

Tiger's image not helped by stage-managed apology

Yesterday, disgraced golfer Tiger Woods stood behind a podium in Florida and read a 14-minute statement with the phoney air of a politician. It looked all-too-familiar, argues [Jake Farrell](#)

Saturday 20 February 2010



Keith Allison, through Flickr Creative Commons

Sadly, intense discomfort makes for compelling television. It is usually the world of politics that presents us with the most morbidly fascinating instances of jaw-clenching, stomach-churning humiliation. Whether it is Bill Clinton steadfastly insisting that he “did not have sexual relations with that woman” or Richard Nixon tolling his own death knell whilst resigning the truth will out – and the cameras will be there to capture it.

Tiger Woods will testify to the veracity of the last assertion. Yesterday, he made a 14 minute statement to a room of forty people and millions more around the world. In this statement he admitted to being unfaithful to his wife, thus confirming what had been obvious to the public since Woods' encounter with a fire hydrant on Thanksgiving last November. Arguably, the world's greatest ever golfer reacted to the scandal strangely. His address was the first time that his voice had been heard, or even that he had been seen, since the incident and his absence breaks almost all of the rules of emergency PR. Usually rapid rebuttals are the norm as the embattled footballer/politician/golfer seeks to own up to their humiliation, to control the media maelstrom that they have conjured.

Woods' silence and ambiguous early statements gave rise to speculation and whispers of the most deplorable kind. His wife Elin was accused of actions that were at the very worst grievous bodily harm and at the very least domestic violence. Woods himself was said to have taken performance enhancing drugs, an accusation which now seems to be almost totally unfounded. Naturally he reacted angrily to these claims but as an observer I can't help but think that they are a product of his own decisions. It has taken far too long for him to set the record straight on an extremely difficult chapter in his life, leaving the wounds that he inflicted to become infected by the lies of celebrity magazines and the blogosphere. Had Woods made a detailed statement of any kind at the time then his indiscretions, although painful, would

have been confined to the realm of news and, therefore, hopefully fact.

It seems as though the issue was perception. Woods has carefully cultivated an image which made him so attractive to the legions of sponsors that have now turned their back on him. He was even criticised for it; people said he was too dull, too professional, too wholesome. It seems that Woods was ready to indulge in actions which would suggest his character is in fact to the contrary but not ready to deal with the consequences. In the aftermath of his very public meltdown, when a full and frank clarification of events was imperative to his family, Woods remained silent, not ready to countenance the idea that the public could be allowed to see him shaken.

Even yesterday, at his most brittle, his appearance was carefully stage managed and many have suggested that this was the first step on a carefully mapped road to rehabilitation for Woods. The overall impact of the statement will take longer to gauge but initial reaction seems frosty. I would have to agree with such early signs. Woods spoke in the smooth politicians dialect so carefully produced by monolithic PR companies. Just when his fans needed to see that he was a real man he produced a 14 minute long press release that, although candid in it's admissions, just gave the whole spectacle the air of a man simply reading someone else's words.

Whether Woods' will regain any semblance of the admiration formerly afforded to him is difficult to say. Despite the horror of it, this situation gave him to opportunity to prove that he was something other than which he is perceived to be. He could have showed himself as man in touch with the emotions that he has always seemed strangely aloof to and proved to people that he was just as feeling as they were. Instead he stood behind a podium, looking eerily like a politician, apologised and set out his vision for how the rest of his sordid tale would play out, appealing for privacy that he knows he will not be given. Perhaps now the media will move on and ignore Woods' turmoil until he returns. Perhaps he will be forgiven. Regardless of the final outcome he will always be tainted by a self-assured, steady persona that turned out to be as baseless as the lies he told his family.



3 comments

Johnny YUSU

20 Feb '10 at 2:24 pm

Excellent article as usual! The public will never view him in quite the same way. He will always have this attached to his name, but like all these things it will just get old and boring, and people won't care. That's the only reprieve Tiger can hope for.

In other news:

"It is usually the world of politics that presents us with the most morbidly fascinating instances of jaw-clenching, stomach-churning humiliation."

You obviously didn't catch Sam Lawson's performance at Derwent's Take Me Out last night...

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Robin

21 Feb '10 at 12:20 am

It would not make one bit of difference what Tiger said or when he said it. A large number of newspapers, magazines, websites, and TV shows are based on exploiting the private lives of celebrities and they want to make as much money off of that as possible.

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Rumour Fill

26 Feb '10 at 11:05 am

I love Tigers

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