

U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship

Friday, October 1, 2021

Siasconset, Massachusetts, USA

Sankaty Head Golf Club

Stewart Hagestad

Quick Quotes

THE MODERATOR: Stewart Hagestad, two-time U.S. Mid-Am champion; how does that sound?

STEWART HAGESTAD: It sounds really great. I'm speechless, and I can't stop smiling. It's something I've set as a goal for myself for a long time, and I'm thrilled.

Q. Of all the things you've done in amateur golf, where is this going to rank now?

STEWART HAGESTAD: Hmm, gosh, that's a tricky question. That's one I've actually never thought about before.

You know, it puts me on the same level as a guy -- we can go through the history of it and I'm not going to be able to quote all of them, but someone I'm good friends with and close to is Spider Miller, as a lot of people know, and I played for him. Still a couple behind Nathan, but puts me on par with Spider. Obviously I think Sigel had three, and I'm missing a ton of names, and I should know my history.

Q. Tim Jackson, Jim Stuart.

STEWART HAGESTAD: Tim Jackson, Jim Stuart. Who are the others?

Q. I think you said all five of them.

STEWART HAGESTAD: It's amazing. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't somewhat read up on the history and guys that have won two, and it's an honor to have my name on that trophy twice.

Q. Is there anything more specific than even winning it here in this setting? It seems to be one of those ultimate settings of golf.

STEWART HAGESTAD: It's an amazing setting. Yeah, I kind of talked about it earlier in the speech. It's a challenging place to get to, but once you're here it's very special. We were talking with a couple of the guys a week



and a half, shoot, two weeks ago now, but the comment was made that it's tough to get to, but let's have a discussion what you think of it when you leave.

I think that nothing has ever been more true than that because there's a lot of smiles and a lot of special memories coming out of this week. It's something I'll remember forever.

Q. The U.S. Mid-Ams you win seem to have some kind of odd flavor to it. First time you played on two different courses, the 18s, and you won. This time you had to split the 18s into two days because of the schedule. I don't know if this follows you around or what's going on.

STEWART HAGESTAD: Yeah, it's weird. I don't know how to comment on that. A win is a win, and I'm -- I don't really care how it happens, I just want to win.

Q. Something different, though, is U.S. Open exemption is attached to this one this time as opposed to the first time when you won. How does that feel to be playing at The Country Club next year and most likely playing at the Masters again?

STEWART HAGESTAD: Sure. Well, first, to The Country Club. So until I played the U.S. Amateur in 2013, or sorry -- in 2013 I played the U.S. Amateur at The Country Club, and for a very long time, five years, I guess, that was the hardest golf course I've ever played, and that's in the U.S. Am, until I played the U.S. Open at Shinnecock.

I'm obviously thrilled to have a spot in the field for the U.S. Open, and I'm very excited to go and to compete in the U.S. Open and to see the challenge that the golf course lays out.

I'm a much, I think, more complete player, and I'm certainly more at ease and confident with my own abilities like to go out there -- lucky that that'll be my fourth U.S. Open, so I look forward to the challenge and the opportunity to go out and to try and play great.

As far as likely or a hopeful invitation to the Masters, won't get too far over my skis there, but my birthday is April 10th, and that's the final round of the Masters in the spring. Obviously we completed step one of getting into the



tournament. Obviously then you have to go down there and you have to play great.

The Masters and the tournament have always held a very special place in my heart just because my birthday is around that time, and growing up that I was always just very attracted and drawn to it as so many people are. Everything, the music that goes with it, the course, the venue, the tournament, the traditions that are down there, it's just an incredibly special place.

I don't think it's something I've completely wrapped my head around right now, but what an honor. I hope that I receive an invitation, but I'm over the moon. It's a literal dream come true.

Q. Let's talk about this match today; you had a solid 5-up lead overnight, and he came after you in the first nine. Talk about your play, because you weren't exactly sharp early on, probably by your own admission, but he made some good swings and made a few putts.

STEWART HAGESTAD: Yeah, he gave me nothing the whole day. I thought that at some point I would maybe get a break or he would give me a hole, which I wouldn't say would stop the bleeding but would at least create some kind of a buffer. When I hit a great putt at the first hole, I had like an eight-footer and it went high, I think that the feeling of that match maybe pivots a little, or it changes just a little.

I knew that he would come out swinging. He's a really good player. He gave me a couple holes yesterday. I knew I wouldn't get that from him today. But I tried to go out and I tried to basically make him beat me, and he damn near did that.

I mean, he's a tremendous competitor. He's a great player. He's a super guy.

I had a feeling that I was going to get his best today, and he sure earned my respect for sure.

Q. On the 13th hole, he made that curling 32-footer to cut it to one. What were you thinking at that point, because obviously you had a big lead early on but now here it is shrinking.

STEWART HAGESTAD: Yeah, so I had -- I made a very impressive, for my own standards, which I was thrilled with, up-and-down at 12. He was very generous to give me that. I was prepared to putt it.

On 13, I thought I was closer. I thought I was going to be

about eight feet, and then I got up there and I was 30. He had this curling putt, and about eight feet out, I just kind of sat there and I was like, are you kidding me. When he made that, it wasn't like buckle down, but I think I changed balls at least, just a momentum switcher, just anything.

So wasn't playing super poorly, he was just playing great. But we needed to do something.

