

RBC Heritage

Friday, April 16, 2021

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, USA

Harbour Town Golf Links

Stewart Cink

Quick Quotes



RBC Heritage

Q. What came together for you?

STEWART CINK: Well, I don't know. It doesn't feel like anything all that special to be honest. We just kind of worked our game plan. I don't know. We haven't had too much wind, and so this course without a lot of wind, there's just not that many surprises when you have a lot of experience around here, and I think we've kind of gotten what we expected out of most of our shots, and we've put it in the right place a lot, and really the key is we haven't put it in the wrong place very often.

Good execution has led to some good scores.

Q. This is your 22nd start here; how do you continue to find the discipline and that competitive energy to come out here year after year and perform like this?

STEWART CINK: Well, it's real easy to answer that question. I love playing golf, and the players I'm playing against aren't getting worse, and that's just the simplest answer I know to give. I don't really want to stop doing this as a job, and the guys that come out here year after year get better and better, younger and younger, and they don't make it any easier, so I have to continue getting more out of myself and managing myself different ways, and Reagan has been a huge help as far as that goes. To me it just feels like, duh, what other way is there.

Q. Reagan, what's it like having your dad as a boss and who listens to who more?

REAGAN CINK: I think I call the shots. He listens to me most of the time. It's a blast out there. We operate on the same wavelength pretty much all the time, so we get to joke around and have a great time in between shots, even when the stakes are pretty high and he's playing really well. And then it's efficient planning when we get to the shots, so it really works on a lot of levels.

Q. It's so hard to follow up a great round of golf with another great round of golf, but you did that today. How did you accomplish this back-to-back 63s?

STEWART CINK: Well, I think a lot of times when you have a super low round out here on the PGA TOUR, it's because like a lot of crazy stuff happens. You hole out from the fairway or maybe you hole a bunker shot or you make some long putts, but that really didn't happen the last couple days. There hasn't been a day of crazy makes and hole-outs. It's just been really solid planning, discipline, and that combined with good execution -- I've had a lot of really good looks at birdies, and I've felt very comfortable on the greens, and having Reagan out there is just another level of that comfort that doesn't always exist when you're up near the lead on the PGA TOUR, but it's been there the last couple days.

Q. Reagan of course your son, who's a caddie for you. Talk about that relationship and how much input does he have on all your shots?

STEWART CINK: He has the same amount or more than any other caddie I've ever had. He's not just my son caddying, he's a professional caddie doing an excellent job. He could caddie for any player in the world right now.

He understands the game plan. He understands golf really high level. He's a good golfer, but he thinks about golf way higher than his about scratch handicap would indicate.

He and I really agree a lot about the way shots are going to play and where we need to put the ball and where we want to avoid. It's just a really good gel we've got going out there. It's nothing new this week. We had it last week. We've had it ever since he's caddied for me. When I've played well, we've done well.

He's just really picking up the -- picking the caddying gig up fast.

Q. I thought a couple of the keys were the couple of pars you made, the one at 9 because you hit it in the pine straw, then in the front bunker, good up-and-down there, and then at 12 you go way left and still able to manufacture a 4 out of there. In the big picture with all the birdies when you can make those 4s and not bleed away any shots, they're huge.



STEWART CINK: Absolutely. Those were key holes. You look at 16-under par through two days and you think it must have been all about birdies and eagles, but you're right about that. I have to give Reagan credit on 12. I had a little narrow opening that I could have gone at the green or I could have just chipped it out and had a nice comfortable wedge shot up there, and I was telling Reagan, I don't really like going on that aggressive little narrow thread-the-gap kind of shot because if I was successful and was going to miss left or right it was going to leave a difficult shot up towards the hole, and Reagan I thought was really good and I was proud of him for suggesting it. He said, Dad, you don't have to get this ball all the way to the green if you go that direction; you can easily leave it 20 or 30 yards short of the green and have a pitch right up the green. I think that's your goal here.

So instead of trying to hit it 160, I hit it 130, left myself 40 yards and had a straightforward shot. Now, I still had to execute the shot and make par, get up-and-down, but that was an example of how a caddie and somebody like Reagan with a comfort level to suggest that can influence a player who may be thinking other ways, and sometimes the brain doesn't just quite work like it normally does when you start getting adrenaline and all the cortisol and all the things mixed up. So that was a good example of how Reagan really made a difference.

Q. You've got a comfortable lead right now, but it's only through 36 holes, so you're a veteran out here; there's a lot of work still to come.

STEWART CINK: Yeah, there's a lot of work still to come, and I've seen leads like this go away quickly and I've seen leads like this expand really quickly. I don't see any reason to change what I'm doing. I want to double down on a couple of my little things -- I didn't feel like I was quite as clean on the ball-striking today, so I want to double down on some of that stuff and just keep the plain goal with him and get some good rest.

Q. After the 63 yesterday, did you come here expecting to play this well again?

STEWART CINK: I didn't really think about it. You know, I try to control what I can control, and when you shoot a really low round, a lot of times the things that lead to that, you can't control all that. You allow those things to happen.

So the things I could control I did a good job of again today just like I did yesterday, and it just so happened that I holed a couple of key putts and got up-and-down a few times and made an eagle on 2, and the round just added up to really good stuff and a good score again today.

