

Citing Sources

On average, 2.2 million fewer people watched golf events in 2008 and early 2009 before Tiger returned to the tour. Nielsen ratings dropped by nearly 50 percent overall, from a 3.3 share of total audience to 1.7. Barely one million people tuned into the third round of the BMW Championship, a 65 percent drop compared to the previous year's event that Woods had played. Ratings dropped 61 percent for the final round. Even golf's major championships suffered, none worse than the PGA Championship played two months after Woods' epic U.S. Open victory. Fewer than 1.3 million watched the third round, a 78 percent decrease from the previous year's event won by Woods. The final round's ratings decreased by 57.6 percent from the year before, a drop of more than five million viewers ("Tiger's Return"). That made it the least-watched major in thirty-six years, just two months after the U.S. Open's colossal ratings (Shaw). If anything, these numbers prove Tiger's affect on golf viewership.

Generally, Tiger's presence in a golf event is worth a full ratings point, which equates to 1 percent of the nation's TV audience. In September 2010, for example, a ratings point translated to 1,159,000 households. NBC estimates that ratings increase by 56 percent when Tiger is playing, even more when he is contending (Hosford). CBS found that ratings increased by 171 percent for events where Tiger finished in the top five, compared to those he did not enter or never truly contended (Fitzpatrick). As most TV executives realized, there were three types of PGA golf events – those where Woods is entered, is not entered, and is in contention in the final rounds. The ratings for each increase significantly. The ratings for the end of the 2008 season reveal Woods could affect ratings as much as 1.6 points.

"There's no question that Tiger dominates our PGA Tour coverage," said Golf Channel president Page Thompson. "He's a once-in-a-lifetime talent. The ratings indicate people want to watch him, and it's a privilege for us to cover Tiger and devote as much attention to him as we do. ... When Tiger's in the field, he is the story" (qtd. in Rubenstein).