

Cindy Reid Interview

What is Mission Hills like?

Mission Hills is the world's largest golf resort. It features 12 courses, each designed by golf luminaries like Jack Nicklaus, Nick Faldo and Pete Dye, and encompasses more than 4,500 acres. Three opulent clubhouses, including the world's largest at more than 680,000 square feet, four serene spas, many restaurants with wide-ranging choices of cuisine, a five-star hotel, multi-million dollar private residences and Asia's biggest tennis center are also some of its highlights. These staggering amenities are all conveniently located less than a one-hour drive from Hong Kong, one of the world's great cities.

How is living in China different from living in the U.S.?

It's both unique and similar. I live in a hi-rise condo building not unlike one you'd see in Florida. The resort grounds are quite Western and the restaurants offer food like cheeseburgers, pasta and pancakes.

That said culturally there are still many differences. Obviously, language barriers exist, although many Chinese speak at least a little English (I'm also working on my Mandarin!). And food selection (off resort grounds) can be a bit of a challenge, though I'm always open to trying new things.

One trait that's definitely shared is an insatiable appetite for all-things golf.

What do you miss about Ponte Vedra?

Well, first and foremost I miss my friends and family. I also miss the beach – I realize now I kind of took it for granted! And playing and working at TPC Sawgrass, one of the most recognizable golf courses in the world was a treat.

How often are you back in the States?

I get back every now and again. For instance, I visited for several weeks in late March / early April and made it down to New Orleans during the Zurich Classic.

What are the differences between golf in China and golf in the U.S.?

Golf in China is still in its infancy. While there's been an amazing amount of progress over the last 20 years, we've only scratched the surface. There are so many people here who're curious about the game and want to learn more. That's why the work at my Academy is so important – I feel like we have the opportunity to shape an entire generation of golfers and spread the sport I love throughout China.

On the course, the game is basically the same. The challenge of getting the little white ball in the hole still confounds. Off the course, however, it's a little bit different. In China, one will often spend an entire day at the club – for instance, one may play 18 holes in the morning, eat a lengthy lunch, head over to the spa for some treatments, then back out for some more golf, and then enjoy a luxurious dinner (or, perhaps, play some night golf, as courses lined with floodlights are quite common in Asia). By comparison, golfers in the U.S. generally get to the course with only minutes to spare before their tee time, scarf down a greasy hot dog and soda at the turn, and then drive right home after finishing their round. It's a very different approach.

You mentioned your Academy. Why don't you tell us a little about your new venture, the Mission Hills Golf Academy by Cindy Reid

It's fantastic! My Academy just moved into a newly constructed, 32,000 square foot facility featuring eight hitting bays equipped with the innovative V1 Swing Analysis Technology, pro shop, and conference room. It's adjacent to a multi-tiered grass practice range with room for dozens of students and several large practice putting and chipping greens are also nearby. It's also an official partner of TaylorMade-adidas, offering only the second TaylorMade SelectFit system in Asia. I have also added a state-of-the-art golf specific fitness room to the Academy and I am excited to bring golf-specific training to Asia. I have assembled a great staff of professionals from the US, Australia and China. All of my instructors are going through an intense certification program with me where I spend six hours per week teaching them how to be better instructors.

Can you tell us a little more about the V1 Swing Analysis technology?

The V1 Digital Coaching System is the most advanced golf swing analysis software on the market. VI uses high-speed digital cameras to see a student's swing in extreme slow motion or even frame-by-frame. The data and images collected are then compared to the swings of tour players. V1 helps our instructors to more accurately diagnose a student's strengths and weaknesses than if they were to watch only with the naked eye.

How important is proper club fitting for the average golfer?

The rapid advances in club and ball technology over the last ten years have made the optimal matching of shaft, club head and ball vitally important. We measure all aspects of the golf swing, such as swing plane, angle of attack, club head speed, ball speed, and launch angle, to ensure our instructors will find just the right combination of equipment to maximize both distance and accuracy.

What's next for you?

I'm looking forward to growing the game in China through my Academy. We have a wonderful hardworking staff that shares these goals, and could not ask for a better club to be associated with than Mission Hills. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for golf in China – the sky is the limit!