldom more evident than earlier this month af-

ter testing positive for steroids at the 1988 Seoul Games.

More recently, Manfred Ewald, 74, the former head of East German sports, was convicted in July of criminal charges in the systematic doping of athletes during the 1970s. Many female swimmers have alleged that their lives were ruined — that steroids left them with excessive body hair, deeper voices, and reproductive problems. Ewald received a suspended 22-month sentence.

Criticism of the IOC's anti-doping program intensified two years ago when

President Juan Antonio Samaranch told a Spanish newspaper that perhaps some drugs should be legalized. Though he backpedaled from that statement, Samaranch, who retires next year, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "The new president will try to solve the problem of doping."

Although doping taints many sports, IOC members believe the public holds them to a higher standard.

"In American football, they don't care how these guys get to be 300 pounds ... and they don't seem to care that Mark McGwire loads up with andro (a muscle-building supplement) and all of a sudden hits 70 home runs," said Dick Pound, an IOC vice president from Canada.

"They do care every time there's a positive test in the Olympics," Pound said. "The Olympics are different."

The doping issue boiled over with the investigation of Ewald and other East German officials and a 1998 scandal in the Tour de France.

After several cycling teams withdrew or were ousted from the tour for alleged use of EPO or other drugs, some governments — led by France — called upon the Olympic movement to lead a change. In February 1999, the IOC held a conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, then helped create and finance the World Anti-Doping Agency.

WADA was designed to operate independently, overseeing the various groups that police sports. Organizers hope to pool research money and coordinate testing.

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since ancient Greece, when athletes sought an edge by eating psychedelic mushrooms.

In the early 1900s, marathon runners swilled brandy and took strychnine. Later came caffeine and amphetamines. Then steroids.

Today, researchers say it is impossible to know how many cyclists, runners and swimmers are doping. Traditionally, tests have been performed only at competitions, so cheaters dope before and after. They take agents such as diuretics, which increase the production of urine, to mask the drugs in their systems.

Estimates of drug use among athletes range wildly, from 10 percent to 99 percent.

"Mind you, there are people who are very gifted and have morals and won't take drugs," said Don Catlin, head of a University of California, Los Angeles, laboratory that analyzes samples for the IOC and other sports organizations.

"But the grim reality is, there are a heck of a lot of drugs out there," Catlin said. "And they are very influential."

The current menu is tricky to detect, and it reads like alphabet soup.

Cheaters bulk up on human growth hormone (hGH) and boost their stamina with erythropoietin (EPO), both mod-

er 33-year-old swimmer Dara Torres won a spot on the U.S. Olympic team.

Torres, a three-time Olympian, had been out of competition for seven years. At the U.S. trials, which concluded two weeks ago in Indianapolis, she qualified for three individual events in Sydney as well as a relay.

FINA, the body that governs world swimming, has performed hundreds of out-of-competition tests this year. But Torres was not tested before the trials, even though her coach says she should have been to erase any suspicion that she is doping.

"If she's not being tested, I don't know who in the world is being tested," said Richard Quick, who is also coach of the U.S. women's team in Sydney. "She's completely outside the box. She's swimming faster than she ever has in her life."

He added: "I'm very confident that she's not cheating. I know she's not. But why would anyone else believe that?"

The Games always have been a flash point for this issue. But fewer than 60 Olympians have been caught since testing began in 1968. The best-known case involved Ben Johnson, the Canadian sprinter stripped of his gold medal and

Open bans dad after outburst

by Rachel Alexander
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NEW YORK — The father of 17-year-old Australian Jelena Dokic was banned from the U.S. Open grounds for the remainder of the tournament Wednesday after yet another abusive episode that left his daughter in tears and several bystanders transfixed in disbelief.

Damir Dokic, who was held by police at Wimbledon earlier this summer and arrested at a tournament in Birmingham, England, last year, will not even be allowed to buy a ticket to see Jelena play during the next two weeks. His photograph has been distributed to the security staff to prevent him from sneaking through the gates, and his credential as Jelena's coach has been revoked.

"Damir Dokic was removed from the grounds as a result of abusive behavior in the player lounge earlier today," tournament director Jay Snyder

said. "The WTA Tour was consulted and fully supports the decision."

