

Woods will play until he can 'no longer win'



● GETTY IMAGES

BBC – Tiger Woods has said he will continue to play for as long as he thinks he can still win as he prepares to return to professional golf.

Woods will play in the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas having not played since injury forced him to withdraw from the Masters in April.

The 15-time major winner then had fusion surgery on a bone in his ankle.

"There will come a time when I can no longer win. When that time comes, I will walk away," Woods said.

"I love to compete. I love the camaraderie, being around the guys."

The 47-year-old American said earlier this month he had "zero issues" with his surgically repaired right ankle, which was done to address post-traumatic arthritis following the 2021 car crash that sidelined him for nearly 14 months. However, he indicated that other injury problems remain.

"The only way to fix that was to replace it or have it fused," Woods said of his ankle. "The next part is the hard part. The six months of doing nothing. The first couple months were really rough - I'm here on the good side now."

The five-time Masters champion has struggled to walk 18 holes since but, after he was seen caddying for his son Charlie at the Notah Begay III Junior Golf National Championship earlier this month, he has decided the time is right to return to action.

"I was hitting golf balls a lot trying to get Charlie ready for the event. Then, post-event, I thought, 'I can probably do this,'" Woods said.

"I've played a lot of holes. I haven't used a pencil and a scorecard."

"My game feels rusty. I haven't played in a while. I'm excited to compete and play. I'm just as curious as all of you are to see what happens."

"I can tell you this, I don't have any of the pain I had in Augusta in my ankle. Other parts are taking the brunt of the load. But that surgery was a success."

The tournament, a 20-player invitational event which will also include Justin Rose, Scottie Scheffler, Matt Fitzpatrick and Viktor Hovland, begins on Thursday in Albany, The Bahamas.

Woods said he hopes to play one tournament per month in 2024 and that this event will help to determine his schedule for next season.

'Lack of experience' cost Nassaji in ACL debut, Rahmati says

Sports Desk

Nassaji Mazandaran head coach Seyyed Mahdi Rahmati said the "lack of experience" in the AFC Champions League kept the Iranian top-flight side from progressing to the knockout phase of the competition.

Nassaji walked away with a 2-0 victory over Indian club Mumbai city at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Tuesday – in what was a dead-rubber in Group D, with Saudi giant Al Hilal and Uzbekistan's Navbahor having already secured a top-two finish in the table with one game to spare.

Mohammadreza Azadi bagged his fourth goal in the group stage, firing home from a tight angle in the 14th minute, before center-back Halen Nongtdu's back pass to the keeper found the back of his own net on the half-hour mark in a repeat of the result in September's reverse fixture.

The northern Iranian club had to finish the game with 10 men after Amir-Mahdi Janmaleki received his marching orders for a reckless challenge midway through the second half.

"We've played five games in the group and went down to 10 men in three of them. Every red card has a two-match suspension, which cost us dearly," Rahmati said after the game, adding: "What my team needed in this competition was the experience.

We deeply suffered from the players' naivety as we didn't get the results we wanted."

Nassaji's Amirmohammad Houshmand was sent off in the first half of the 3-0 home defeat against Al Hilal, though Rahmati said Saber Hardani's 52nd-minute dismissal – for two bookable offences – in the 2-1 defeat at Navbahor on Matchday Three proved even more costly for his side.

"I truly believed in myself and my team as being capable to qualify from the group, but our descent started in the first game against Navbahor. We were in front when we lost two players to injuries and then had one red-carded. The team had to play with 10 men for nearly 50 minutes in the vociferous atmosphere [of the Markazi Stadium]," said Rahmati, whose team was left heartbroken by Mehrdad Abdi's own goal deep into stoppage time against the Uzbek club in October.

"We would have had a chance to progress if we had left the pitch with a point against Navbahor, but the defeat increased pressure on us. We have a short-handed squad and were involved in hectic schedule [in recent months]," added the Iranian.

"I still believe six points so far has been quite an achievement for our young team."

Nassaji, second from bottom in the Iranian league table, will finish its debut campaign at the Asian elite clubs' competition with a visit to Riyadh to take on Al Hilal on Monday.

Brazilian Malcom and Saudi international Salem Al-Dawsari found the net late in the second half to steer Al Hilal to a 2-0 win at Navbahor on Tuesday, helping the four-time champion move three points clear on top of the group standing.

Navbahor – on 10 points – remains in pole position to book a last-16 berth as one of the three best runners-up across the five West Zone groups.



● MOHAMMADREZA ALIMADADI/IRNA

'Group of death' delivers as PSG, Newcastle and Milan all stay in hunt

REUTERS – When the Champions League draw was made Group F always looked like being too close to call and it will duly go right down to the wire with French aristocrats Paris St Germain still in control of their destiny, but only just.

Manager Luis Enrique was breathing a massive sigh of relief on Tuesday as Kylian Mbappe struck home a penalty in the eighth minute of stoppage time to earn a 1-1 draw at home to Newcastle United who had been on the brink of a memorable double.

The visitors were desperately defending the lead given to them by Swedish striker Alexander Isak midway through the first half but suffered heartbreak when Tino Livramento was harshly-adjudged to have handled as an Ousmane Dembele pass bounced off his chest and against his elbow.

Mbappe netted from the spot to earn a point which left PSG in second spot with seven points, three behind already-qualified Borussia Dortmund who they face in their final group match.

PSG, who have reached the last-16 at least for the last 11 seasons, know that only a win in Dortmund will guarantee a last-16 place,



● Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring PSG's equalizer against Newcastle United in Parc des Princes, Paris, France, on November 28, 2023.
● STEPHANE MAHE/REUTERS

but such is the complexity of a high-octane group they could also lose and still progress.

Newcastle must beat seven-time European champions Milan in their last game and hope PSG do not win if they are to grab second spot, while Milan

could also still reach the last-16 with a victory at St James' Park.

"The most important thing is to focus on ourselves. If we win, we're going to finish first, but even if we lose, we can go through to the next phase," Luis Enrique, whose side lost

4-1 away to Newcastle, said. "It's so complicated, but I hope we can make it easier by winning against Dortmund."

His side had 31 goal attempts against Newcastle on Tuesday but contrived to miss chances galore. "I think we deserved to win,

we created a lot of clear chances and, at times, it was difficult to get the ball in," the Spaniard said. Newcastle were crestfallen as they trudged off the Parc des Princes pitch with a burning sense of injustice. They have a long injury

list and were out on their feet but had heroes all over the pitch including keeper Nick Pope and 17-year-old midfielder Lewis Miley, the third-youngest English player to start in the Champions League and the unlucky left back Livramento, another young Englishman with a bright future.

Manager Eddie Howe was admirably restrained about the penalty awarded by referee Szymon Marciniak after VAR instructed him to view a pitchside monitor, more so than former Newcastle striker Alan Shearer who described the decision as disgusting.

"I thought the referee was having a good game up until this moment. He had been strong," Howe said. But he was not too downhearted and said Newcastle will go into the home clash against Milan with high hopes of reaching the last 16 on their long-awaited return to the competition.

"We're still in it. That's another thing we can't forget. We could easily have come here and have not been in the competition anymore," he said. "We still believe. As much as it's a huge, deflating feeling – it could be another story in our season."