

Waste Management Phoenix Open

Thursday, February 4, 2021

Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Steve Stricker

Quick Quotes

STEVE STRICKER: (In progress.) Last few weeks out here on TOUR. Played San Diego last week, which is a big golf course. Actually played pretty nicely at times.

And then came here and the greens are rolling good. I made some putts. Felt like the old Steve Stricker. I am old, but I don't feel 53 or 4. I feel like I still have a little bit of game left in me.

Q. That second shot at 18, as you tried to get to 6-under par, how challenging was that?

STEVE STRICKER: I had a good lie. I was in another bunker somewhere else throughout the course of the round. Didn't have a very good lie. I guess it was on No. 5.

But this was a really good lie. (Wind interference) Hit a 7-iron. Wind took it over there towards the pin. I had a good idea what that putt was going to do. I've been here enough.

Played it outside left edge and broke a little to the right. I almost thought I left it short, which I did a couple times today. It's so engrained trying to get the line and I forget about hitting it sometimes. It was a good putt; good way to finish.

Q. You and Padraig Harrington, two of the all-time good guys in the history of the sport. You guys are going to go head to head in September when you go against him in the Ryder Cup. Today you beat him by six shots. Did you guys have any conversation at all about what might take place eight months from now?

STEVE STRICKER: Well, walking off the first tee I told him -- and Jerry Kelly was our third player in our group. I said, Paddy, we got two Badgers against you today. He was like, Well, I need to get used to that I guess.

So he knows what's coming when he comes there in



September. Hopefully we can put a good team together and play well and bring that Cup back home where it belongs.

Q. (Indiscernible - wind.) How do you continue what you did today over the course of the next three days?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that's been a challenge for me. I've played some good rounds and put some good back-to-back days together. Saturdays have been kind of a nemesis for me when I do make the cut.

So that's been the challenge lately, and I'll have to work hard to come out and play a good one tomorrow. That's my goal thinking about it right now, is to get off to a good start tomorrow morning. It's going to be cold and starting on the back nine.

Just go about the same stuff that I been doing today and take care of business.

Q. What a day. The 53-year-old puts up a good round. Tell me about your day.

STEVE STRICKER: It was a good day. Did a lot of good things. Hit a lot of fairways. I think I missed five greens. Rolled the ball really nicely for a change. Made some nice putts.

And, yeah, all added up to a 6-under round, which is a good start.

Q. Great start in fact. As of now, that's the best round anyone had in the afternoon wave. Really, really good. I saw you take a long look at the leaderboard on 18. Are you looking for your name or for Ryder Cup possibilities?

STEVE STRICKER: Oh, I love to watch who is playing well and look for potential players on the Ryder Cup team, friends, how they're playing. Just see -- get the lay of it. I study it a lot it seems like nowadays just trying to get a feel for what's going on and how guys are playing.

That's nothing new. It was good to see my name up there on the top, and the challenge will be to come out tomorrow and try to keep that ball rolling.



Q. You will have early start tomorrow. Thoughts going into the second round?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, just the same things: drive the ball in the fairway and knock it on the green. Finally made some putts today. Been a while since I made that many putts. Hopefully continue that.

Q. How proud of you are of this round today?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, it was a good round. Finally made some putts. I hasn't been putting the ball all that great, rolling the ball over the edges a lot, but it all kind of came together today. Drove it pretty good. Hit some really good iron on the back nine, some marginal ones on the front that didn't really get me into trouble.

But made some putts, and when you can make some putts, that always helps.

Q. Interesting to hear you say you've been struggling with your putting. What have you been working on?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, a lot of setup. I've been changing a lot and just trying to find a good feel and good visual of how the ball is rolling. Hasn't been rolling that well for me.

I caught on to a few things last week and carried over to this week. I rolled the ball pretty good last week on those poana greens, so I knew if I could do that out there, get out on a pure surface like this, and it's even nicer to see it roll.

So they were going in today, and the challenge will be to try to continue that.

Q. Third PGA start in 2021. (Indiscernible - wind.)

STEVE STRICKER: Well, out here I don't know if I feel like I belong anymore, to be quite honest.

Q. Have you seen the leaderboard?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I know. These guys, they all hit it 300 plus, 320s, 330s, and I'm just trying to get it in the fairway and get it up to 280.

