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## Stewart Cink Using Postseason Events to Test New Gear

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One of the perks of winning the [2009 British Open](#) for Stewart Cink has been a first-ever trip to Bermuda and a chance to compete in the Grand Slam of Golf. While he's assured of leaving the island with a better appreciation for the [Dark and Stormy](#), he'll need to play well to beat Lucas Glover, Angel Cabrera and Y.E. Yang and win the \$600,000 first prize.



On the windswept Port Royal Golf Course in Southampton, Cink is planning to put Nike's new Victory Red driver into play for the very first time. But that's only the beginning of the changes he's facing. Just like [the skies that he Twittered](#) about on Monday afternoon, there are ominous clouds on the horizon for Cink and other PG Tour players: pending rule changes that limit the volume and sharpness of grooves.

"I want to be ready to go and not have any big surprises with the grooves," he said Monday afternoon from Bermuda. "So I'm going to play a little extra this year just be familiar with that."

Winning at [Turnberry](#) qualified Cink for the [WGC-HSBC Champions](#) in Shanghai, and he's also going to play the [Wendy's Three Tour Challenge](#) in Las Vegas and the [Chevron World Challenge](#) (Tiger Woods's event) in Thousand Oaks, Calif.

While the former Georgia Tech All-American isn't crazy about the idea of changing both his irons and his golf ball at the same time, there is no way around it. The grooves in his [Nike Forged CCI irons](#), as well as his wedges, will become non-conforming starting on Jan. 1, 2010.

"The one thing that I learned last week at The Oven [Nike's test facility] is that the golf ball I'm using now [[Nike's ONE Tour D](#)] is probably a little too hard to be a realistic option for next year with the new grooves," he said.

A softer ball could cut into driving distance for Cink and other Tour pros, but it should also produce more control around the greens, which will be critical when playing the lower-spin grooves. Within Nike's current ball line, the [One Tour](#) ball might be Cink's best choice in 2010.

"I'm okay with the changes," Cink said, "but I don't know that going this aggressively was necessary because it's a radical change with the wedges. If you are on the edge of the rough, or if conditions are damp like they are here in Bermuda right now, there are going to be some shots hit that are quite ugly and not too attractive to fans. And that scares me a little."

Grooves that are less sharp can't dig into the ball's cover as easily, so the ball comes off the face with less spin. Grooves with less volume than the current square groove will channel less water and debris off the face at impact, possibly leading to fliers out of light rough and maybe even the middle of the fairway on dewy mornings.

"That's where I think you cross over into a little bit of absurdity," he said.

In Bermuda, Cink is going to closely watch Glover in the fairways; the U.S. Open champion won at Bethpage using a set of Nike Forged CCI irons that are nearly identical to Cink's. Glover will be playing this week with a new set of [Nike's Victor Red Forged Half Cavity irons](#) made with grooves that conform to next year's rules.

The 2010 season starts in 10 weeks. That's not a lot of time to practice *not* looking absurd.