

STEWART CINK

20 YEARS ON TOUR

He discusses sneaking through the fence to play golf, his love of chick flicks, and a visit to Mayakoba, the Venice of the Yucatan.

MEXICO'S RIVIERA MAYA: Stewart Cink admits he was lucky during his first outings on a golf course as a youngster. "My parents were members at our local golf club in Florence, Alabama. It had a strict rule forbidding access to children under eight years old," recalled Cink. "Many a Monday, when the course was closed, my dad and I would sneak through the fence for a loop of six holes. Fortunately, we were never caught and I didn't get a black mark on my 'permanent record.'"

Cink would often accompany his parents on the golf course. "I think they didn't want to pay for a babysitter," joked Cink. "By the time I was old enough to stand on the first tee without a stern look from the director of golf, I was pretty good. While there were many great football and soccer players in town, I was the standout, eight-year-old golfer. My parents didn't push me into the sport. I didn't need the motivation."

During an interview with the local newspaper after winning the Rolex AJGA Tournament of Champions, Stewart was asked if he dreamed of playing on the PGA TOUR. "I said I wanted to work in a golf shop. I guess my naivety as a 16-year-old was evident," sheepishly said Cink.

His solid junior golf career caught the eye of many college golf coaches. "The PGA TOUR wasn't on my radar. My hope of hope was to land a college scholarship," said Cink.

Stewart earned a full scholarship to Georgia Tech and continued to hone his game. "We had a team deep with talent," praised Cink. "David Duval was my teammate."

WHAT WOULD PUGGY SAY?

Stewart's sophomore year at Georgia Tech was a whirlwind. He married Lisa, and soon afterward, welcomed

their first son. "I had to get my act together in a *big way*," asserted Cink. "I was worried how my college coach, Puggy Blackmon, would react. Losing my scholarship was front and center in my mind."

Taking a full load of classes, including summer school, precluded Stewart from competing in the Walker Cup and other top amateur events.

After graduating Georgia Tech, he switched from amateur to pro. It was a bumpy road at first. "We were penniless the day I graduated," said Cink. "I never felt shaky on the golf course and I knew I had the game, but I failed miserably during my first try at Q School to get my Tour card."

When asked about memorable moments during his early days as a professional, Stewart was quick with a reply. "I received a sponsor's exemption to play in the Travelers Harford Open, tied for 18th, and earned \$15,000. To this day, it feels like my biggest check ever! Lisa and I went from nothing to something."

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Lisa and Stewart Cink in Mayakoba.

LIFE ON TOUR

The odds of a successful career on the PGA TOUR are tough. They are literally one in a million. "I feel blessed. Lisa has been an instrumental force in my success. She is an eternal optimist," smiled Cink. "What makes the Tour so great also makes it scary. It is 100 percent based on your individual performance. If you are a new guy on Tour, it is easy to rack up debt if you don't play well. Every week is a new week. The field is always even on the 1st tee during the 1st round."

Stewart's passions off the course include cooking (particularly BBQ), camping, hiking, Broadway musicals, and watching chick flicks. "If I hadn't made it on Tour, I probably would have become a meteorologist. I love weather," revealed Cink. >



The Fairmont casitas at Mayakoba along a freshwater canal.

MAYAKOBA – THE VENICE OF THE YUCATAN

"Our reputation as one of Mexico's most service oriented destinations was not by happenstance. Six years of research and work was invested into planning Mayakoba before any development began. Our landscape of mangrove forests and white sand beaches support scores of species of birds, families of monkeys, and fragile turtle nesting habitats. A group of biologists were tasked to earmark protected areas. By studying a Mayan technique for managing forests, we understood the natural balance of a forest. The holistic approach paid dividends. Since our first hotel opened, wildlife inhabitation has increased by 500 percent. Mayakoba is home to three luxury hotels—Fairmont, Rosewood, and

Banyan Tree. Its fourth hotel, Andaz, opens next year. I've been a hotelier around the world. Mayakoba is different. Each of our hotels offers a singular twist on luxury. The Fairmont is known for its casitas, Rosewood is acknowledged for its suites, and Banyan Tree features all-pool villas. One commonality between our hotels is the six miles of meandering freshwater canals that connect each property. A fleet of electric boats will literally drop you off at your front door." — JAMES BATT, OPERATIONS DIRECTOR AT MAYAKOBA



Banyan Tree at Mayakoba



Rosewood at Mayakoba



“EL CAMALEON MAYAKOBA has two distinct characteristics. The ocean side of the course is part of a vast system of mangrove wetlands with minimal undulation. Upper area holes are rolling and rocky. The design features are dramatic and cenotes create unusual hazards. Several holes have tight landing areas. This, coupled with great playing conditions, make it a first-rate venue.” — GREG NORMAN



“EL CAMALEON MAYAKOBA GOLF COURSE hosts the only PGA TOUR event in Mexico. The Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary course boasts a spectacular layout winding through tropical jungle, mangrove and crystal-clear canals before boldly stretching to the Caribbean Sea. During construction, an unmapped cavernous sinkhole was found. Mr. Norman incorporated it beautifully into his design and created one of the more unusual hazards you will face on a golf course!” — PATRICIO BEAUTELL, DIRECTOR OF SALES



The 1st hole at El Camaleon, featuring a cenote (sinkhole) in the fairway.

FRIENDS TELLING FRIENDS

Over his 20-year career on the PGA TOUR, Stewart has won over \$33 million in prize money, has had six PGA TOUR wins, and has won the 2009 Open Championship at Turnberry in Scotland.

For the first time in more than a decade, Cink didn't play in the Masters this year.

“Both our sons are in college and we had an open week. Lisa and I were both in agreement, a vacation was in order,” said Cink. “Our friends raved about Mayakoba in Mexico. We knew the weather was almost guaranteed to be perfect and with only a two-hour flight from Atlanta, it couldn't be more convenient.

“We chose to stay at the Rosewood Hotel. The room is like a one-bedroom apartment and the back deck sits on stilts over the water. I can honestly say I have never stayed in a nicer room,” extolled Cink.

“My advice on what to bring and not bring? Make sure to pack your swim trunks. I'm not a big pool guy, but I loved it there. Not to bring: your tennis racket. I am still smarting over the fact Lisa beat me in straight sets on the court.

“I also played the El Camaleon Mayakoba golf course. It's fun to play and accuracy off the tee is a must. While the mangroves are pretty to look at, they are not generous to a wayward shot. It is a first rate tournament course and I look forward to competing in the OHL CLASSIC at Mayakoba in November.” ■

MAYAKOBA, located in Riviera Maya, is Mexico's premier beach destination fronting the Caribbean Sea. The resort is 35 minutes from Cancun International Airport. Its coastline is home to the second largest coral reef in the world stretching from the Yucatán to Guatemala. *For more information* on the course, please visit MayakobaGolf.com.