So the game has changed. I know if I can do my thing and roll the ball like I did today, not get too crazy and try to stuff it when I have a long iron in my hand or something like that, I can do all right.

It's harder, but I enjoy the challenge. Last week I enjoyed that challenge. It's the biggest course we play out here and I made the cut. Had one bad round, but did some

really good things.

Q. Did some good things today. Low number here. Some impressions on your round out there?

STEVE STRICKER: It was one of those rounds where I just kept trying to do the smart thing, put the ball in play, put it on the right side of the green, you know, and not too aggressive shots into the green.

Felt like I was rolling the ball well with my putter, so I said, you know, just try to give myself some opportunities. I fortunately did, and quite a few went in today. So that was good to see.

Q. You mentioned earlier about making the cut last week and playing well today. What is sort of going on with your game that you have been playing so well?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, just been playing a lot. You know, with our kids doing school virtually, we spend a lot time down in Florida. Been playing a lot down there and working on my game. I'm trying to find a set of irons and shafts since I -- I got a new set in the bag the last couple weeks that seem to be a little bit better.

And then working on the putting really is what I been doing a lot of, and it paid off today. Made some nice putts and, it was good to see the ball tracking and staying online and rolling towards the hole.

Q. How long has the (indiscernible) been more of a foe than a friend for you? How long you been struggling with it?

STEVE STRICKER: I don't know. It's not like I been struggling big time, it's just like I haven't been making a lot. I feel like I've been putting some good strokes on it and rolling it good at times, and just not going in.

That's starting to change a little bit. I made some putts last week at Torrey Pines, and like I said down there, if you can make some putts and roll it go on that poana, you're doing something good.

So I came here, hit some putts here, and it seems to be helping. It was a setup thing. So it's been good, so hopefully that continues.

Q. What was the conversation like with Padraig out there today talking Ryder Cup?

STEVE STRICKER: We talked a little bit just to see -- he was asking me if we were going to have fans. What do I think as far as that goes. It's too early to tell, right?

We don't know what's going to happen yet. So we just got to keep plugging away like it's going to happen with full fans or half fans or no fans.

I'm sure we're going to play it. The amount of people there is still up in the air I guess. And he feels the same way. But we know we're going to play it in September I would think, but we would love to see a full house for sure.

Q. What would you say to some of the younger guys who might on your team that you beat today?

STEVE STRICKER: Well, it's only one round. That's what I would say, I guess. But it shows that I'm still out here trying to compete with them, trying to play, trying to beat them.

But the reason I'm out here, I totally expected to be on the Champions Tour this year because we were supposed to play the Ryder Cup last year, and then I was going to be pretty much done out here and then strictly Champions Tour stuff.

Now that the Ryder Cup is pushed off to the end of this year, that brings me out another year, which I'm totally good with and fine with and I enjoy the challenge.

So it's nice to come out. I see the guys, I get to talk to them, I see them, I play some practice rounds with them occasionally. So it puts me with them. It gets me in a position where I can listen to them and talk to them about what we need to do going forward.

Q. Play a practice round with anybody this week?

STEVE STRICKER: I didn't this week. Palm Springs I played with Cantlay. Last week I only played nine holes. Morikawa in the fall I played with. So I kind of try to make an effort to try to play with some guys while I'm out here and just -- or talk to them at least.

I talk to P. Reed last week early in the week. Justin Thomas. I'm seeing just a lot of the guys that I get to see. So it keeps me relevant, keeps me out here, keeps me in their kitchen. I get to watch them play.

So it's why I'm here.

Q. Who do you have for family this week?

STEVE STRICKER: We're all here. Wife is caddying and the kids are here as well. They've been troupers. We haven't been home to Wisconsin. They left on Halloween to go to Florida, and we haven't been back.

So it looks like we're going back next week for some beautiful minus eight degree temperatures. But we're all excited to go back and see our parents and our dogs we haven't seen for three months.

So we're excited to go back.

Q. With Padraig turning 50 this summer, did you and Jerry talk Champions with him a little bit today?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I asked him. I asked him when he was going to play. He turns 50 in August and he is going to play right away in September, he thought.

So he's still got a lot of game, too. He hits to a long ways, and another feather in the cap for the Champions Tour when he comes out to play for sure.

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