

# John Deere Classic

Wednesday, July 7, 2021

TPC Deere Run

Silvis, Illinois, USA

## Steve Stricker

### Press Conference

AMANDA HERRINGTON: We'd like to welcome Steve Stricker to the virtual interview room here at the John Deere Classic, somebody who needs no introduction around these parts. Three-time winner, coming in this week, got the win at the SENIOR PLAYERS Championship. How does it feel to be back after two years off the PGA TOUR schedule?

STEVE STRICKER: It feels amazing to be back. It felt longer than that since I've been here, to tell you the truth. But still a lot of great memories when I go around here, a lot of familiar faces, with the tournament director, all the way through to the fans.

Yeah, I get a lot of support here, and it's nice, really nice, to be back.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Just some comments on your recent win. Congratulations.

STEVE STRICKER: Thank you. Yeah, it was a place that I've always wanted to win at, Firestone, and I've had some opportunities over the last few tournaments there. Got off to a good start a few years ago and didn't finish it off, and this time I got off to the same good start and was able to hang on.

It's just an iconic course. It's one where the TOUR has been at for a number of years, and now we on the Champions Tour have been going through to play our PLAYERS Championship, and it's a special place to win.

**Q. Why was this the one you wanted to come back to, because knowing you're missing a major on the Champions Tour, why did you decide to come back to the JDC this week?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's a special week here. It's 50 years here for the John Deere Classic. Having this tournament mean so much to me over the years, it just felt like a no-brainer to come back here and to play here. It's an easy trip for me. It's in the car, drive three hours and I'm here. Like I said, it's a special place for me and my



family.

I always enjoy coming here, and it's been hard to miss the last few years, to tell you the truth. The SENIOR PLAYERS has been opposite the John Deere Classic, so that was switched this year, and being 50 years I thought it was a good time to be here at the John Deere.

**Q. Everybody is talking about the memories of 50 years here. I want to take yourself out of the equation for this question. What do you remember the most or what comes to your mind when you think of the John Deere Classic, but you can't say the years that you won, obviously.**

STEVE STRICKER: You know, I was involved here in the grand opening, so I came here and went around with D.A. and a couple other pros. We opened the course, whatever year that was when we opened it.

That's my first memory of TPC Deere Run. And then obviously playing, I think, my first year I played here I was over at Oakwood, and then when they moved from Oakwood to here, it's been a special spot and a treat to be here. It's a fun layout, it's a nice course. It's great for viewing for the spectators. They've got the pork chops. I guess that's always a fan favorite and something that we always think about every year when we come here.

You throw all that together, but I think my first memories of the John Deere Classic were at Oakwood and then coming here to open this TPC course.

**Q. You're more or less scouting for the Ryder Cup, but I don't think you ever go to a tournament without realistically thinking you have a chance. What do you think of your chances of doing well here this week?**

STEVE STRICKER: Well, obviously I've got great memories here that I can kind of fall back on. I'll use those to my advantage. I've been playing well lately, so hopefully I can keep that rolling. Hoping to strike magic a fourth time and try to get myself in contention heading into the weekend.

It's a tall order, don't get me wrong. I'm not hitting it quite as far as I used to, and I especially around there today, and I'm like, wow, I'm back here a few yards than where



I'm used to playing from.

Hopefully find a little bit more energy for tomorrow and a little bit more ball speed and get it back out there, but yeah, it's something -- you're right, I don't go to a place thinking that I'm not going to contend or play well, so hopefully get off to a good start tomorrow morning early.

**Q. What would it mean to you to win this tournament here again, to do it again?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, 54 years of age and here at the John Deere Classic, it would mean a lot. But again, it's a tall order. But that's why I'm here, to see if I can't try to do it.

**Q. Speaking of tall challenges, was it difficult to convince Nicki to carry your bag up and down these hills?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, she told me today that she hadn't caddied here the last few times just because it's been so hot, and these hills kind of scare her a little bit. It got her attention today being upper 80s and humid, but knock on wood, it's going to be cooler this week and through the weekend. It won't be such a difficult walk.

But it is a challenge going around here.

**Q. You have some of the family with you, I understand your daughter is going to play golf this afternoon?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, my oldest daughter is trying to qualify for the U.S. Am over in the Chicago area and then they're driving over to be with us this week.

