“Tigers” – Our Champion Housekeepers

During the coming week, Outrigger and OHANA will celebrate National Housekeepers Week with a series of luncheons and festivities throughout our Hawaii hotel properties. We will proudly honor our Housekeeping staff and recognize them for everything they do to keep our rooms and public areas clean and orderly.

In my book, our Housekeepers are the champions of the hospitality industry. They do a magnificent job quietly and effectively. Few people really appreciate the magnitude of their task and the fact that they must perform their duties flawlessly, around the clock, every day of the week, throughout the year, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s, and the Fourth of July. In fact, those are often some of the busiest and most demanding days of a Housekeeper’s year.

Most of the readers of Saturday Briefing are aware that I have a special place in my heart for the Housekeeping staff. They probably also know that during National Housekeepers Week, I often seek a metaphor to help convey my feelings about the unique role that Housekeepers play in the success of our hotel operations. Six years ago, I compared them to golf champion Tiger Woods. Tiger, like our Housekeepers, was performing flawlessly day after day under all sorts of conditions.

Since then, more than any other athlete, Tiger Woods has continued to be tops in his profession. Our Outrigger/OHANA Housekeepers have matched that record. Both are “enduring champions” who are unyielding in their search for consistent peak performance.

Let’s take a look at Tiger Woods, the athlete and the person. What are the qualities that make him a champion? How are they similar to the traits I find in the members of Outrigger and OHANA’s Housekeeping team?

Tiger Woods and our Housekeepers all have:

- A dedicated work ethic
- Top skills
- A willingness to help others
- Honesty and integrity
- A sense of humor

Let’s examine those attributes:

- Housekeepers have dedicated work ethics that drive them to accomplish their goals. Tiger’s life is no walk in the park. He is constantly training, whether on the practice green or in the weight room, building his strength to hit a ball 300 yards down the fairway. As a result, he has won 79 golf tournaments since turning pro 11 years ago.

He knows that if he lets up, even for a minute, the competition is ready to take his place, as happened at last week’s Deutsche Bank Championship in Boston, Massachusetts. A couple of missed putts let Phil Mickelson finish in first place, two strokes ahead of Tiger Woods. That’s a rare occurrence, and Tiger will be back on the course with the same determination again next week.

That sounds a lot like the hotel business. The challenges are never-ending. You must constantly be on the alert and can never relax. It seems as if each day brings a new set of problems to be faced and overcome. If we are less than perfect, there is plenty of competition ready to take advantage of the situation.

The Housekeeping department is the central core of any hotel, and like Tiger, our Housekeepers can never relax. They must be willing to work hard. They must also have considerable strength and stamina to tackle 16 rooms a day and make them look spic and span before the arrival of the next guest.
• Tiger Woods has an unbelievable amount of skill, and our Housekeepers have their own set of extraordinary skills as well. If anyone doubts this, I challenge him or her to put on a Housekeeper’s uniform, organize a Housekeeping cart, go to the floors, and make-up rooms for a day. Unless you are in top shape, efficient, and highly skilled, you will not get past lunch, let alone make it through the day.

• Tiger Woods is also an extraordinary human being who has demonstrated compassion and a willingness to help others. Through the Tiger Woods Foundation, he is very generous with his time, talent, and treasures. Every year, he conducts countless junior golf clinics in an effort to teach kids invaluable lessons, which can be applied not only to the game of golf, but to every aspect of life. The new Tiger Woods Learning Center, through an after-school curriculum, is providing young people the tools to achieve long-term success.

I see those same traits of generosity in our Housekeepers. At the annual Visitor Industry Charity Walk, I always notice hundreds of our Housekeepers leading the pack and walking the extra mile to help Hawaii’s charity organizations. As I write this article, a number of Housekeepers are preparing to volunteer their time and talent to decorate the Outrigger/OHANA stage at Waikiki’s spectacular Ho’olaule’a. Many Housekeepers are also active in local community organizations, providing personal assistance to many in need.

• We expect the highest degree of honesty and integrity in a person in the spotlight like Tiger Woods. Likewise, we hold Housekeepers to an equally high standard. Every day, Outrigger and OHANA’s guests leave their rooms, valuables, and personal effects in the care of our Housekeepers. In my half century in the hotel business, I have rarely seen that trust violated.

• Finally, let’s talk about humor. While Tiger Woods is dead serious on the golf course, I have seen a humorous side as well. In fact, he tells young people, “Do your best. Play fairly. Embrace every activity with integrity, honesty, and discipline. Be responsible for your actions. And above all, have fun.”

I like to visit the Outrigger and OHANA Housekeeping departments because I always find laughter and humor there. On the golf course, and especially in the hotel business, things often do not go as planned. Arrivals and departures vary from forecasts. Sometimes the laundry delivers stained towels (or does not deliver at all). Sometimes the plumbing stops up just before the end of a shift.

Whenever something like this happens, our Housekeepers, like true leaders, approach the situation with patience and a large dose of humor. They know that no one lasts long in the hotel industry without the ability to look at the bright and funny side of whatever comes their way.

So when I think of Tiger Woods and our Housekeepers, I see champions with remarkably similar traits and characteristics. But when it comes to our Housekeepers, I do not need a scorecard. No matter how you add it up, on my leader board, the Outrigger and OHANA Housekeepers are always in First Place.