

U.S. Open Championship 2020

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

Henrik Stenson

Flash Interview



Q. Henrik Stenson, 4-over 74. Henrik, can you talk us through your round today?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, what shall we start with? Start on back nine, couple of pars. Then one fact I didn't really have earlier in the week during preparations was the greens were going to spin back like they were this morning.

12th hole, made a lot of fairway, hit a decent enough 9 iron to about 12 feet. Then just a little bit of backspin on there. I didn't expect that. Ball rolls back about 60 feet, and I three-putt for bogey.

Then I missed a fairway on a couple of pars after that. On 16, I missed the fairway right, chop it forward, and then kind of feeling the same dilemma. Then I got 80 meters, 88 yards. Given how severe these greens are and the gradient on them, I feel like, well, I can't hit my 58 because that's going to land and spin back and give me another 60 footer, and I can't hit a normal 52 either because that's going to do the same. So I decided to go for a turn in 52 and it touched in the pitch at the back of the green, and it goes over, and then I'm totally dead. Then I just have to flop it on and runs down the front of the green and three-putt, make a nice little 7.

So, yeah, that was partly where it felt like the score went away. Got a few birdies just after the turn, had some good chances on 17 and 18, didn't make those. Made birdie on 1 and 3. So got it back to 2 over. Then, yeah, a couple of missed fairways led to bogeys on 5 and 8, and then I was on the green in two on 18 here -- or 9. Not more than 25 feet away, but I got about a five, six-foot raise on the hump there and three-putt that one to finish off. Have a nice little aftertaste walking off the course with a three-putt.

For me, the day was average in all, and the most problem that probably came out of it was the greens were spinning in the morning, and I didn't expect that. That normally handcuffs me a little bit since I carry a lot of spin, and the margins are extremely small on some of these areas.

Q. How would you compare this golf course to previous U.S. Open courses?

HENRIK STENSON: The setup is good. Thick rough and not super tight fairways. It's more Winged Foot being Winged Foot, I guess. It's an old golf course. Some of the fairways are sloping and kicking the ball now when they're a little bit firmer. The greens are a hundred years old, I guess, and been kind of restored to what they were back in the day when you play them on 9 on the Stimp and not 13 on the Stimp.

So putting, I would say, is extremely difficult and is a lot harder than -- yeah, I'd say it's a lot harder than Augusta really to putt out there. This is just the beginning of the week. I think they gave us a few more easier pin positions today to kind of see where the score was going to be at. You can toughen this place up as much as you like. If it gets firm and fast, some of the greens, they hardly have any pin position. So it's certainly a tricky challenge.

Q. Any adjustments today in your play going into tomorrow?

HENRIK STENSON: No, not really. Just got to play a bit better. Obviously, a lot of the U.S. Open is about minimizing your mistakes. I almost wrapped up a double on 8 coming in and managed to save it to bogey, and then the triple on 16. You can't afford to make holes like that.

Other than that, the day wasn't too bad in terms of scoring. There were a few highlights on the long game as well. So, yeah, back to the range after lunch and keep on working away. I haven't played a lot of golf. This is my third tournament in six months. I can't expect maybe to be on top, but I obviously had higher hopes for the start than what we managed to do today.

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