

“I am Tiger Woods”

I remember the TV commercial with children from all walks of life boldly proclaiming, “I am Tiger Woods” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAnlcW_ILyw). On the surface, it was an advertisement for Nike, an effort to promote a brand and sell shoes. But it was much more. It was an inspiration. Here were these children, representing great cultural diversity – much like Tiger himself – voicing the dream with the confidence that they too not only could, but would, live it. And why not. For here was this athlete, a product of hard work, sacrifice and commitment doing what nobody thought was possible. He was a product of parents whose dedication to the dream overshadowed the fact that he came from a broken home. On the one hand, Tiger’s simplicity was something with which we could all relate. On the other hand, he wasn’t even human, he was an icon. He possessed gifts beyond the imagination. To say to ourselves, “I am Tiger Woods” uplifted the spirit if but for a moment until reality set back in.

The reality is that those words, “I am Tiger Woods” were never more true than they are today. That we are much more like the Tiger Woods we see today, than the image we saw and claimed two short years ago. We are broken and wounded; we face temptation and daily struggles; we have been, or perhaps need to be, humbled. And if we are honest, we would admit that at one time or another we have all embraced the same sense of entitlement that ultimately brings only false happiness.

There’s a reason that children were chosen for that commercial. With children, it’s believable. Because they believe. They can embrace a dream – be it flying to the moon or being the next Tiger Woods – and it becomes their reality. As adults, our reality is a bit different. When we embrace a dream, we see it as just that - a dream; a dream whose obstacles come more from the demons within than from outside. Yet it is in this struggle that our hope lies, that the possibility of the dream exists. For our dreams will not become reality *despite* our brokenness, they can become reality *because* of our brokenness. This is the process of recovery, the hope that “even the darkest night heralds the dawn of new day.”

We’ve heard a bit about recovery in these past days. Early in that process, we do best to name our affliction and claim it as our own, acknowledging our ultimate powerlessness over it. Where this will lead us, we cannot know. Yet we are beckoned onward, whether it is with fear because we know no other way or with faith because we believe it is truly the way, or perhaps a little bit of both.

If Tiger Woods could bring out the best in us, he can also bring out the worst in us. Lest I become too self-righteous, I am reminded of the scriptural maxim, “let he who is without sin, cast the first stone.” My hands now empty, I am left to ponder the meaning of it all. How could this happen? How does one seemingly on top of the world find his dream turned into a nightmare? Then I remember, “I am Tiger Woods.” I remember that he wasn’t an icon, he too was merely human.

Today, I will boldly proclaim, “I am Tiger Woods.” Will you?

- Michael DiPaolo, Ph.D.

February 21, 2010