



By: Steve Hosid
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Padraig Harrington had two non-malignant melanomas removed from around his right eye last month. "I had them looked at just before Christmas and had them cut out 10 days ago," said Harrington, who played this week in San Diego at the Buick Open. Last year's British and PGA champion, who had similar surgery in 2007, is in America for the next four weeks, but may then skip the CA World Championship at Doral in Miami in March. That would enable him to fully recharge his batteries before the final countdown to the Masters, where he will try to become only the third player in golf history to win three majors in a row.

"I'm unlikely to play Doral," he added. "I'm not fully committed at the moment, but it looks like I'll take a three-week break there and go home and work on things. Usually I peak in my third week, so I look to put the majors the third week. I'd love to play all the best tournaments but you've got to schedule these things for what works best to help you peak when you need to."

A couple of weeks ago I mentioned about the special exemption for Charlie Sifford at the Northern Trust Open, which will be played next week at Riviera. Well, they clarified it this week and the exemption will be named for Sifford, with the first recipient to be Vincent Johnson, a 22-year-old golfer with a total of three professional mini-tour events on his resume. The exemption, named after Sifford, the first African American to play on the PGA Tour and the winner of the Northern Trust Open, then the Los Angeles Open, in 1969, goes to a player who otherwise would not qualify for the tournament and who represents the advancement of diversity in golf. Johnson will get to see what life on the Big Tour is all about and you never know how far he can go after being given the chance to play. It's a great idea. Johnson won the PGA minority collegiate golf championship by 12 strokes in 2007.

Luke Donald, was sidelined for five months last year with a wrist injury, has bittersweet feelings in the build-up to this week's Buick Invitational. He suffered the injury eight months ago at Torrey during a round at the U.S. Open. "I have had some good finishes here so that was a very disappointing moment in my career when I injured my wrist in the U.S. Open," he said. "I have played well here and I guess, in a certain way, I feel like this course owes me something. We'll have to see how I play this week." Donald was the runner-up at Torrey Pines in 2004 and 2005. Is it possible the injury has some long range benefit for him? "I felt like my swing was slipping into some places that I didn't like in 2008. The injury gave me time to reflect upon what I needed to get my swing back to. I looked at a lot of videos with my coach and, when I was able to start hitting balls, I was able to start building my game up from the ground level."



Golfweek's Achenbach: 'Tiger chose PUREd clubs'

SST is extremely careful in releasing the names of players who play with PUREd clubs. Today I'm quoting columnist James Achenbach, who in his column in the Feb. 7 edition of *Golfweek*, says:

"Golfweek has learned through sources at Nike that Tiger Woods had his clubs checked and adjusted by SST. As revealed by Nike insiders, the company assembled a dozen sets of irons for Woods, with only two sets being PUREd. In blind testing, Woods picked those two PUREd sets as his primary set and backup set."

Several times last year I mentioned that the original equipment makers bring the players shafts to the SST PURE PGA Tour analysis lab that travels to the tournament sites. The shafts are PUREd using SST's patented and proprietary equipment to find the each shaft's most stable position before being assembled in the PUREd orientation in the club heads. I knew that because of this it was virtually certain that the world's No. 1 player has at least hit some PUREd clubs in practice but since I did not have any confirmation this was the case SST PURE requested I not name him in the newsletter.

So based on Achenbach's findings, Tiger Woods, the world's top-ranked player, hit a dozen set of irons and after evaluating them with his very precise method of extensive testing chose the only two sets of clubs that had been PUREd as his primary and back up sets. But now think about this. If only two of the sets were PUREd and he rejected 10 other sets that had not been PUREd, the difference he felt and noticed in performance must have been overwhelming.

In response to this information, a post on GolfWrx.com this weekend read: **"Would this qualify as one of the most significant unsolicited and unpaid linkages between a player and a product ever in the history of golf ... and at the same time provide more validation than any research study could ever provide?"**

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