PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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STEWART CINK

Q. Stewart, welcome back to Phoenix. You're defending this week and you're also playing against your really good friend, Zach Johnson, for this Cup. How are you feeling heading into this week?

STEWART CINK: Well, obviously it's going to be a very exciting week. I have to correct you, though. We're playing against a lot more than each other, me and Zach. There's 34 other players that are very capable here in this field.

Phoenix Country Club, for being not the typical course people think of when they think of Arizona golf, it's a really good execution-oriented golf course. There's not a whole lot of strategy out there. It's more like can you hit the fairways, can you hit the greens. We like that kind of golf course. We have our hands full with the golf course, too. There's a lot of rough.

But it's going to be a lot of fun. This is what you really play golf for. When you're 53 years old, to have a chance to win something like this, to compete and to do it with one of your friends, this is like Champions Tour 101 out here.

Q. They say it's hard to win but harder to repeat. Do you feel any extra pressure? You won both trophies last year, now you're coming back for more.

DOUG GHIM: I do, I feel a little bit more pressure because I'm in the reverse scenario from what I was last year. Last year I was Zach, I was like win and I win, but otherwise I wasn't going to win this thing. So I was very focused on one thing.

This year there's a lot of different scenarios and I have to, of course, stay focused on one thing because that's going to take a little bit more overriding and training mentally to make sure that I'm focused on the right stuff.

No, for sure as the frontrunner you feel a little bit more pressure. That's just the way it is in this game. We're coming down the very final stretch of a long season here, so it's come down to this and I just hope to put on a great show.

Q. I want to ask you about somebody who's not here and that's Bernhard Langer. He's been a fixture here for so many years. Do you have a fun story, a memory of going back with him, the first time you met him or a funny -- just anything about Bernhard Langer?

STEWART CINK: Not really. The terms funny and Bernhard just don't really exist in the conversation that much. He's not really a comedian or anything. He's just a guy that you

want to just watch and follow and take notes on.

The way I describe Bernhard's golf when anybody asks me about him, and almost everybody I talk to asks me about what's it like on the PGA Tour Champions and what's Bernhard Langer like.

The way I describe it is like you don't stand behind Bernhard for five shots on the range and think, oh, my gosh, this guy has to have won 100 tournaments around the world.

No, you have to walk around and watch him, the way he attacks a course. I don't think Bernhard even knows how to hit a flop shot. He's never had to hit a flop shot. He's never out of position. Of course he hits the ball in play a lot, he doesn't hit it out of play, but he's always on the strong side of the hole, never has to take on any unnecessary risk. It's just like a textbook way to play competitive golf. It's incredible the way he continues to do it.

Q. I know you have this week to worry about, but the Skechers event is coming up as well. Can you talk about that and what it's like to play team golf and how you prepare for something like that?

STEWART CINK: Team golf is the biggest treat for us because we don't get to do it that often. And we're close, on PGA Tour Champions most of us are pretty close to each other. We've been logging the miles for quite a few years.

So to get a chance to not just play in terms like this but also like team up and play partner golf with a guy you've known for so long, it's a lot of fun. There's a lot of laughs. There's not very many I'm sorrys like there are maybe in the Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup.

Looking forward to that every year, and this year in December is going to be a good match. We've got a score to settle, the U.S. does. We were sort of bad last year, and I put the weight mostly on my shoulders because I came out on the Sunday singles day and pretty much laid an egg and finished last in my group. So I've got a score to settle personally and I know our team does, too.

Q. Can you compare how you feel pressure at 53 versus when you were 23 or 33?

STEWART CINK: Pressure feels exactly the same as it used to, exactly the same. The biggest difference is it's an animal I'm a little more familiar with now than I used to be, so it doesn't scare me quite as much.

So I kind of welcome it because I've made a choice to decide that the pressure I feel is more about like, hey, this is the position you want to be in and that's why you feel this way as opposed to fear and avoidance and wanting to run away.

Q. When you're on 18 here, it's got the big picture of you behind the water holding the two trophies. Do you notice that? Does that type of thing make you smile, give

you the feels back from last year?

STEWART CINK: Well, it doesn't really take much to get the feels back because they're already pretty much in the front of my mind. I've enjoyed playing here the last two years as a matter of fact.

But yeah, I saw the picture just now when I drove around the corner for the 18th hole.

It's cool because I remember seeing Stricker's picture up there the first year in 2024. So yeah, if you have your picture up on that wall, it means you've done something good the previous year. To know that I maybe have a chance to make it back up there in 2027 feels pretty good.

Q. And when you talk --

STEWART CINK: Although I know it's going to be a different wall somewhere else, a city wall.

Q. When you talk about there's 34 other guys in the field besides you and Zach, is there an actual advantage to looking at it that way as opposed to kind of a one-on-one match between you two guys?

STEWART CINK: I think it's healthy to look at it that way because it's just not going to do me or Zach any good to try to beat each other and finish, you know, 30th. It's just not going to do us any good because the positioning matters in this thing whether we are up there near the lead or we're back in the bottom half of the field.

I just want to put my best foot forward because I want to look back and say I did everything I could do here to be the best I could be. If Zach wins, then I'm going to high five him and hug him and be very proud of him, and if I win, I'm sure he'll do the same thing for me.

But it's not match play, it's not match play. It's stroke play, and there's a lot going on out there on the golf course to keep us very busy and alert. So I'm just going to take it shot by shot and try to be as good as I can.

I have my own personal scorecard that I kind of keep in a way, you know, figuratively. So a lot of times it doesn't always match up with the scorecard that I return says, but I'm going to make sure I focus on that figurative scorecard this week and try to do my best on that. If I can shoot low on that one, then, well, I feel pretty good about the rest of it.

Q. Stewart, the strategy on the weekend, tomorrow is going to be similar to today but possible weather on Friday and Saturday. How do you approach that?

STEWART CINK: We won't do any approaching with that. Our game plan on the course won't change. If it rains, we'll just use our rain gear.

Yeah, it adds an element of variety and a little bit of different type of focus. You play the shots a little differently, but you don't play the course differently. The field's small and the tee times are compact so everybody's going to have to play in pretty much the same thing.

I hope it doesn't rain because it's such a beautiful part of the country this time of year and I would hate for it to get a damper literally. But I did see the forecast and it won't change anything. If we get out here on Friday and it's misting or raining, we'll just add the umbrella and the rain gear to the bag and do the same thing we always do.