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TOP STORY

## BRT's POV: Robinson-Thompson staying positive while adjusting to pro tour golf

By Kyle Dawson [kdawson@aikenstandard.com](mailto:kdawson@aikenstandard.com) Jul 28, 2018

Former USC Aiken All-American Brandon Robinson-Thompson is midway through his first season as a PGA Tour Latinoamérica competitor.

Submitted photo

It's a dream of millions of aspiring golfers to one day play at the professional level.

The big time. Private jets. Courtesy cars. Television coverage from one of those big, three-letter networks. Oversized novelty checks with a whole bunch of zeros.

That's only the case, though, for a select few who reach the ultimate goal and strike gold on the PGA Tour. All around the world exist countless smaller tours that have smaller versions of the same perks – cheap flights, shared rental cars, oversized novelty checks that could use a lot more zeros.

But it's still part of the dream – it *is* pro golf, after all. And that's the dream former USC Aiken All-American Brandon Robinson-Thompson is currently living on PGA Tour Latinoamérica.

"I'm doing what I've always dreamed of doing, but I'm learning so much about my golf game at the same time," he said. "It's pretty unique. It's a pretty cool part about it."

"... We're experiencing cultures and countries I would've never dreamed of going to, either. That's always a bonus. I never would've gone to Guatemala or, I don't know, some parts of Argentina unless I was on this tour."

Robinson-Thompson earned his tour status back in February when he tied for eighth in the PTLA Qualifying Tournament in Pilar, Argentina, and he's been playing some of the best courses in that part of the world ever since.

It hasn't been the easiest start to pro tour life – Robinson-Thompson has made three cuts in eight starts and is 97th on the money list with \$2,749 in prize money. Add in that it's in an unfamiliar part of the world, and it can be quite stressful. But he tries to embrace it, which won't surprise those who know the affable Englishman.

"For me, there's players I've talked to that dislike the travel, they dislike the cultures, the language barrier, the whole idea of being down in Latin America," he said. "But I love to travel, for one, and I love to experience new things, new cultures. So though it's difficult at times, I guess if your mindset is right you'll always sort of have fun, you know?"

He's not going through it alone. Robinson-Thompson has made friends on tour and enjoys the camaraderie, whether that's been sampling coconuts in Jamaica, diving in the Dominican Republic or living the same travel horror stories.

"You're flying, you know, sometimes the budget airlines. Sometimes you'll fly into a city and you've got to drive 3½ hours," he said. "I remember, in the Dominican ... we had to drive 3½ hours up over a mountain to get to the golf course. Some of those roads weren't even paved. We thought we were lost. One of those things that you probably won't forget."

Making friends on tour also has its financial benefit. A handful of them can pile the golf bags and suitcases into a shared rental car, and they can split lodging for the week at that particular stop on tour.

The downside of that comes in the case of, say, a missed cut. Without the financial resources to just fly home or on to the next event, it can be a restless weekend of waiting around and watching everyone else play. Stack a couple of those in a row, and it can be a real downer. But, like Robinson-Thompson says, it's all about keeping a positive mindset.

"Some weeks, I've played well and missed the cut by one, two shots. You might shoot 3 or 4 under and miss the cut," he said. "Say you make the cut on the number instead of missing it by one, you could have a great weekend and maybe even win the golf tournament."

"That's golf in general; it's not just the Latin tour. People don't understand how difficult it is, even at a lower level like the Latin American tour. It's a very cut-throat business we're playing in."

It's not all dirt roads and missed cuts, of course. There have been triumphs on the golf course, like a third-place finish last month in the Open Termas de Rio Hondo, an event on the Argentinian pro tour.

Robinson-Thompson said his next PGA Tour Latinoamérica event will be in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in September once the tour returns from its midseason break. In the meantime, he has various mini-tour events on his schedule.

The level of competition, of course, is different in Latin America than on the smaller tours without that PGA association. And the results so far have certainly been different than a decorated college career during which he won the Peach Belt Conference title in 2014, was league Player of the Year in '15 and earned All-America honors in both seasons at USCA – after twice being named an NAIA All-American at Iowa's Morningside College.

Naturally, any difficulties so far aren't changing his attitude – BRT's POV, if you will.

Robinson-Thompson has a GoFundMe page and is active on social media, updating his Facebook and Instagram pages to provide updates on his exploits in Latin America. There, one can follow along and offer support, financially or otherwise, as he attempts to become the next USCA grad to reach the PGA Tour.

"What happens is, in the mind of the public and even the people at the golf course, they see you're a professional golfer so they assume that you're OK," he said. "You're on the Latin tour and it's a big deal, so they assume you're just fine. It's quite the opposite. ... Even if it's ways of the GoFundMe donations or some sort of sponsorship or investment, there's so many opportunities for people to get involved."

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