

Ascension Charity Classic

Thursday, September 5, 2024

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Norwood Hills Country Club

Stewart Cink

Press Conference

Q. Stewart, nice to have you here. I guess you've had a chance to look at the golf course. What are your first impressions?

STEWART CINK: I think it's fabulous. It's a good driving course. There is rough out there. The greens have -- there is a lot of pitch on the greens. It's not necessarily back to front. There are some greens that pitch right to left, some greens that pitch away.

It's just a really good -- sorry, what happened? I'm from the inner city. (Laughter.)

It's a really good test out there. The golf course is very good. It's an old-style course. This land, I love the way that the holes are routed either on top of ridges or in valleys.

There is a lot of like ups and downs, ups and downs. The course has a pretty cool rhythm-y flow to it. It's just a fun track, and looking forward to competing on it.

Q. Anything that you need to adjust in your game to kind of fit the golf course?

STEWART CINK: I don't think necessarily there is. I mean, most of us, including myself, we kind of set our games up neutral, to be optimized for all conditions. There is nothing out here that really says you need to take out a hybrid and add in a 3-iron, something like that.

I think this is a golf course where it's kind of a through-the-air course. The type the grass doesn't allow a ton of roll, the zoysia grass in the fairway, so it's going to play a little target like and some holes you'll have to layup and be smart. You know, maybe give up your advantage off the tee if you're a longer hitter.

It's just the right way to play some of those holes. Just makes for a good test for decision making.

Q. Multiple wins on the PGA TOUR; first PGA TOUR Champions win recently. What were the emotions like



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when you broke through for your first victory?

STEWART CINK: Since I've been out playing more PGA TOUR Champions golf I've been surprised how much it feels like a new challenge as opposed to like a continuation of what I was doing.

To come out here and win feels very validating and provided me really good confirmation for deciding to continue to add more and more events on the Champions Tour.

Q. When you're coming off a win in general and going into the next event, is there a little more bounce in your step, confidence? Is it just business as usual?

STEWART CINK: There is definitely a little bit more confidence and belief because you just recently have been given that confirmation that said, well, you're doing something pretty decent.

At the same time, there is also the natural -- like the urge to back yourself up. So you have to balance a little bit of both. I think it's important to -- yeah, we're going to take the last tournament I played in, the Ally Challenge, and learn what we can from it.

Definitely took some good notes on what went well. But it's golf. Didn't go perfect. So we're going to still try to keep on building on that and try to improve and get a little bit better.

The goal will be to give no one a chance to win except yourself out here. Winning is great. Feels awesome. But this is a new tournament, new course. Every week is a completely new chapter out here.

Q. Sounds like you kind of did that in the last tournament. You had the lead going into the final day; didn't give anyone a chance; played really well.

STEWART CINK: I played really well, but I know there are good players behind me if I'm leading or near the pack. You can't just expect to just coast and walk right to the stage and accept the trophy.

There is going to be players that come after you. This course is pretty robust, but you can still see how someone



who's on all facets of your game, driving the ball in play and making good putts, leaving the ball in the right place, you can shoot it low. You can shoot it low out here.

I know it's happened in the past. It'll continue to happen. It's a solid course that will catch you out if you're not on. If you're on, you can really take it deep.

Q. St. Louis is a sports town. The fans show out for this event. How much does that mean to have that kind of community support on the PGA TOUR Champions?

STEWART CINK: It means a lot. Tell you what, the last time I was here playing in St. Louis was the PGA Championship in 2018. It was the most intense fan experience I remember maybe outside a Presidents Cup or Ryder Cup. The fans were just amazing. They loved it. They were frenetic about having big time golf here.

What they have this week, there is big time golf in the field at a great course. Temperatures will be cooling down a little bit. It's a great time to come out here and see some guys play golf that really know how to get the ball in the hole.

Q. Since you've brought up the Presidents Cup, what were your thoughts on Captain Furyk's selections? You're an assistant captain. How does the team shape up in your mind for the U.S. team?

STEWART CINK: I feel really solid about our picks, and one of the main reasons is because the guys that we were focused on picking just lined up 1 through 12 and Jim didn't have to go much outside of box, which is always a fear of a captain, to pick over somebody.

So we got our top 12 lined up exactly the way we were forecasting that it would. The major shift was Keegan Bradley winning, and basically earned himself what amounted to an automatic berth seemed like. I think we'll probably be joking with Keegan a little bit that he's the first guy in a long time to be relieved of his duties as assistant captain.

Q. You've been out here a little while now. What's the most surprising thing when you transition to the PGA TOUR Champions? What was the, yeah, the most surprising thing and maybe the most challenging thing from your perspective?

STEWART CINK: Well, not that it was really a surprise, but I was a little bit -- I didn't really think much ahead about how much I was going to enjoy seeing all the familiar faces again. When I get out here, I realized how long I had been

away from a lot of these guys. Thanks it technology, phones and whatnot, you still keep up with everybody. But just to be with them, it's really been awesome.

It's taken me back to sort of like a previous generation when I saw these guys all the time. So that's been great. I would say the most challenging thing has been just dealing with the expectations of coming out here as sort of a rookie and the youngest guys, and high expectations.

Just not easy. Golf is always like that. You have to manage all that stuff. It's just part of trying to stay out of your own way. I had a couple chances to win. Really had a chance earlier this year at Cologuard in Tucson and didn't and so that hurt.

So I've been very open about that and the displeasure that was experiencing going through that. So meant a lot to me to play well on the weekend and to -- not that it felt like cruising, but kind of cruise to a fairly substantial win up there in Michigan.

Q. I saw you recently had 500 made cuts. Maybe you didn't even know about it at that point. What did that tell you about -- when you look back about what you've done in your career?

STEWART CINK: Well, I've forgotten probably about 80% of those made cuts. You're right, I didn't know. It was at Valspar this year in Tampa, and I played pretty well and during the interview they said, this is your 500th cut made. I was like, wow, that is pretty significant.

I know a lot of players feel like it's a feather in your cap when you get to 500 starts. To make 500 cuts is something I guess I'm proud of, but I don't really think of golf as accumulative thing, because it starts over every tournament. I feel like it's a brand new challenge every week, and I think it's a bit of -- it's been one of my strengths actually, served me very well to think of golf that way, as it's a new challenge every week as opposed to looking back.

Q. I guess out here it's nice. You don't have to worry about cuts.

STEWART CINK: That's nice, yeah. It is nice. I mean, the field sizes out here, everything flows well. It's tough to get in these fields out here. It's not easy. It's very difficult tour to qualify for to make it on here.

So I'm grateful to have an opportunity to play and it's a lot of fun. I look forward to doing this for a long time.

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