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The Big Miss: My Years Coaching Tiger Woods



Synopsis

The *Big Miss* is Hank Haney's candid and surprisingly insightful account of his tumultuous six-year journey with Tiger Woods, during which the supremely gifted golfer collected six major championships and rewrote golf history. Hank was one of the very few people allowed behind the curtain. He was with Tiger 110 days a year, spoke to him over 200 days a year, and stayed at his home up to 30 days a year, observing him in nearly every circumstance: at tournaments; on the practice range; over meals, with his wife, Elin; and relaxing with friends. The relationship between the two men began in March 2004, when Hank received a call from Tiger in which the golf champion asked him to be his coach. It was a call that would change both men's lives. Tiger - only 28 at the time - was by then already an icon, judged by the sporting press as not only one of the best golfers ever, but possibly the best athlete ever. Already, he was among the world's highest paid celebrities. There was an air of mystery surrounding him, an aura of invincibility. Unique among athletes, Tiger seemed to be able to shrug off any level of pressure and find a way to win. But Tiger was always looking to improve, and he wanted Hank's help. What Hank soon came to appreciate was that Tiger was one of the most complicated individuals he'd ever met, let alone coached. Although Hank had worked with hundreds of elite golfers and was not easily impressed, there were days watching Tiger on the range when Hank couldn't believe what he was witnessing. On those days, it was impossible to imagine another human playing golf so perfectly. And yet Tiger is human - and Hank's expert eye was adept at spotting where Tiger's perfection ended and an opportunity for improvement existed. Always haunting Tiger was his fear of "the big miss" - the wildly inaccurate golf shot that can ruin an otherwise solid round - and it was because that type of blunder was sometimes part of Tiger's game that Hank carefully redesigned his swing mechanics. Hank's most formidable coaching challenge, though, would be solving the riddle of Tiger's personality. Wary of the emotional distractions that might diminish his game and put him further from his goals, Tiger had developed a variety of tactics to keep people from getting too close, and not even Hank - or Tiger's family and friends, for that matter - was spared "the treatment". Toward the end of Tiger's and Hank's time together, the champion's laser-like focus began to blur, and he became less willing to put in punishing hours practicing - a disappointment to Hank, who saw in Tiger's behavior signs that his pupil had developed a conflicted relationship with the game. Hints that Tiger hungered to reinvent himself were present in his bizarre infatuation with elite military training, and - in a development Hank didn't see coming - in the scandal that would make headlines in late 2009. It all added up to a big miss that Hank, try as he might, couldn't save Tiger from. There's never been a book about Tiger Woods that is as intimate and revealing - or one so wise about what it takes to coach a superstar athlete.

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Customer Reviews

To say this book was eye opening is to make a big understatement. I have followed Tiger's career from his junior days, and have marveled along with the rest of the world at his accomplishments and at the amazing style in which he accomplishes them. But, as a former collegiate player, and once upon a time low handicapper, there were many things about Tiger's game that greatly puzzled me, as I thought I could see rather obvious flaws in his game that even lesser lights, let alone the Nicklauses, Hogans and Palmers didn't have. The most obvious one, the one that everyone now knows about, is the incredible amount of head movement in his driver swings that has robbed him of any chance for superior performance off the tee. Well, this book explains at least some of the reasons why Tiger has allowed this and other flaws into his game over time. Even more stunning to me was his fixation with becoming a Navy Seal, and how his Seal training has likely been the source of his severe physical problems. Think about it: Tiger is far from the only long hitter to play the game. Weiskopf, Nicklaus, Norman, Bubba, J.B., Dustin Johnson, etc etc. I cannot think of one other long hitter in golf history who has had such severe injuries at such a young age as Tiger, so I am now of the opinion it is more likely his Seal training that has devastated his body, not his powerful golf swing, as we have been led to believe. There are many, many inside facts that Haney has access to due to his long, intimate association w/ Tiger, and even though the book bogs down at times with self-serving prose and some gratuitous, voyeuristic details of Tiger's life, I have a much fuller insight into why Tiger does what he does. Haney spent countless hundreds of hours w/ Tiger,

not only coaching him, but simply living at his house, hanging with him and his family. As such, he has a vast experience with Tiger, and has insights that very few can have. Not all will be interested in some of the 'tech talk' about the golf swing, but more accomplished players will appreciate this part of the book. The sad thing is, perhaps, that had Tiger stayed the course, both maritally and in focusing on his golf, he probably would have surpassed Nicklaus long ago for most majors. His talent (and drive for many years) is so prodigious that it is hard to see anyone else among current stars (other than Rory, possibly) coming close to his career accomplishments, but I still feel that in many ways Tiger's life has elements of tragedy (broken marriage, broken body, continued struggles w/ sex addiction.) I wouldn't say this book is must reading even for Wood's biggest fans, but if you want at least part of the picture of why Tiger's life has taken the turns it has, this book is probably the best source that there is.

I'm sure the zillions of Tiger fanatics are horrified by this Book but they are horrified too often anyway. This book was just plain wonderful as far as I am concerned. It was, I believe, an extremely fair tutorial about the eccentricities that collectively are the essence of Tiger Woods. It pretty much explains and makes sense of the man who clearly is the greatest golfer and one of the greatest athlete of my lifetime and helps me understand why he is such a kook and even more importantly why someone as blessed as he is feels justified being such a total jerk. With the credibility only a select few have earned, Hank Haney adds in some pretty useful stuff on the game of golf which I found to be a nice bonus. Hank never promised this to be a golf improvement book but it really is. Mostly it is a fun book loaded with "aw-ha moments." I certainly feel like I understand the complexity and the greatness of Tiger and to my own amazement I find I like him far more than before reading this little book. Any golfer who has ever followed PGA golf and its strange cast of characters, will love this book. Well done Hank

Great book, very entertaining and revealing, about coaching one of golf's greatest stars. Hank Haney, the author, had to have the skill, temperament, and the ego to teach someone like Tiger. The stakes are off the scale because if your guy wins on Sunday, you share the victory, if your guy falters, you get the blame. If your guy has sex a problem and his world is on the verge of collapsing, who do you blame? This is a very complicated book and reveals more about the central figures than just making putts and hitting the ball off the tee. In the end I am glad I read it and would recommend it.

I read news stories featuring several of the "juicy tidbits" excerpted from "The Big Miss" before I actually read the book, which was basically like watching a movie trailer that has all the good lines. Except the juicy stuff is not at all what the book is...I feel that the stories that dwelt on the very few "gossipy" items did Hank Haney a huge disservice. In the end, the book is a fascinating character study of the most famous golfer of all time, who happens to be a man impossible to know, much less understand. But Hank Haney tried. And tried and tried. Because the book is written by a man who has his own strong point of view and belief system, it was fascinating to read about the interaction between the two. There was no student and master ... there was only a certain understanding that Hank would be what Tiger wanted him to be. I felt that the book was as revealing about Haney himself, as much as it was about Tiger. While the technical golf talk crossed my eyes now and then, I still found the story intriguing. There was a bit of a sense that Hank laid it all out there preemptively, so there would be no questions as to how things happened (from his POV) - but Haney does not strike me at all as a person out for retaliation or revenge. I came away feeling that Hank Haney truly cares about Tiger Woods as a person - and miraculously, (because I'm not a Tiger fan), he made me care more, too. I came away hoping that Tiger will truly find what he's looking for, both off the course and on.

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