

# Eldrick Tont Woods

by JUSTIN BROWN

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“He was just too good to be true,” was my first thought after hearing of Eldrick’s “transgressions.” Eldrick Tont Woods was a man, an athlete, who was so campaigned and endorsed as the consistent front-runner and face of an entire sport for the past 15 years. He has taken the game of golf and its profits to new heights, breaking - not just crossing - barriers of age and race along the way. The similarities between athletes and celebs are in such abundance that the two are synonymous. The money, the fame, and the star power are shared attributes between the two groups. This goes along with the obsession of the image these athletes and entertainers portray. Image is everything when it comes to the likeability and marketability of a professional athlete. Pro athletes like Tiger Woods, Peyton Manning and Derek Jeter are among the most recognizable faces in the world, let alone the sports community.

Unfortunately, professional athletes also inherit dark side of the business comes with it. Unwanted publicity and exposure of private lives haunt athletes and entertainers everywhere they go. Christopher “Biggie Smalls” Wallace said it best when he exclaimed that more money brings more problems. I’m certain that after being named the first professional athlete to be a billionaire this past summer, as reported by Forbes.com, Eldrick Tont Woods couldn’t agree more with that statement.

Woods’ image is and always has been controversial within the African-American community. After self-proclaiming himself a “Cabinasian” [Caucasian, Black, American-Indian and Asian] in 1997, Eldrick woods never really connected with the African-American community despite his history making, barrier breaking appearance at the Masters in Augusta Georgia. Conversely, the African-American community was never able to fully embrace Woods either. Eldrick was always quick to words in order to defend his Cabinasian ancestry, and while not totally denying his blackness, he never fully embraced it. A black man is dominating a sport where the main participants are white. That’s the initial perception of Eldrick Tont Woods. Woods, however, made it clear that his African-American ancestry is only part of who he is.

The alienation that Eldrick Woods is experiencing from the African-American community goes hand in hand with the sport that alienates African-Americans all together. Golf is an elitist sport. From youth, it takes time and money, the latter of which is a deficiency in the black community, to invest in training and lessons. That economic barrier lends itself to a disadvantage for young African-Americans wanting to get involved. Unlike Michael Jordan and basketball, young children who look up to Eldrick cannot just run outside and play golf. It just doesn’t happen that way. Not that this is any fault of Woods, but his nonchalant attitude towards racial relations in golf do not offer any assistance in the furthering of participation in golf for young blacks.

What’s alarming is Eldrick’s persistence to remain passive in racial relations in golf even when he’s in the center of it. “Lynch him in the back alley.” Remember those words spoken of as the only way to stop Eldrick on the golf course. Golf is a seemingly impenetrable bubble in which African-Americans aren’t readily embraced. The golf community that thrives off of the very existence of Eldrick Tont Woods suggests that lynching him is even an option. Eldrick just took his big expensive broom and big ol’ smile and swept that right under the rug, ignoring the tension that exists between part of his own ancestry and the very sport by which he makes his living.

Eldrick is identified as black in an arena where blacks don’t really exist. Yet, Woods downplays the issues surrounding his blackness when they do arise.

In the same way, Woods may be distancing himself from the female community. Infidelity is a constant theme among upper tier professional athletes, and often costs them sponsorships, their families, and sometimes may even cost them their freedom in alleged rape cases. Just ask Kobe Bryant, something like this will not be easy to come back from. With sponsors pulling out left and right, Eldrick Woods will certainly have his work cut out for him upon his return to golf. With women being the most active influential consumers in this society, Woods will have to reshape and rebuild his image. No corporation will associate itself with an appeared womanizing infidel.

The infidelity and family issues of Eldrick Tont Woods will ignite discussion on the topic of the impact of his legacy and career. Eldrick’s racial identification as Cabinasian will forever be a topic of much controversy, considering the racially oriented tension during his career. Woods’ image will forever be tainted by his personal issues off the golf course, issues that are magnified in the African-American community from which he has essentially alienated himself. Still, his accomplishments as a golfer regardless of his racial ancestry are outstanding.