

# U.S. Senior Open Championship

Saturday, July 10, 2021

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Omaha Country Club

## Steve Flesch

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: It's my pleasure to welcome Steve Flesch here to the interview area. Steve, 6-under 64 today, your best round in a U.S. Senior Open championship thus far. Let's start with the morning. Walk us through that birdie stretch from 14 to 18.

STEVE FLESCHE: Yeah, you know, I just told Jim Gallagher, starting on the back nine, having barely made the cut kind of, I was kind of on the cut number with three holes left yesterday afternoon. I somehow birdied 16 and 17 to get here today. But starting on the back nine, second group out, not a whole lot of pressure out there, even though it's a tough golf course.

You know, I three-putted my second hole, par-3 No. 11 from nowhere, from 20 feet.

Somehow birdied -- made a nice putt down the hill on 14. My ball wouldn't even stay steady on the green. It started trickling, I had to remark it twice. But birdied 14, 16, 17 and 18, a nice stretch. Hit some wedges close, made some good putts, and then I think I birdied 2, 5 and 6 on the front.

But really the par on the last was kind of my proudest one of the day, driving it in the rough, which I normally kind of do at U.S. Opens. Maybe why I haven't contended in many. I can hit it straight sometimes but not all the time.

Nice up-and-down from about 85 yards on the last hole for par to finish off a nice day.

THE MODERATOR: During the delay when you were in the clubhouse, was there a target number that you were looking at that you felt like you needed to get to?

STEVE FLESCHE: Not really. I had hit a nice shot into 5 with a 6-iron, and I had it five feet pretty much straight up the hill left edge, and they had blew the horn right when it was my turn to putt, so I got to sit in the locker room and not think about it.



But I was putting so well, I had a lot of momentum. I was hoping that I got to hit that putt before the horn. But no, we had a lot of laughs in the locker room. My same Tuesday group, Kevin Sutherland and Paul Goydos were in there and Jim Furyk and Retief were the subject of a little bit of our fun. We had a good time.

I can tell you it's nice to finish for the day because I'm exhausted. Last night, just finishing at 6:30 last night took a lot out of me, so I'm looking forward to a nice dinner and early sleep tonight.

THE MODERATOR: You're going to be in one of the final groups on Sunday at the U.S. Senior Open. Describe what you're feeling like right now.

STEVE FLESCHE: It's not something I've experienced really. Like I said, I haven't had much luck in U.S. Opens or U.S. Senior Opens for that matter. But it's fun to contend, and I really have nothing to lose, and that's kind of how I played today, so I imagine I'll kind of play the same way tomorrow and just enjoy it.

It's a good tough golf course. You have to drive it in the fairway, which will be my main focus. I'm ironing it well, I'm putting it well. Fortunately, I didn't have to chip much today, but I've got to get the ball in the fairway if I'm going to have a chance. I actually have done it fairly well this week, and I'm a better driver of the ball than I let on, but in years past it hasn't been my forte, let's put it that way.

#### **Q. How did green speeds change maybe overnight with the rain and then with the resumption after the rain delay?**

STEVE FLESCHE: You know, they were perfect this morning. That's why I three-putted the second hole of the day. I had it 20 feet uphill on 11 for birdie and I ran it by thinking it would be a little slower. 10 green is really fast regardless, because there's a big hump in the middle of it. But I got fooled on that one and three-putted, but they had great speed. And then when the rain came, I don't know how much rain we got, but it seemed like a lot, boy, they slowed down probably a foot in my estimation. I know it's later in the day and they've grown a little bit, but they got about a foot slower. I'm sure they'll be back up to speed in the morning.



But for the guys the rest of the day they're definitely slower than before the rain delay.

**Q. How was your overnight and what did you think when you woke up and maybe heard or saw or even if you had power, the damage around here?**

STEVE FLESCH: I guess the side of the hotel we're on downtown, my son and I didn't even know we got rain. We knew nothing other than we got the text that said there's a three-hour delay.

But my buddy Goydos, who's on the other side of the hotel, said he thought his window was going to get blown in from the rain. I slept great. I didn't sleep long enough. But it's just different. This golf course plays very differently when it's dry than when it's wet, and right now it's very wet. But thankfully with so much severity in the slopes of the fairways, the water isn't collecting out there.

You'll still get a little bit of run, you might get a little bit of mud at times, but it's tough. You've got to drive the ball in the fairway.

**Q. You've mentioned that you were proud of that par on the last hole, and you said you got out of the rough there. Is the rough getting pretty heavy after that rain? Is it worse than usual?**

STEVE FLESCH: Well, yeah. Even if the rough was two inches, when it's wet your club just doesn't get through it. The water somehow just makes it denser where it grabs it. But now when it's -- I mean, I drove it where it was four inches if it was an inch, and it's kind of laying against you.

I joke, I always say it's like hitting it out of a closet full of tennis shoes, because you never feel like you make contact with the ball and your club never feels like it hits anything but just the grass. So it's like a bunker shot, the ball just kind of somehow comes out.

I mean, I hit a drive early in the week in the rough, I couldn't advance it 50 yards with a sand wedge. I think it was on 14 yesterday.

But it's tough. Even if you only miss the fairway by three yards and you get outside the first cut, it's that deep and thick right there. Fairways are plenty wide enough. They give you plenty of opportunity to get the ball in play. But if you're going to miss, you're going to pay the penalty.

**Q. I know your son is out here a lot, but talk about playing a major with him on the bag.**

STEVE FLESCH: You know, it really is -- the guy that I regularly have caddie for me had back surgery five weeks ago, so Griffin has been a great fill-in. I know he'd love to be able to do it full-time, but he's got to finish up school here this coming semester at University of Kentucky.

Yesterday I kind of had a bad mood going. I was on the cut number, but I really just was -- I knew how bad he wanted to be here today. For him, when I finally tapped in for my par on 18, I just kind of said, That one is for you, pal, because I know how bad you want us to be here on the weekend. I'm trying not to get choked up, but I think he wants it more than I do anymore.

It's been fun. He helped me a lot. He's a great caddie. He knows the game, and he's been a great side kick for me these past couple weeks when he's helped out.

**Q. Obviously you did some work as a broadcaster. Just wondering if you had gained any new insights just watching these guys play USGA events over the last couple of years.**

STEVE FLESCH: The easiest thing that I've always told people that I notice is everybody hits bad shots. When you're broadcasting or doing a recap show or broadcasting live -- I was with Fox for years, and we did Chambers Bay, and I'm just sitting there and I'm in the 16 tower right on the Puget Sound, and I'm like, Man, these guys hit bad shots just like I do.

I already knew it, but the pressure obviously adds to the element. But I always look at it from the standpoint, why do I get so upset when I hit bad shots? You just go find it and hit it again. And I think it taught me just, hey, give yourself a little bit of a break. Everybody is going to struggle, especially in a U.S. Open or U.S. Senior Open because it's hard. It's a more exacting setup, and that's how you have to play it, and sometimes you can't play as aggressively. 15, 20 feet off toward the center of the green is perfectly fine.

But my thing is even if I know the pin is on the left and I'm like, okay, let's play smart to the right, somehow I know that pin is to the left and I'll subconsciously push it at it or something and make that mistake. But you have to play a disciplined game, and that's what I've learned. You watch Retief and Jim Furyk and those guys play, and they just seem smarter than me on the course. I'm like, they don't hit bad shots as often.

But they do, they just handle it maybe better than me sometimes. I learned just to give myself a break, have fun and play your game no matter what. You can't play like somebody else, you're always going to play like your own

game.

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