WTA chairman Bart McGuire said he is still deciding whether the tour itself will take any action against Damir, although he does not expect to make a decision until after the U.S. Open ends. In the past, the tour has declined to officially reprimand or discipline Damir, a Serbian who emigrated to Australia in 1994. However, McGuire's hand may be forced after Wednesday's incident, which started over the price of a piece of salmon in the player dining area.

Upset with the \$10 charge for the fish, Damir called one of the cafeteria workers a "cow" and began ranting about the "fascist" tournament that was "taking money out of my pocket." As the scene turned uglier, U.S. Open head of security Pete Pistole and another official arrived to escort Damir from the grounds, pushing him backward as he continued to shout insults and curses.

Damir briefly walked out to the

parking lot with a shaken Jelena trailing after him, then bizarrely began hugging his daughter. He tried to re-enter the grounds once more and was finally led back into the parking lot by Pistole and a uniformed officer. Damir began shouting insults at a nearby WTA Tour official, then lifted Jelena's credential from around her neck and threw it into the path of a passing car.

Eventually, a transportation official coaxed Damir into a waiting van, where he had to be buckled into the front seat. Jelena, wiping tears from her eyes, sat in the back.

"To be honest, I feel sorry for her," Australian Mark Philippoussis said a few hours after the incident. "She's just so young. She should be enjoying herself. She's a great player; she's got a bright future ahead of her. It's a shame."

"When I played mixed doubles with her in Hopman Cup (last year,) she didn't look like a happy 16-year-old girl. She's not. She's not smiling out

there."

Damir is officially Jelena's coach, a position he took after firing Australian great Tony Roche earlier this year. At the time, Jelena said she thought Roche was an excellent coach, but that "we just thought we'd try it this way for a while." The decision is part of a larger pattern of isolation Damir has orchestrated for Jelena since she joined the tour — she will play for Australia in the Olympics this fall, for example, but will not stay in the athletes' village with her teammates.

Still, Jelena repeatedly defends Damir. After he made a similar scene at Wimbledon — Damir was held by police after he wrapped himself in an English flag, staggered around the grounds yelling obscenities and smashed a journalist's cellular phone — she said, "I've said this many times. I have a great relationship with my dad. Him going to tournaments with me, he's always been with me in tennis, a big influence. I like having him around. It doesn't bother me at all."

Jagr is once again the NHL's one to watch

by Larry Wigge
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It's a puzzle coaches and G.M.s have to solve nearly every night. There are about a dozen players in the NHL who can singlehandedly take over a game and beat you. If it's Pittsburgh, for instance, you have to pay particular attention to Jaromir Jagr. If it's St. Louis, Chris Pronger is the guy you have to take off his game. Buffalo? That's easy, it's Dominik Hasek.

Jagr, Pronger, and Hasek were the first three who came to mind. Colorado's Peter Forsberg, Anaheim's Paul Kariya, and

Florida's Pavel Bure were close behind. What can coaches do to stop these stars? They can't punt, that's for sure. Nor can they intentionally walk the big guy to avoid him. It's one-on-one in hockey.

"Jaromir Jagr is to the Penguins what Michael Jordan was to the Bulls," says Capitals G.M. George McPhee. "He's also the best player in the game at using his teammates and making the whole team better."

"I'd say Pronger belongs right up there at the top," Sharks G.M. Dean Lombardi says. "He is the equivalent of a Dominik Hasek for defensemen. He can completely control a game in all phases."

The most surprising result wasn't that Jagr was first on 29 of 33 ballots submit-

ted by TSN correspondents and staffers but, rather, that Eric Lindros appeared on only one ballot — and that was a fifth-place vote.

That skepticism, plus the big salary and compensation a team will have to pay to sign a player who has had six concussions in two years, makes Lindros a question mark for the first time in his eighth-year NHL career.

"We've all got the same questions about Eric," says Rangers G.M. Glen Sather. "If his head is into it, how many games can he play? And how well can he play in those games?"

Jagr, Pronger, and Forsberg were the consensus top three vote-getters in our poll. And Hasek, returning for his final

season after a subpar effort in 1999-2000, was the choice in goal.

But does having one of these elite players mean instant success? Think about it. Jagr failed to reach 100 points and his team came up short in the second round of the playoffs last season. Pronger's team bowed out in the first round after putting up the best record in the regular season. Forsberg missed nearly half of the season with injuries. Ditto The Dominator.

If NHL execs are correct and the two-referee system allows the stars to come out every night and not be neutralized by a minimum-salaried checker, then maybe, just maybe, we could be in for the most exciting season ever.