**Q. You were talking about your familiarity with the course. You obviously saw it a little bit today. How does it compare? What's it playing like out there?**

STEVE STRICKER: It's in great shape. You know, everything about it is like I remember, and it's always been in great shape here. The rough is up like normal, the fairways are pure, the greens are pure. A little bit slower maybe today on the green surfaces than other years, but it's Wednesday, and I'm sure if we don't get any rain that things can speed up a little bit. The fairways are running pretty quick, and it's in great shape.

**Q. What's it going to take to win?**

STEVE STRICKER: You know, I'm sure it's going to be low here again. There's just -- there's great conditions and there's a lot of scoring holes. I think scoring will be good again.

**Q. You were asked about being able to win out here. Does seeing what Phil did at the PGA give you any hope or hope for the 50-plus crew out here competing against the flat bellies?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, obviously it does. Phil is a special kind of player, though. I mean, he still has maintained his length and flexibility. He's 50 years old, so he's -- or almost 51, I guess, or maybe is 51 by now, but he's, like I said, a special kind of player, maintained those skills. Yeah, I mean, I wouldn't be out here if I didn't think I could do something similar.

Obviously winning the John Deere, like I said, is going to be a tall order, but I still think there's some good play inside of me where I can hopefully get that out here this week.

Like I said, I'm optimistic, and I'm excited to see what's going to happen the next few days.

**Q. This tournament has always supported Illini alums. This week Michael Feagles is playing. Have you had a chance to talk to him and what does it mean for an event like this to support colleges in the area?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and I went to the University of Illinois, so it's great to see that Clair and his staff here at the John Deere support the U of I and other colleges in the area. I haven't been able to see Michael yet. I've talked with him in the past, but I haven't seen him yet here this week. I'll have a watchful eye over him for sure to see how he does and see how he handles playing here.

It's a treat to play in a TOUR event, and he doesn't have any status yet, so hopefully he can follow the likes of some of the former Illini. I think Luke Guthrie came here and had a really good finish. Even, I think, Hardy has played well here, too. Hopefully he can get the ball rolling and play well. I'll be rooting for him.

**Q. In your role as Ryder Cup captain, just wondering as it's getting closer, is having the six picks turning out to make the job more difficult than you would have thought, or do you still think it's going to be easier overall? Obviously there's a lot of guys there.**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, there's a lot of guys there, but I think it'll shake itself out. I don't think it's going to be more difficult at all. You know, I'll have the opportunity to sit with those six players. After the top six make the team, I plan on seeing these six players and getting their feedback to the next six that we're going to pick. I want this to be a team effort. I want everybody to be all in on who these six picks are going to be and make it a team, a true team deal.

That's my plan going forward. But I don't think it's going to be any harder if it was four or six.

**Q. Obviously the schedule between now and when the team is decided is really tight, very crammed, but after it's decided, is there time to go up there early in the weeks after the TOUR Championship and before the Ryder Cup?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, there's time to get up there, and hopefully we can -- we're working on that, and hopefully we can get up there.

**Q. Can you talk about the adjustment from the Champions Tour to the PGA TOUR now that you're 54? In a way we're all celebrating the 10th anniversary of your three-peat. On the other hand considering what Bob just asked you about, you've got a lot going on.**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, there's differences from the Champions Tour to this Tour. The obvious difference is length and probably the pin locations, how tight they put them to the edges out here on TOUR compared to the Champions Tour. Those are the glaring differences. I say that, but we played the SENIOR PLAYERS Championship at Firestone, and that was set up as tough as -- except we played it about 100 yards less than what we would play it on the regular TOUR. That being said, a little bit of length and some pin locations from the side is probably the biggest difference.

Yeah, we've got a lot going this year, and obviously looking forward to the Ryder Cup and trying to get that going. I mean, it's an exciting time, and we're a year behind for the obvious reasons, but I'm ready to get it going, play it, bring that Cup back where it belongs.

**Q. You have three John Deere Classic championships, maybe a fourth this weekend. Is there a favorite John Deere Classic championship, now that it's 50 years and we can ask you like a milestone question, is there a favorite John Deere Classic championship for you?**

STEVE STRICKER: Well, I think for me it's the one -- I don't even know what year it is to tell you the truth, the one I hit it out of the bunker and made the putt to birdie the last and to really kind of steal it from Kyle Stanley. Yeah, that one I get the most kind of reward out of seeing and kind of replaying in my mind again. I mean, I just didn't have a lot of moments like that in my career, right, so it was a special one.

To do it here at a special place for me, it meant a lot.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Thank you for spending time with us today. We appreciate it.

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