



**Sports Illustrated**  
**Kelsey Hendrix**  
**10.16.15**

**Kip Moore on the perfect golf swing, his dream gig and more**

From September through December, SI will be speaking to musicians of all genres about the intersection of music and sports.

This week, SI sits down with country singer and songwriter Kip Moore, a former collegiate basketball player and golfer.

SI.com: Tell us a little bit about your beginnings as an artist.

Kip Moore: Music is what has shaped my whole life. I was drawn to song writing at a very early age. Music allowed me to make sense of my own life. Music has shaped everything for me, and who I am. My journey was tough. It took me five or six years just to get a songwriting/publishing deal and another four to get a record deal. There was nothing about my journey that was easy. A lot of people get it faster, but I was playing clubs and bars and getting a following in Nashville, and then touring the country in a 12-passenger van for years before anyone ever heard us on the radio. My journey was long and hard-fought.

SI.com: Throughout that journey what has been your biggest achievement as an artist?

Moore: Honestly, I would say so far it would be heading the CMT Tour. They pick new artists for that tour that are actually selling tickets—that can sell a hard ticket—and there's a difference in a hard ticket and a soft ticket. We had built such an underground following, so they recognized the tickets we sold. I think that was our first major, headlining tour.

SI.com: We've read a lot about the inspiration that Bruce Springsteen has had on your music, especially on your new album, *Wild Ones*. What would you want people to know about his influence on you?

Moore: I don't really need to let anyone know about an influence [Springsteen] had on the new record. I think that all musicians are influenced by different people and I feel like the things that I do are going to naturally show my influences from people like Springsteen and those guys. But I never make a conscious effort to be like, "OK, well I'm going to honor Springsteen with my work." I just think Bruce is a general influence for me. My music is always changing, with each body of work, so it would be tough for someone to pick out just one influence on this record.

SI.com: One song from *Wild Ones* stands out in particular—"Comeback Kid." What does that song mean to you?

Moore: I just always felt like "that guy." I don't feel like I've ever had anything easy. I've just had to work so hard for every single advance, so that song to me represented not only the way I felt my whole life, but especially in the last year and a half or so. I feel like I hit that kind of lull with the record and the single wasn't working, and I think people started counting me out. I heard the chatter, and I heard what people were saying, and then people started wanting me to do stuff that I didn't want to do. And I always stuck to my guns and only made what I wanted to make. It's one of those things, where no matter how much everyone else might think that I'm out, I always know that I'm not out. So that song is a special thing for me, for my whole life and mainly in the last year of making this record.

SI.com: Let's talk a little bit about sports. We know your dad was a golf pro, and you played both basketball and golf. Were there any other sports that you grew up following or playing?

Moore: I was a huge baseball fan as a kid. My granddad played some minor league ball for the Cardinals, and my dad was also a great baseball player. They would always take us to the Braves games back when they just sucked—I mean, they were awful back then. But he would take us up there for a Sunday night game, after he got off of work, and we'd get those \$9 tickets for the cheap seats, we'd go and walk down by third base and sit down there. But I just loved baseball growing up, and I also loved football. I also golfed until I was a senior in high school, but basketball was my main thing, always.

SI.com: We know you had a golf scholarship, so what made you play in college but then walk away from the game?

Moore: I actually initially went to school with a basketball scholarship ... and then I switched to golf and played for three years. I think just knowing that I wasn't in love with the game—I was in love with music and that's what I wanted to do with my life—was why I walked away.

SI.com: Had you been playing music the whole time you were in school?

Moore: I didn't really start playing until I was 17, but once I hit my freshman year of college, all I could think about, even when I was playing basketball, was that guitar. And I started playing in the bars on the weekends when I was about 20—every Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday night—and sports just started taking a back seat. It became all about trying to write songs and trying to become a better guitar player. I liked the challenge of sports, like when I picked up a golf club for the first time, but it never had the same impact on my life that music does.

SI.com: Do you still play recreationally? Have any tips for your fans who golf?

Moore: The biggest tip that I could say is don't strangle-hold the club. Every bad golfer I've ever seen is strangle-holding the club and it creates too much tension. The good golfers don't have that tension. You have to let your arms freely swing and get rid of all the mumbo-jumbo that you're constantly seeing in all these magazines about all the mechanics you need to fix your swing. It's just about freeing your arms up and letting your arms swing naturally. You take a guy like Tiger Woods at the prime of his career, and when he was at his peak, everyone started teaching the straight-arm with the left hand going back. What that essentially did ... first of all Tiger is a freak athlete with a freak swing and you can't program everybody's swing to do what Tiger Woods does. By locking that left arm, people were creating lots of tension. I see bad golfers trying to do that and it makes me want to just shake them. It's different strokes for different folks. The problem is you get all these golf teachers that were never really good players to begin with, because it's not that hard to get your card to be a professional golf teacher ... All they're doing is regurgitating all the mechanics and they didn't really ever have a feel for the game. Too much stuff is taught one way and every swing is different.

SI.com: What's your favorite sports memory growing up?

Moore: I would say playing 'pepper' in the backyard with my dad and my granddad before he passed. Our last game of "pepper" in the backyard was the best.

"Pepper" is a game that teaches you the feel of the bat and you basically get half the distance you would from a pitcher's mound. So you're pitching close up and it's about reacting quick to hit the ball right back to the pitcher on the sweetest spot of the bat. It's all about timing and getting a feel for the bat. I can remember the last time my granddad got out there—he was in his mid 80s—and he kind of had avoided it because of his age. One day he was feeling really good so he said, "I'm going to get out there with y'all," and he looked amazing out there catching ground balls. He still was so smooth, even at 85, and it blew us all away how natural he looked. I can remember everyone just being so happy that day. My dad had his health. My granddad had his health. And it was just an awesome day.

SI.com: If you could connect music and sports in any way, what would your dream be? A halftime show? Pre-show? Teach an athlete to sing?

Moore: For me it would be the Super Bowl halftime show.

SI.com: And who would be playing in that game?

Moore: Ooh, probably the Cowboys and the Colts. It's just such a great rivalry.

