

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE

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STEWART CINK



MODERATOR: We are now joined by Stewart Cink here at the Simmons Bank Championship.

Your second appearance here in Little Rock after a T-5 finish here last year. Just to start, how is it to be back here in Little Rock at Pleasant Valley Country Club?

STEWART CINK: It's really exciting to be back. It was a well supported event last. Year, Simmons Bank did an awesome job for a first-time event, and the town of Little Rock really supported us very, very well. It's a nice little town. I grew up not too far from here and believe it or not I had never been to Little Rock until last year. We had a nice time. A lot of nice little spots to eat and it's just a nice, homey town and we enjoyed it. So it's great to be back.

MODERATOR: Two wins this season, you enter this week No. 2 in the Charles Schwab Cup standings, just how do you feel about everything coming into this week?

STEWART CINK: Well, I just, I keep whittling down the number of tournaments I have left to catch Miguel, now it's to two.

Miguel -- as No. 2 guy, you're always kind of focused on the No. 1 guy. He's given us a chance to catch him because he took some tournaments off over the summer, late half of the summer, and then didn't really do much with it. I'd like to have a few of those events back, especially the last couple. There's still two more, and really good golf will pay off.

This is a good golf course for me. I felt like last year I was thoroughly impressed with the condition of it, it's amazing. So it will be a good show for Little Rock this week, for Simmons Bank no matter who wins, but I would like to be the one.

Q. Stewart, first off, I didn't know you grew up around here. Where did you grow up around here?

STEWART CINK: Well, I grew up in Florence, Alabama, which is just about a hundred miles on the other side of Memphis.

Q. You have a cuckoo number of top-10s this year. Your last three weeks didn't quite hit that, that's been the difference, and how do you feel about your game so far?

STEWART CINK: You know, I really can't put a finger on the difference other than it's just been a little bit of everything. Just hasn't been that sharp. I've made a couple of mistakes

that aren't typical for me, like abandoning my game plan and doing a different -- like I said in my media last week, the 15th hole is not a hole where you go for the green even though it's drivable. Just because you can reach it doesn't mean you should, and I did one day and I made bogey. That kind of thing is just not like my hallmark.

I usually stick to my game plan. I'm a disciplined player, got a lot of experience and that's the kind of thing, that's a sign of mental fatigue. It's just a long year, I'm 52, and it just adds up there, little mental mistakes like that. That's kind of the first thing to appear.

Q. I know it seems simple, but the more times you play this course, the more you get used to it. Are you finding things out even now today that you wouldn't have known this time last year maybe?

STEWART CINK: Well, I don't have a good answer to that question just because I haven't played the course yet. Because of the late nature of the event in the season, I've been going home. I live in Atlanta, it's real easy to travel in and out of, so I've been going home in between. I only came in last night, I haven't seen the course yet this year.

I remember a lot from last year. I thought our game plan that me and my caddie, Chris Jones, had set up was good and it was definitely good enough to win if I had continued to execute on Sunday. I think I was tied for the lead early in the round, like maybe on the seventh hole, and I just was flat after that. So the game plan that we had doesn't really need to be tweaked a whole lot, just have to do a better job of sticking to it and clean a few things up here.

The line is really fine between first place and say 10th or 12th place out here and I've been kind of residing in that area a lot this year. It's minute little changes but be a little bit more focused and a little bit more what we call getting my heart in the right place. Like there's a lot of acceptance that goes along with succeeding out here and sometimes you have to accept failure in order to help yourself succeed, and sometimes it's hard to really decide before shots that you'll accept a bad result but that's in a way a key to sort of unlock your true abilities sometimes. That's a focus on that.

Q. I'm looking at the forecast right now. I don't know how much you pay attention to the weather, but it's supposed to be an 80 percent chance of rain on Saturday and Sunday. How does that play into effect in terms of your game and how do you judge how far you hit the ball and just judge those greens (inaudible)?

STEWART CINK: Well, unfortunately it's one thing we're kind of accustomed to, playing in bad weather. I have putt and the greens are absolutely phenomenal, some of the best greens I've ever seen.

