

# TIGER, TIGER BURNING BRIGHT WITH A SHOW OF TRUE GUTS AND GLORY

COCKY OR NOT, HIS PRESIDENTS CUP DISPLAY IS A LESSON IN TRUE ABILITY

Former Singapore boxing champion Cyril Jeeris, a stylish pugilist of the Seventies, had a telling, impactful quote.

It read: "I have never smelt the canvas".

In simple terms, it means that he has never been knocked down in a boxing contest.

Jeeris, who for almost a decade was the undefeated featherweight/lightweight champion in Singapore, also boasted several regional belts, occasionally even outclassing Thai boxers who were known to rule the ring in that period.

But the question is: "Was his declaration a boastful expression"?

It can be. However, boasts and arrogance are not new to champions.

Those sentiments can also can provide a means to instil confidence, shoring and lifting one up to a point of feeling all-round superiority.

And in opponents, it can inject a fear factor that could send your tactics and techniques awry, leaving you in a state of submission.

I know of many sportsmen who use such arrogance to cow opponents.

Having watched former great American sprinter Carl Lewis several times, I have always admired the world and Olympic champion's ability to bring down rivals even before a race with his aura of authority.

## SUPREME CONFIDENCE

So often, while his opponents frowned, fretted and fussed as they warmed up for their races, the indomitable Lewis was seen to take a nonchalant attitude by showing that the race is all about who is to come second best.

His gait and glance offer supreme confidence, and there were occa-



**Tiger brings the Roar back to golf with his Presidents Cup showing.**

sions when the multi-event master (100m, 200m, relay and long jump) would switch from the jumps to running within minutes as though the eventuality for all his races had already been determined.

Another sportsman as assured and assertive as Lewis is boxer Floyd Mayweather. His body language is enough to bring down opponents, a good reason why he is retiring undefeated.

His famous quote, before a clash with Puerto Rican Miguel Cotto: "I don't feel that no fighter has the mental and physical agility to match Floyd Mayweather. Cotto is a talented fighter, but I'm God-gifted. Some pay to see me win, some pay to see me lose, but they all pay."

I have always been fascinated with Swedish footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who once used to

play for my favourite team, Manchester United.

He was a magician with his feet, a master at headers. Seldom known to be a team man, the highly-skilled footballer frustrates teammates as well as opponents with his antics and selfish ways.

The genius who hailed from the slums of Malmo once said this: "I can't help but laugh at how perfect I am. A World Cup without me is nothing to watch."

And when asked what he was getting his wife for his birthday, he replied: "Nothing. She already has Zlatan", a peacock statement followed by: "When you buy me, you are buying a Ferrari."

These thoughts flashed my mind when I replayed what American megastar golfer Tiger Woods said before the recent Presidents Cup between the United States and the International Team in Melbourne.

Like any champion Woods has also displayed arrogance and cockiness. On two occasions, I had been disappointed with his behaviour but I will always consider him to be the greatest golfer of our time, purely for his immense talent and supreme mental strength.

At St Andrews, the home of golf in Scotland where the British Open was being played some 12 years ago, I saw him turn away a pack of juniors who had lined up for hours just to get his signature. To be fair, he had a bad round that day.

One another occasion 15 years ago in a Tokyo event named after him, "The Tiger Woods Invitational", surprisingly he did not stay for the prize presentation on the last day and flew back to the US, leaving his buddy Mark O'Meara to take over the proceedings.

But at the recent Presidents Cup, I saw a side of Tiger, in sheer humility displaying a sportsmanship that should be an example to all sporting heroes and would-be role models.

Woods, who claimed his 15th Major title at the Masters in April and won his 82nd US PGA Tour title at the Zozo Championship in Japan later, named himself among

four captain's picks for the 12-man team.

Then he said: "As captain, I'm going to choose Tiger Woods as the last player on the team. He's made nine Cups and he's played in Australia twice in the Presidents Cup, so this will be his third appearance as a player. And I find it interesting talking in the third person."

He was the first playing captain in the Presidents Cup since American Hale Irwin in the inaugural edition in 1994, then amplified his distinction with a fabulous showing at the event, both as captain and player.

## LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

He was the only player to go undefeated, winning twice with Justin Thomas and then beating Abraham Ancer in the singles after having pulled himself out of Saturday's play because of concerns about his physical condition after a series of injuries.

With the US team trailing for the first time in 16 years, Woods showed his leadership qualities when he went out in the first of 12 singles on Sunday to win his 27th match in the series and set the stage for a brilliant American comeback.

Matt Kuchar, a key member of the US team, said: It was really cool being part of this team and having Tiger as captain. We had a roomful of some of the greatest golfers in the world, and when he speaks, we listen.

"I think all of us will look back and have these pictures hanging on our walls and say 'We played for and alongside Tiger Woods, the greatest player ever. It was awesome'."

In fact, with the Presidents Cup showing, Woods, who has had a mammoth following throughout the world despite his transgressions and setbacks, has won over more fans, even the many detractors.

Because what he did in Melbourne was to push the popular ratings for golf with his impeccable display.

And he underlined what he once said: "I want to be what I've always wanted to be: dominant."

Photo: AP

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