Woods' apology 'genuine'

Local developer gives hug, support for golfer designing Cliffs course

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Tiger Woods and Jim Anthony came together again Friday, but this time it was under far different circumstances than either man would have wanted or anticipated.

The bear hug Woods gave Anthony before the golfer publicly apologized for his infidelity needed no explanation. It was one friend reaching out to another in a time of need.

He "really thanked me for our community support and thanked me for our friendship," said Anthony, the developer of The Cliffs country-club communities in the Upstate and western North Carolina. "I just sensed overwhelming gratitude for our support."

Anthony and his wife had flown to Florida, where Woods, without revealing details about his extramarital affairs, took responsibility and told a global audience that he's not sure when he will play golf again.

"I was unfaithful. I had affairs. I cheated. What I did was not acceptable," Woods said.

It was a far different setting than in 2007, when Woods and Anthony sat side by side in Travelers Rest and announced triumphantly that they had reached an agreement for Woods to design his first U.S. the golf course at Anthony's resort community, the 3,000-acre Cliffs at High Carolina, east of Asheville.

On Friday, Anthony offered Woods encouragement.

"I just told him we're his friends and that we continue to support him and are looking forward to High Carolina being one of the desirable places to live in the world," Anthony

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SAM GREENWOOD / The AP

Tiger Woods apologizes to his fans.

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Woods steps up and says all the right things.
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said.

From Woods, "I sensed remorse, and I also sensed just a commitment," Anthony said. "He understands he's let a lot of folks down — and just a commitment to work hard to make amends. You can't fake that."

"I thought he was very genuine," Anthony said.

He was among about 40 people inside a room at the clubhouse at the TPC Sawgrass, home of the PGA Tour, when Woods spoke. The group included Woods' mother, but not his wife.

Woods, dressed in a suit with an open-collared dress shirt, spoke from behind a podium backed by a blue curtain.

"I am also aware of the pain my behavior has caused to those of you in this room," Woods said. "I have let you down, and I have let down my fans."

He also said he realized "my behavior has caused considerable worry to my business partners."

Woods and Anthony have become friends despite very different backgrounds.

Woods, 34, is a California native and attended Stanford University, while Anthony, 66, is the son of a factory worker who never went to college. At age 19, a year after finishing Dacusville High School, Anthony went to work as a lineman for what was then Southern Bell.

He became the visionary developer who created an empire of luxury Cliffs developments in South Carolina and North Carolina.

The course at High Carolina is under construction, and Anthony has refused to discuss details of his agreement with Woods, including how much the golfer will be paid for his work.

But in 2007, recounting the negotiations that would ultimately define Woods' role, Anthony said he was impressed with the pro golfer's resolve, and that Woods and his team prepared for business negotiations the same way he approached the sport.

Asked if he had a guaranteed number of appearances from Woods, Anthony said, "We have appearances, yes."

Woods told reporters that he was comfortable working with Anthony.

"Certain people you just feel at ease around," Woods said, "and Jim is that."

Anthony told *The News* this week that the turmoil in financial markets has taken its toll and forced him to pursue an alternative financing strategy to steer through the crisis without failing like many other golf developments.

He said he is turning to property owners for as much as $100 million in financing to help complete the amenities for his communities.

Anthony expressed confidence that he will make it. His supporters agree. They expect Woods to re-emerge as a strong presence in the golf world, but they stressed that their ability to secure The Cliffs' future won't rest solely on that.

"This recession was not caused by Tiger Woods' infidelity," said Don Tucker, a Michigan native and homeowner in The Cliffs' Glassy Mountain community. "This recession was caused by a much bigger phenomenon than that."

"The Cliffs have successfully cut costs and survived that crisis and is now coming out of it," he said.