With that being said, the rain will affect it, it will soften the greens up somewhat. If there's a lot of rough out there, the rain will make the rough play a little bit more difficult.

But our game plan's set up around how far we want to hit it in sort of a raw number kind of way. If the ball's not going very far because it's wet, then we just add a club and we just hit to the same spots. It really won't change much. It's one of the reasons that I like to do those game plans in that way because it takes less decision making energy off of my plate since I don't have an infinite amount of that energy anymore.

No, I hope it's good weather for the tournament. For the golfers and the caddies, I really -- it is what it is. If it rains, it's a grind and it will just require a little bit more patience. But we're good in that department.

Q. And looking at standings, looking at (inaudible) competing against this weekend, I guess what kind of stands out in your mind --

STEWART CINK: Miguel Jimenez.

No, really we're down to the wire here, this is the penultimate playoff event of the season for the Schwab Cup. I've only got one guy to pass. The difference between second and first means a lot more to me than the difference between second and third or fourth.

Q. The finish here, 16, 17, 18, it's just kind of built out, what do you remember from that stretch of holes and what kind of atmosphere do you expect from that this week?

STEWART CINK: Yeah, I love the way it finishes, kind of feels like a race track. Like you play the first 15 holes, then you plus out onto the back stretch and you've got a lot more energy in the crowd and there's some risk-reward shots. It's a really cool stretch. It's a fun golf course to play. The 18th hole obviously has some excitement with eagle being in play and you've got water all the way down the left. It's just a really ideal, classic setup for tournament golf. Looking forward to it.

Q. (inaudible) having those kind of eagle, birdie opportunities kind of down the stretch, does it kind of change the mindset knowing that you have some opportunities at the end to make up some strokes?

STEWART CINK: It might change the mindset a little bit on 18, but it won't change anything on 16 or 17. Those holes, you just don't gain anything by changing the way you attack those holes. You've just got to execute on those holes, and you hope to like sort of hang on until the 18th hole.

Then if there's a decision to be made, you know, everybody's going to hit a driver, but is it more about how far right do I need to aim it. If you're in the lead by a couple there, it might not be a driver, it might be a shorter shot. Certainly a hole where -- it's probably the main hole on this golf course where if you hit a good tee ball, it rewards you more than any other.

And I saw both sides of that last year. I hit the fairway a couple times and had irons to the green, made an eagle. I hit in the water one day too and had to struggle. Yeah, it's a cool

finish.

Q. I'm not sure what your relationship with Miguel is or how it exactly works on the tour here, but is there trash talk going on? What's that relationship look like?

STEWART CINK: We're using the media for trash talk.

No, it's not trash talk or anything. I respect him a lot and I'm sure he would probably say the same thing about me. When I said that I'm -- that he's the one I'm focused on, I say that completely in jest.

I'm focused on trying to play Pleasant Valley the best I can play it, number one, number two, all the way to the 18th hole. I know that I have what it takes to win this tournament, and I know everybody in the field has what it takes to win this tournament. It's just a question of who can get out of their own way the most and who can execute the shots when it matters and make a few putts and that's about it. I know I have the capability and I just look forward it.

I really do love competing out here. PGA TOUR Champions is a fun place to play and I've had a blast so far and I don't see any reason to slow down now.

Q. To follow up basically on what you're talking about, you can't win the Schwab Cup Championship this week, it's two weeks away, but you sure can make a difference if you lose or top 20, like that.

STEWART CINK: For me, I think I'm in a position where really the only thing I can do to make a big difference is probably a top 3, 4, 5 finish.

And I need some help in that regard because Miguel's just, it's not like he's going to probably take the week off and not play. He's a great player, there's a reason he's No. 1. I can only do what I can do, and to me I know what that means. It's piecing together a really solid, executing a series of executions. And like I said before, I know our game plan's in good shape and really just go out and relax.

Golf is one of those, there's a lot of backwardness in golf where the harder you try, the worse you play typically. I think I've been trying maybe a little too hard the last three or four weeks instead of just letting it happen. Golf doesn't really treat you very well when you do that. I've had some middling finishes and I'm ready to put those behind me.