Then when he hit a great shot that was peeling and the green caught it essentially, had a nice bounce on 14, and he hit it to we'll call it 10 feet and then I missed, when he left that low and it was a softer putt, it was a different putt than he had hit the rest of the day. I don't really know how to describe it, and I certainly don't want to put words in his mouth, but in my opinion that was like the first sign of, like, him maybe not playing as much with like his back against the wall. I don't really know how to describe it. But when he missed that low, I kind of said, that was more of a nervous putt versus a you-have-nothing-to-lose type of putt. But yeah, the putt on 13 was incredible. He played great.

Q. Then we go to 16, which I thought was a key moment in the match. He makes the 24-footer, so now you're up against it or the match is tied and you poured in the 14-footer.

STEWART HAGESTAD: I had a feeling he would make that. I don't know why. Putts just seem to go in on that green. I made one in stroke play. I made one against Stephen Behr when I knew that Stephen would make it. I had a feeling going on to the green that he was going to make it. I don't know why. I just -- I don't really know how to describe it.

I tried to kind of like really prepare myself mentally like to make that. Even if it goes -- just be prepared for the body blow. You know it's going to go in, so be ready for a small amount of heartbreak, and then you have to go out and you have to hit your putt. That was the first putt really all day that I hit with a little bit more speed and assertiveness. I lined it up, and then looked over it and I think corrected it just a little to give me a little bit more break and hit it with good speed, and about four feet out I knew it was in.

I give a tremendous amount of credit to him, but in a weird way it almost kind of freed me up to hit almost a better putt, if that makes sense. But I'm sure glad I don't have to hit it again.

Q. After you made it did you feel a little juice?

STEWART HAGESTAD: Yeah, I don't know how to describe it, but anyone that's ever like made a big putt or



something that's really important to them, they get like chills or time begins to slow down or things begin to just -- I wasn't in the zone per se, but like I was very aware of what was going on.

Q. We get to 17, and basically you both got to the front of the green in two. Describe that third shot; you decided to use the putter as you've been using all week off the green.

STEWART HAGESTAD: Yeah, well, the second shot I'll touch on first. I hit a great drive there. I threw it in the air and got up there in the fairway, but I was in between 7 and 8 and I kind of figured downwind -- it was firm in front of that green. I think that most veteran players, if adrenaline is going, they would prefer to take less club and just hit it hard. Being downwind, I thought that that was the best option, so I tried to put it in the back of my stance just a touch and just hammer it, and it came up a bit short, which is a bummer, but I think if you put on line with the pin it maybe lands in a slightly flatter spot where it then bounces up.

And then as far as -- he chips the lights out of it. I was under the impression, I just had a feeling he was going to make birdie. He probably hit his first poor chip of, shoot, the last 25 holes, 27 holes, whatever it was. When he hit that, I had this thought in my head like if you knock this up and you knock it close, if you hit it to a foot or two, this thing is over. Like you can end it here.

I did take putter. I didn't even think about chipping it. From a tighter lie like that, just adrenaline and everything, I was going to putt it. But yeah, I rolled it up there four feet and I assume you're going to ask about the putt after this so I'll just go ahead and touch on it, but when he left it low, I just tried not to think about what comes with winning. I knew it was there, but I just tried to just tell myself, like literally, self-affirmations, like nearly out loud so that I could hear it, just hit your best putt. Go and just focus on the process, do everything you can to hit your best putt, and as long as you do that, that's all you can do.

I played it on the higher side, played it like half a ball right to left and just trusted that it would go in, and just tried to trust my practice and preparation, and I hit my best putt.

Q. When the ball goes in the hole, can you describe what that feeling is when you know you're a champion?

STEWART HAGESTAD: It didn't really hit me until after because I think I was just -- I think I did -- the obvious answer is you're thrilled and you're elated and you can go through, right, but I really did everything I could to just

focus on the process of the task at hand. Like just don't think about the results, don't think about what comes with it, just like go and do everything you can in that moment to do what you can to hit a great putt, and if it falls, it falls, if it doesn't, it doesn't, and you move on. You can end it right there, just go do what you can do to do your best and hit a great putt.

As soon that went in -- I've literally teared up thinking about it on many occasions. You shake hands and you shake the official's hands and the walking scorer's hands, hugged my caddie, hugged my mom, and that's when it was just kind of like, that a dream was a reality. I don't think it's hit me yet just because we've been so busy after, just things to do, but I think there's going to be a point where I'm alone and it'll hit me.

Q. And then the last one, you went to USC and you had a USC caddie who also went through the caddie camp here at this club. How much did he help you this week?

STEWART HAGESTAD: There's no way I would have won it without him. He was incredible. So quick story, our first tee shot I hit out of bounds with 9, which is like really bad. I'm sure that he was a little rattled at the beginning, but luckily we were able to right the ship, and we've kind of laughed about it throughout this whole week. He was like, oh, my gosh, why did I fly back to Nantucket for this guy, and that's going to be his first tee shot.

But Pete is great. I know his dad through LACC, and I've hit balls a handful of times with him. He's not like a lot of other 18 year olds. I think the best thing about Pete and what made us work this week is he wasn't afraid to say no. I've had the chance to obviously meet or work with a handful of guys that have been on the bag, and I think as an 18 year old -- forget, not in an arrogant way, but forget what I've done in the game of golf and forget some of the accomplishments I've had, but as a younger person, it's hard to tell an older person that they're wrong and that that's not correct or that's just -- and I give a ton of credit to him, one, for doing exactly what I asked the whole week, pin, front number, just little things what I like. But then, two, to be able to stand up to me and tell me that I'm not right.

I think that we worked really well together. He was incredible. He knows the golf course really well. The caddie camp here is renowned around the country. Without his help, I certainly wouldn't be talking to you right now.

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