

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 30, 2026

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Scioto Country Club

Stewart Cink

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the Media Center here at the 46th U.S. Senior Open. It's my pleasure to be here with Stewart Cink.

Stewart, really close call last year, played really well at the Broadmoor, came up one stroke short to Padraig Harrington. What are your hopes and expectations for this week?

STEWART CINK: I think the biggest challenge here is just going to be to remain yourself and not try to be someone you're not. The golf course has got a lot of challenge out there. I don't think it really fits one type of player. It's just a really good overall golf course.

It's tempting in a tournament like this. It's a very important event. We all care a lot about it. It's tempting to maybe try too hard. I think for me it's a big key to really settle into this event. It's four long days, especially with the heat.

It's going to be a grind and a test and stay hydrated and stay rested. But really just stay kind of in the present and just be myself. I think the way the year or so has gone, I've proved to myself that it's enough just to be pretty ordinary. And I don't mean that in a negative sense. I mean being ordinary in extraordinary circumstances like these is enough and just to remember that.

Q. A lot of talk about grand slams recently. Nelly Korda was trying to do something on the LPGA. Rory won the career grand slam before. You won the first two majors of the year. Has that entered your mind at all coming into this week?

STEWART CINK: Definitely. The way I think about it is I would rather just have won the U.S. Senior Open than have it be part of some series of events like the grand slam.

It means a lot to me that this is a big tournament. It's certainly one of the biggest tournaments of the year on my



schedule, and that's why we're here, to compete and win. That's the goal.

We're not trying to keep some kind of a streak alive. If that happens, that's a by-product of being prepared the way we're talking about in every shot and being ready and staying hydrated and managing the energy expenditures here early in the week.

So it's all part of it.

If it turns out to be like a third major win this year, then that would be wonderful, but it's more important to me that it's the U.S. Senior Open.

Q. You've had a great year. We've had those two majors and you played really well. What has been so dialed in about your game here in 2026?

STEWART CINK: If I had to put one thing in the front, I'd probably say driving. Over the course of my career I was a good driver, but I was not ever really a consistently good driver. When I drove it well for a stretch of time I played great and I won some, but I also felt like driving was my Achilles heel at times.

The last year or so I've worked really hard. My team is unbelievable -- John Scott Rattan and James Sieckmann and my caddie, Chris, are -- we all work together really well. So my driving has been he really good over the last year.

When you have plenty of power like I have out here relative to the PGA TOUR Champions field week in and week out, being able to keep the ball in play and hit it really far is a huge asset. It just makes golf feel easier, and that's a good thing to have.

That's probably the number one thing I'd put at the top of the list.

Q. Power and driving it well, and Padraig was sitting here kind of feeling like he's handcuffed a little bit, that maybe driver was going to be out of his hands a little bit. I don't know how much of the course you've seen, but is there a similar feeling for you?

STEWART CINK: There is. There is. I came here last



Thursday and played and spent all day here. I haven't seen it yet this week, but it's only been five days that I was here.

It does take the driver out of your hand in places, a lot of places, but power translates all the way through the bag. So to get to the places where we have to layup, Harrington and I are hitting less clubs to do that, and then from those places to the greens we're hitting less club to do that.

This is what I experienced at Concession -- the Concession at the PGA Seniors. That course took the driver out of your hands a lot, a lot. What I found there was we were hitting short of all the bunkers because everything pinched in, but then the second shot is coming in from 190 or 200 to small targets.

The power player had a big advantage there because I could hit a big, high 6 or 7-iron that carried 195, and it would stop. Like most guys are having to -- they're doing that from 155.

So power is an advantage coming into the greens too. It's not just about hitting the driver far.

Q. I saw you win the last two years out at the Ally Challenge. I think you won six more times since then. What is -- you kind of alluded to that your driving has been a key to your game, but is it your mental game as well? You won eight times on TOUR. You won like eight times the last 15 months. What has got you just really dialed in?

STEWART CINK: It's a little bit of everything, and it's also a question of what comes first. Do you start feeling really confident in your mental game is organized and then you start driving well, or do you start driving it well and then the mental stuff follows? It's hard to know.

We're constantly working on all these parts of golf. It's like kind of a full-time job. It's hard to know exactly, but I just feel like I have -- I've learned a lot about myself, the way I react on the course emotionally, and I just feel like I'm way less thrown into like a chaotic fit out there when something really bad happens.

