

## Case 26-White Whale Of Golf

Anthony Kim was a professional golfer and young rising star, shaking the world with his explosive claim to fame. Nicknamed “the next Tiger Woods,” Kim was ranked 11th in the world and was making \$4.6 million in 2008, at just 23 years old. By the age of 24, he had three PGA wins under his belt, along with numerous other titles. Unfortunately, this fame did not last. Kim was hindered by many injuries beginning in 2010, and in 2012 he took a leave from golf because of escalating complications, including a surgery on his torn Achilles tendon that left him in constant pain. Since then, he has never returned to professional golf, and has left a confused public and many devastated fans behind.

Kim’s current insurance policy covers career-ending injuries as such, and is currently paying him money while he is out on medical leave. Estimates show that the company will, by the end of his plan, have paid him around ten to twenty million dollars, more than enough to sustain him for many years as he decides on a new path. The catch: these funds will cease if Kim returns to professional golf. If he returns to the sport, he will have to earn the money to sustain himself by winning tournaments and cash prizes, or finding another donor. However, with his injuries and time off, that may be unrealistic. If he stays out of professional golf, he can continue collecting funds from his insurance plan.

The golf world is still waiting anxiously for the prodigy to return, but many are losing faith in his reappearance. With nicknames like “golf’s yeti” and “the white whale of golf,” the public makes it sound like he is unlikely to return to professional golf. The press has reported that Kim does not want to play professionally anymore, only for charity. However, he has still been golfing on and off, which keeps some people on a thin false hope that he will eventually return to the professional league.

In parasocial relationships, a sense of obligation is established. This is especially present in sports. Unlike music or film, if a player retires, they fade away. Talent is rare, which is why situations like these are so upsetting. The idea that a star would be willing to walk away from the spotlight, live life as just another everyman, feels almost like a betrayal to his fans and the public.

Bright, incandescent, and full of flair, Anthony Kim certainly left an impact in the golfing world. A decade later from his brief stardom as golf’s most exciting young player, he is still remembered and adored. When Kim and his team triumphed in the 2008 Ryder Cup, Kim said, “I wouldn’t trade this for \$10 million.”

### Study Questions:

- If someone has an extraordinary gift for something, whether it be sports or something else, do they have a moral obligation to use it? What duty does a person have to their talent?

- Consider a brain surgeon. What moral obligation do they have to use their talent on others' behalf? Is Kim in the same situation, or is there a critical difference between athletic and academic expertise, and other types of skills?
- What, if any, obligation does Kim have to his fans? In contrast, what obligation does Kim's fans have to Kim? Do they have the obligation to let him go without harassing him about his return?
- Consider the following: Kim is now fully recovered from his past injuries but is still staying under his insurance plan. Does Kim now have the moral obligation to return to professional golf? Did this obligation shift because of his health status, compared to when he was still recovering?
- Should Kim take the greater risk and return to professional golf, or should he stay under his insurance plan?
- Is it ethical for Kim to collect money from an injury-related insurance deal when there is still a chance of him returning to the sport?

Sources:

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