

Even Tigers can let poor judgment get the best of them

I would have been thrilled to be wrong, but during some of the last few "Sports Doctor" radio shows, I really felt it was too soon for Tiger Woods to come back.

I thought it was too soon

to play tournament golf eight weeks after "simple" arthroscopic knee surgery, the third surgery to the knee over the last few years. Golf isn't running and jumping, but it puts lots of twisting torque actions on the knees,

and there's all that walking.

Woods said he felt good, but he really hadn't tested the knee walking 18 holes three to four days in a row, up and down hills, in and out of sand traps, etc.

During the last few months, one of the topics I addressed in this column was playing in pain isn't smart and another addressed the question of how much is too much. In both cases I stressed the importance of "intelligent rest."

Trainers, doctors and therapists make decisions all the time as to when an athlete can return to competition and how much time off is needed. But there can be huge pressure to play and return too soon.

Even with millions of dollars' worth of sport medicine expertise around him, Woods and his team made the wrong choice, in

my opinion. Stress fractures and knee reconstruction are serious business. Now, with today's sports medicine, Woods has a great chance to return and dominate again, but this is a big deal because he might never be the same.

His mental toughness is legendary, and he really gutted it out. He was running on adrenaline, painkillers and 24-7 treatment. Woods in contention at the U.S. Open is worth millions to the network ratings and sponsors, as well as to Woods himself. I think he felt obligated to try, which was the wrong attitude. This championship and Torrey Pines' South Course, where he has great memories, overwhelmed good judgment. He sure is amazing, but he made a mistake.

Speaking of questionable practices, what's with the Olympic trials being held

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at the end of June when the games start in early August? I've always worried about American athletes either risking injury competing in the trials or peaking too soon and not being at their best in August. Even minor injuries are a real challenge when there are only six weeks or so before the Olympics. I'd like to see the trials backed up a few months, allowing more time to recover and recharge for the games.

For you young athletes who have finished your school or club seasons recently, make sure you get at least a few weeks, to

allow your body to recover. I know it's a tough sell, both for the athletes as well as their parents and coaches. But offseason and off-sport conditioning is important, as often it's the nagging overuse injuries that never get the time to heal and can hinder you in the long run.

I'm not talking about doing nothing, but rather stopping the training for your sport and working on different muscles.

Also, congratulations to patient and Sun Volleyball Player of the Year Jake Blackman, a Nequa Valley graduate. Good luck at Indiana!

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