I'm just prepared for that stuff. I can't explain it really.

Two years ago I was getting rattled pretty significantly if -- I think my expectations might have been in the wrong place. I felt like I should have come out here and won every tournament, and when I didn't, I started to get pretty rattled if something bad would happen. I just kind of worked my way through that and got to a point where I was a little bit more accepting.

That just has led to a lot of peace on the golf course, and I'm enjoying myself. Maybe that's kind of turned into just the ball striking has been a lot crisper and better, but there's also been so much work on that side of the game.

We're constantly changing, constantly improving. You hope you're improving. Constantly changing for sure. So we're just always trying to pursue this game and try to be a little bit better.

One thing too that we're not even talking about, the stuff that you don't see, the intangibles, Chris Jones, my caddie, he and I think very similarly about the way we approach golf courses, about the way we attack tee balls, about the way we maybe don't attack tee balls, and our game plan has just kind of come together. I have this really like a solid confidence that, if he agrees with what I'm saying, that it's the right thing to do because we think the same way.

So that's been a big part of it too. There's not ever really -- I'm never hitting any shots with any kind of doubt coming from the other side of the golf bag. That's the really big deal out here.

Q. (No microphone).

STEWART CINK: What did you say? Well, we talk through it. We discuss it. We use all our therapy techniques.

Q. Was there a time on the PGA TOUR where guys just basically hired somebody to manicure the lawn in their game? Now it seems like you and your caddie, a lot of players and their caddie are really bonded. Are you really interviewing people before you'd ever bring somebody on to see how they are with that? Maybe talking with them wherever you meet them to see if they fit in with the Stewart Cink mindset of golf?

STEWART CINK: No, there's no interview. The game of golf provides the interview for you. You get paired with the guys over and over over the years. I bet I've been paired with my caddie Chris at least eight different times with different players when he's caddied -- he moved around with different guys on the PGA TOUR. He caddied for Mark Wilson for the longest and had five wins.

You just get to know them. It's just a small world out here. I know a lot of the caddies, and I know just by observing the way they work with their player, I hear their talk, and I know their styles. There's no interviews necessary. It's already kind of all in the log up here.

They all know the players too. When you're a good fit -- a lot of times the results make you and your caddie a good fit. We joke about this all the time, my caddie and I. We joke about how, okay, we shot 65 today, we're a great fit. Shoot 74, and we're not a great fit.

But we are fitting together well. Chris is a great -- he's probably going to be mad at me if he reads this, but I call him a great pointer dog because if I tell him we're going to do one thing, we're going to do that thing forever until I tell him we're going to do something different.

He's just really good and loyal about marching orders and here's how we're approaching this stuff.

He's also just -- it naturally fits into the way he sees golf holes and shots and the way he sees the proper way to play the shot if he were me. I've got a lot of confidence in our relationship, and I just think he's been a big part of the team, and he works with my coaches too, which is great. He understands what we're doing.

It's not like, oh, they said wider stance, we're going wider stance. He understands why, what the purpose is, and that's important to me.

Yeah, it means a lot.

Q. Poulter was in here and Stenson was in here talking about it's their first time just turning 50 and how they were comfortable to a certain extent because they knew all these guys. Do you remember back to what you thought when you came on? It's like guys you grew up playing with, did that provide some comfort to you? And is there more camaraderie out here? Pdraig seems to think there is.

STEWART CINK: There is more camaraderie for sure. Everybody is at a different stage in their life. It's not the this may be my last year in this job. There is that situation, don't get me wrong, but it just doesn't feel as immediate or -- you know, I shouldn't even say that because I know there are players that it feels very immediate for, but the fact that we've already had our long careers, we're all over 50, it just doesn't feel like my whole life's ahead of me, and if I don't succeed at this golf this year, then what am I going to do? It's just not like that.

So that aspect of it just sort of puts a dull edge on that sword. Then the fact that we just have logged all these miles with each other, we know each other, all our kids know each other. I know where this guy's kids went to college and who just had a grandchild. We just share different kinds of things than we used to share when we were 25 with each other.

Yeah, we were changing diapers with each other's kids and all that, but now we've had a whole generation of bringing up families. Marriages have broken up. There's new marriages formed. There's all kind of different change. But for the most part we know people, and it's good to be around people we know and we've got a lot of similarities. We still get a chance to compete hard and play and try to win, and it means a lot to us. It means an awful lot.

