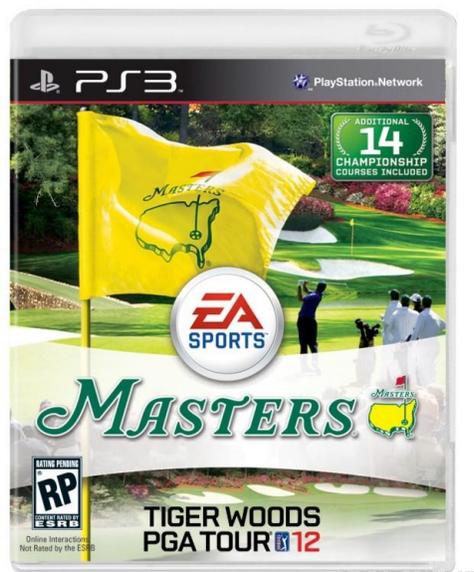


A Winthrop & Weinstine blog dedicated to bridging the gap between legal & marketing types.

[Master Blaster!](#)

Posted on January 13, 2011 by [Brent Lorentz](#)



It was [recently announced](#) that Augusta National (home to golf's famous [Masters](#) tournament) would be featured in the latest installment of the Tiger Woods video game. For those of you unfamiliar with the franchise, it has sold millions of games over the past dozen years. Some of the keys to success, in my opinion, are that the game allows you to use “real” equipment and play real courses scattered throughout the country. (I previously blogged about the game [here](#).)

Notwithstanding the success of the Tiger Woods franchise, Augusta National had previously refused to allow inclusion of their course in the game. I'm not sure of the exact reason, but I'm imagining there was concern that it might cheapen the Augusta brand. The absence of this course was a frustration to me personally, and I'm sure to other golf fans as well. (Augusta National is kind of a “[bucket list](#)” course for avid golfers and video game players).



Now, after a dozen years of holding out, Augusta has finally decided to jump on board. While I think the addition of Augusta National is an outstanding development for the video game, I have to question Augusta's decision making process. During all the years that Augusta refused to sign on, Tiger Woods was perhaps one of the most popular, uncontroversial figures in sports. He always said the right things and had an untarnished image. Basically, he was everything to which you'd want to attach your brand. That obviously all changed with his very recent and very public infidelity. Even Augusta's Chairman [blasted Woods](#) less than a year ago before the 2010 Masters:

But as he now says himself, he forgot in the process to remember that with fame and fortune comes responsibility, not invisibility. It is not simply the degree of his conduct that is so egregious here; it is the fact that he disappointed all of us, and more importantly, our kids and our grandkids. Our hero did not live up to the expectations of the role model we saw for our children.

If you're Augusta National, why in the world would you choose now to join forces with perhaps the most famous villain in sports. It doesn't make sense from a branding perspective. [The game's developer even took Woods's image off the cover!](#)

Perhaps it shouldn't be that surprising. Augusta National is, after all, no stranger to controversy. In 2002, there was a very public conversation about the fact that [Augusta has no women members](#). As of 2010, no woman has yet been admitted. Additionally, the club [didn't have an African-American member until 1990](#). However, regardless of past controversies, why would you make the decision to stand front and center with Woods in this current environment. I just don't get it.