I didn't really have any kind of like an anticipation about shooting a certain number or anything. I just wanted to come out here and continue being disciplined and staying in the moment, in the present, and just working our plan. We've got a really good plan going between Reagan and myself, and just wanted to come out here and just continue just -- we call it bludgeoning. We're just bludgeoning that plan almost to death. Golf courses like that, when you can manage yourself around a course like that and execute. The golf course will just yield.

Q. What specifically has been most beneficial to you with having Reagan on the the bag this week and this season?

STEWART CINK: Well, I've always had, I guess, a game plan in my mind that the way I like to play golf. This is like hallmark Stewart Cink type of golf, and it's not always been go at every flag. What Reagan has really allowed me to do is to really quantify that game plan with a system that we use on every shot, and we work it all up the night before and we come out here, and every shot we work that system through, and it's enabled me to -- he agrees with what I say from a young age because he's learned how to play golf by watching me and playing golf with me.

And so as a caddie he buys into the system, and when we have choices to make he's really good about reminding me what the prudent one is. It doesn't mean we play conservative; we're aggressive, but we're aggressive to the right places, and then when we need to be conservative, the system makes the decision for us. We don't really have to do a lot of decision making, and it takes off of my grid, so to speak.

I'm 47; I don't have this unlimited boundless energy to constantly make these decisions all day long, so we've got a good system that makes the decisions for us.

Q. Does it mean anything to you that you've shattered Jack Nicklaus's and Phil Mickelson's opening 36-hole record by three shots?

STEWART CINK: Not really. No. I mean, I'm honored to be in the same TOUR that those guys play in -- no, it doesn't matter. I'm trying to play the best golf I can play, and we'll see where that lands on Sunday.

Q. I'm curious, as well as you're rolling, when you got to the 10th hole today, did yesterday flash back in your mind?

STEWART CINK: It didn't. It's just a completely different ballgame. It flashed into my mind today on the first hole.

On the first hole where I felt a little bit of that comfort level that I was victimized by yesterday in a way.

Today it happened a couple times again, but I was able to catch myself and remind -- use that shot again as a reminder, wait, this is not how we operate, it's not how we do things. But no, it didn't cross my mind on 10.

Q. Do you allow yourself to think, okay, when I won this those other times, it was a different stage in my life, a different part of it, now I'm in the mix at a place where I really like and my son is here and I've got a whole different perspective on things? Have you thought about that heading into this tournament?

STEWART CINK: I think about that all the time because every day I wake up and I remind myself that I'm like a PGA TOUR player at age 47. I probably didn't expect to be here still when I was 47, so it's a good reminder for me because it keeps me calm and it gives me sort of a sense of reality and a dose of like hey, there's not really all that much expectations of me that I can just come out here and have fun.

Reagan being on the bag has just been a huge bonus, Lisa traveling, and so it's -- I think about that. Going into this weekend with a lead and having played really well the first couple days, I'll rely on some of that and remind myself constantly that the expectations aren't really all that high for me still, and I'm having fun playing golf and Reagan caddying and Lisa traveling, I love this. It's what I love doing. Whether I'm shooting really low or not, I still love playing and competing and trying to figure it out.

Q. I think those first two wins here you had to come from behind on Sunday to --

STEWART CINK: Yeah, you're right.

Q. Now you've got to find a way to stay ahead of things.

STEWART CINK: Well, I can only control what I can control, and there's a lot of stuff that those other guys are going to do that I don't have anything to do with, so I'm just going to try to do my best, stay committed to my thing and hopefully -- I told Reagan, let's just try to make the first two days our highest scores of the week. That's the biggest goal.

Q. I don't know how many of your secrets you want to give away, but I'm intrigued by the system you're talking about. Sounds like it's based a little on research that happens beforehand, but when you're in front of the shot what are the checkpoints?

STEWART CINK: Well, we do a good job with our mapping of hole locations and where the holes are relative to like bunkers and trouble and all that stuff, and we kind of grade everything. So the night before we look at wind direction, and so the night before we're already planning for what kind of shots are going to come up from around the green based on certain wind and certain hole locations, and we just kind of go from there and make our plan, kind of drop this blob on the green that says, hit it here.

Q. Before a shot do you have two options that you're looking at or is it mostly I know if I go here off the tee I know exactly what to do?

STEWART CINK: It's mostly approach shots, and only -- the tee shots are dictated by where the tees are placed. We don't know any of that. We do all that work ahead of time, too, but it's more vague. It's more like distance zones we're trying to hit to. If they move the tee 50 yards up, we just take 50 yards off our zone and say, well, it must be a 6-iron off the tee today. We just try to do it that way.

Like I said, the key is it takes emotional and actual energy away from me having to make decisions and stuff, and I can just retain some of that energy to do other things that are more important out here like trying to hit shots.

Q. It's like you have a computer doing 50 percent of the mental work almost?

STEWART CINK: Yeah, we do a lot of the mental work ahead of time. I'm a firm believer that you just don't have enough energy -- there's a lot of information now, a lot more than there used to be. And so if you just come into every hole like blind and you're like -- you walk up to it and then start making your decision, that eats away at your reserve of energy, especially at my age. It's kind of a conservation plan that we came up with.

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