It feels like any other golf coming down the stretch when you're trying to win, but the downside is just not there.

Q. (Off mic) ...don't talk about the (indiscernible) PGA TOUR here. You guys live that, but ou don't really see that.

STEWART CINK: Yeah, it is. I think it's just important to human beings. We're trying to beat each other's brains out, but we're also out here, we care about each other. This year it seems like there's been a lot of guys getting diagnosed with stuff. It seems like it's been a wave this year, more than usual.

The whole TOUR rallies around him. You should see the text messages flying around, all the prayers and the thumbs up and everything, positive news and everybody just rallying. It's just on the PGA TOUR, I'm not saying that kind of stuff doesn't happen, but with the wider age range and a lot more players, it just naturally divides the group up into smaller groups, like little cliques.

You've got the young dudes over here from the West Coast and you've got the European guys. Out here it's just a little bit more one big bunch and like a little bit more of a family with the old guys.

Q. I was going to ask you about your dominance really in the majors. You played in four now and obviously two wins and a 2nd and a 3rd. When you started talking about finding your driver again, in your face you could see you were genuinely happy. Can you elaborate a little bit about that? Was it more technical? Was it were you changing driver heads? Was it -- I'm just really curious to see because it seems like drivers are really, really important and a good place for you now.

STEWART CINK: Yeah, it is. First of all, it's really fun to hit good drives and to be able to pull shots off under pressure. Just I look forward to the challenge of hitting drivers on difficult drives when it matters because it's an opportunity to feel great about the way you hit that shot and the way you prepared for the shot and all that.

It doesn't mean all of them are going to be great. There's going to be crooked ones and balls that don't end up the way I wanted them to. The point is it's an opportunity and not something I'm bracing for.

So it is -- I feel very joyful and peaceful with my golf game overall, just because of the place I'm in. And it doesn't really have a lot to do with the results. It's more the results are because of the joy and peace. I feel good about the work I've done.

I started working with Scott Rattan going on about two, three years ago. It's been a process. He laid out sort of the two year, three-year plan that said like here's what we're going to do and we're going to take it piece by piece.

To do that there's been a pretty huge change, and the ball is acting different. The TrackMan likes it. The golf course likes it a lot of times, sometimes. But it's -- I love the part of golf, the pursuit of trying to get better and trying to just squeeze a little bit more out of it. If that didn't exist in golf, I probably would have already quit. I just love that part of it.

Q. A couple things. You won previously at Firestone, and I know that's looking ahead a little bit, but it will be the last event there. I'm just curious your thoughts on the specialness of that place to you in general and then to golf.

STEWART CINK: Yeah, it is sad that it's going to go off the calendar, at least for now. We don't know about the future, but for now it's going off.

Yeah, it's been a part of the game for a long, long time. I know walking through that clubhouse you see all the old newspaper articles about winners from way back from before our times.

It's cool. Not many places can boast that kind of pedigree. And the golf course is so great and fun to play. Everybody knows it so well. It's not changed over the years very much.

But it's also -- it's kind of a sign of the times. Three things have to happen for pro golf to exist, and that is the club has to be for it, which I think Firestone is. The TOUR has to be for it, which we are. And the corporate partners have to come together and the community has to support it. In that case, it just hasn't really been a successful market for us. We just have struggled there, trying to give the tournament life.

It's just a business thing unfortunately. I wish it wasn't the case. We're grateful. Don't get me wrong. For Kaulig Companies to have stepped up and strung this thing

together for a while, and they do a nice job, but it's just a -- I wish I could tell you a more specific answer as to why it is.

I know that's not really what you asked. It is kind of sad to see Firestone drop off because it's a hallowed ground in our game.

Q. Did you always like it? The south course, as they say, is not the most exciting golf course, but it's a good golf course.

STEWART CINK: Yeah, but if you think about the golf courses that all the TOUR players like the most are the ones that aren't that exciting. They're just straightforward. They give you exactly what you deserve. There's no quirky, crazy designs. It's just like, if you hit it straight, you're going to be in the fairway. If you hit it crooked, you're going to be in the rough or trees, and your work is going to be cut out for you.

Courses like Firestone, East Lake, Riviera, courses like that, those are the courses we all love the most because they're just straightforward and, yeah, a little boring.

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