

Men's Olympic Golf Competition

Thursday, 29 July 2021

Saitama City, Saitama, Japan

Kasumigaseki Country Club

Sepp Straka

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: First question is did you see that round coming today and then second would be what did you have going right out on the course today?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, I felt comfortable with my game going into this week. I hadn't played great over on the PGA TOUR the last few weeks, but my putting was really the reason and I just switched up my routine on my putting and it's worked out.

THE MODERATOR: Today any key shots or any key moments of the round today out there?

SEPP STRAKA: Not really anything key. It was just a steady round. I really hit the ball well. I didn't put myself into trouble and yeah I mean took advantage of the putter. The putter was pretty hot today.

Q. Can we get some details on that stretch of three straight birdies on the back nine. I think it was 13, 14, 15.

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, those are holes where I think one of them was a par-5, but if you just put it in the fairway on this course you can really take advantage and I got hot with my irons, especially my short irons and wedges. Was really knocking down the flag stick and really tried to stay aggressive with those.

Q. Were those all wedges or 9-irons?

SEPP STRAKA: I really can't remember I'm not sure. I'm not very good.

Q. Do you mind if I make it up?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, you got it. (Laughing).

Q. Secondly, I'm curious, would this be the first time playing under the flag? Would there have been a World Cup?

SEPP STRAKA: I haven't played a World Cup but I played a few, I played the European Team Junior Championship and then I played the Men's Amateur Championship, the team. So, no, not the first time playing under the flag.

Q. How old were you for that?

SEPP STRAKA: The Junior I was 16.

Q. Didn't you come to America when you were 14?

SEPP STRAKA: Came when I was 14, yeah.

Q. And then you -- okay.

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah. Yeah, I still went back and played that, those events.

Q. It looked like you played two rounds at 3M, so can you just talk putt how you got here, how did that work?

SEPP STRAKA: In terms of travel? I just flew Delta through Detroit, got here on Tuesday afternoon. I just stayed back and practiced. Because of the COVID protocols I had to take my tests and that was all scheduled already, so I couldn't get here earlier. But yeah just practiced this weekend out at the 3M and got here Tuesday afternoon and played a practice round yesterday.

Q. So you saw it one time?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, just played 18 yesterday.

Q. Is that surprising that you could only get one practice round in here and be able to shoot the number you shot today?

SEPP STRAKA: Not completely. I feel like we do that a lot, especially on TOUR, we, I see new courses all the time and usually just get one practice round in. So I felt pretty prepared coming into it.

Q. Looking at least the last five or six weeks or tournaments you played in, you haven't had a lot of



success except for Travelers. Can you just -- but you've had really good first rounds. Can you just talk about that dichotomy?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, I felt like my game was in a pretty good spot. Those first few weeks before Travelers when I missed the cut my irons were bad, but my short game was really good. So I worked on my irons a lot and then my short game got bad. So that's when I missed the last couple cuts. But yeah just changed my putting routine up a little bit and it worked really well and my irons have been pretty good the last few weeks, so I felt pretty good about my game.

Q. What did you do to your putting routine?

SEPP STRAKA: Shortened it a little bit, simplified it. I took the practice swings out and way more feel oriented, a little more athletic. I was getting a little technical with the putting so just get out there, see it and hit it.

Q. When did the Olympics kind of first cross your mind, your radar screen?

SEPP STRAKA: When they had them in Brazil I was watching, I wasn't close to qualifying back then but I was watching and it seemed like a cool event and everybody that I knew that went over there and played just raved about it. So I knew at that point that that was going to be on my radar and definitely wanted to play well so I could play my way in.

Q. For people who would just see you in what looks to be a Georgia red Bulldog shirt, why the move to America when you were 14, how did your mom get out there, that kind of stuff?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, my mom, she ran a pro shop in Austria, she lived there for 24 years. My dad's Austrian, mom's American, and we just tried to move closer to back home to her side of the family, she had been there for quite awhile in Austria and she loved it, but just wanted to move a little closer to her side of the family to my grandparents on her side and so that's really what prompted that move.

Q. Did she run a pro shop?

SEPP STRAKA: She did. She ran a pro shop over there.

Q. What's her golf background?

SEPP STRAKA: She play a little bit but not nothing much. She plays a few times a year. But she always ran pro shops, she's, she did a great job of that in Austria at a few golf clubs and, yeah, that's what she does.

Q. What golf club was it do you remember the name?

SEPP STRAKA: Her first pro shop was Atzenbrugg in Salzburg and then her next one where I grew up was at phone at Fontana Golf Club just south of Vienna.

Q. You mentioned the one practice round. Patrick Reed gets zero practice rounds, he came over super late. Like when you are going to a new course what are you trying to learn in that first practice round, what do you try to take in?

SEPP STRAKA: The first thing I would say you look for is kind of your sight lines off the tee, just making sure you know where you want the ball to be distance-wise and direction-wise. And then from there into the green you really just kind of want to take a look around the green and see if there's any places where you really can't miss it, but, yeah, you just really try to get a feel for the course and try to find the spots where you want to hit the ball.

Q. Is there a spot in particular out here that you learned about during that practice round, a spot you can't miss it?

SEPP STRAKA: There's a few, just any time you don't really want to be in this rough here, it gets pretty high. Especially around the greens. Chipping out of it is pretty hard. So anything can you do to avoid staying in that rough is key.

Q. You had your brother on the bag today?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah.

Q. What was it like having him out there with you?

SEPP STRAKA: It was great. It was awesome. It was a dream come true for us to be out there together and we had a blast out there, so it was one of those -- it was a day that will be in my memory forever.

Q. How would you say he did?

SEPP STRAKA: He did great. He's done it a few times for me and he caddied for Chris Kirk a few times on the PGA TOUR. So he's a veteran.

Q. You said that after Rio the guys you talked to raved about it. Who were some of the people who had positive things to say?

SEPP STRAKA: Matt Kuchar just loved it, loved the week. Just everybody that I was seeing in the media and a few

friends, they just loved their experience down there.

Q. You like to play quickly as I understand it, how important was it getting out first and playing with Thomas?

SEPP STRAKA: It was great. Thomas plays quickly too, so that was nice. We had a really good group, had some good mojo going in the group and first off was great we didn't have to wait on anybody and we played quickly, but we didn't feel rushed because we had some pretty good space between us and the group behind us, so that was really key.

Q. I think you ended up nearly three holes ahead of the group behind. Does it sometimes gets frustrating out on TOUR when you're in the middle of the pack?

SEPP STRAKA: A little bit, yeah. It definitely does. But that's part of it. If you want to have big tournaments with a lot of players, it's going to be a little slow and a little backed up. So you just got to learn to deal with it and I feel like I've gotten pretty good at being patient.

Q. This is a golf-loving country here. Did you think at all about how it would have sounded with full on people?

SEPP STRAKA: It would have been special. It's really special without the spectators, but if they didn't have any restrictions this would be one heck of an event. So I noticed flying in, you fly over one golf course over the next. It's incredible.

Q. In terms of what people told you about Brazil and that event and all, what is it, do you think, in their minds and now in yours that makes it refreshing or different or what aspects make it so?

SEPP STRAKA: I think one of them is just knowing that it only happens every four years or five years, but no, just knowing that it's one-of-a-kind event and on the PGA you have a bad week you play again the next week. Out here this week it's just special that the next one isn't for another four years. So I think that's the big part.

Q. Wondering how connected you feel to Austria. Clearly you're representing Austria, but your time is spent in America, golf's pretty much an American gig, right, and so for you to be here representing Austria but yet living and working in America how does that feel and how is it playing I would say back home but in Austria?

SEPP STRAKA: I feel very connected. My dad still

spends a lot of time there and I try to go back once a year and visit. I spent my first 14 years over there, it's home, I used to say that I was 50 percent Austrian, 50 percent American, a friend of mine corrected me and said I'm a hundred percent Austrian and a hundred percent American. So I feel fully connected to Austria, fully connected.

Q. Sleep does not come easy when you're moving around the time zones, I wonder how much sleep you've had since you got here?

SEPP STRAKA: I had some great sleep actually I feel like coming here is a little easier than going back. I've been in bed at about 8:30 every night and slept through to about 7, except for this morning it was a little earlier wake up call, but no I've had some great sleep.

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