

The American Express

Sunday, January 19, 2025

La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Sepp Straka

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good evening, everyone. We would like to welcome our 2025 champion of The American Express, Sepp Straka. Sepp, congrats on earning your third PGA TOUR victory. Just some comments about what it was like to get the win today.

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, thank you. No, it was great. It was awesome. It was a fun day, trying to manage the lead and manage my nerves. Yeah, just had a good time playing out there, and, yeah, very happy to come out with a win.

THE MODERATOR: Entered the final round with a four-stroke lead and bogey-free so far in the tournament, what was it like, what do you do to manage those nerves on the lead?

SEPP STRAKA: This course kind of makes it easy because you just have to hit your shots. I mean, there's no safe play, really, you just have to hit your numbers, you have to hit your spots, especially as firm as the greens are, you just have to execute, kind of made it easy to focus on each shot. But it was very intimidating, obviously, because every hole you know you got a chance to make a double, a bogey, everywhere you look. So, yeah, very happy with the way I hit the ball today and yeah, just overall very happy with the week.

THE MODERATOR: Let's take some questions.

Q. Pete Dye would like very much hearing what you have to say about his golf course, I think. You didn't look nervous. You birdied the very first hole, you birdied 4, the par-3 there. Everybody else was making birdies, but you were keeping that lead. You said yesterday no lead was safe on this golf course, you made it pretty safe early, what was the thinking as you were going along that you were comfortable?

SEPP STRAKA: Definitely not comfortable. That's quite the opposite. Yeah, I never really felt safe with the lead all day. Charley was making birdies, Jason was making birdies, I think Justin was playing well ahead of us. Yeah, it was tough. I'm glad I came out firing and made some

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birdies early, because if I played even par on the front, which would have been a pretty good score, I think I would have had a one-shot lead going into the back, which would have been a little bit of a different story, so those early birdies were huge.

Q. That first hole Charley and Jason both hit it inside you.

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, they both stuffed it in there, and yeah, definitely felt really good making that putt. It wouldn't have changed the way I played today if I hadn't had made it, but it did feel really good making that putt on the first hole.

Q. Then as you're coming down the stretch, what point did you think to yourself, or did you think to yourself, you could finish this thing with no bogeys?

SEPP STRAKA: I never really thought about that. Yeah, I never thought about the no-bogey thing, I was just trying to close out the tournament. I had a lot of chances to make bogeys throughout the week and the putter kind of stayed hot for me and stayed bogey-free for a long time there, but yeah, I never really worried about the no bogeys.

Q. This is kind of a contrast from your first two TOUR victories because you had to come from behind on the final day both times, and today you were the hunted. Talk about your approach today and how that changed, if any, from those others where you had to roar from behind?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, it's a very different feeling, I would say, you just have nerves a lot earlier. Those other ones, you play your way into contention and those nerves start kicking in. But, yeah, I love Kirby Smart's quote about being the hunter and not the hunted regardless of where you are in the game, in the tournament. Yeah, I kind of felt that way, I was kind of just trying to stay aggressive to my spots, my targets were pretty conservative, but I was trying to make aggressive swings to it. Yeah, I did that really well today of the.

Q. You changed irons ahead of the year.

SEPP STRAKA: Yes, yeah, they're the new Srixon irons.

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Q. What was the thinking behind that, and the ball too, can you take me through both of those?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, so the ball, yeah, you know, it's just a new versions of the one I was playing before. I didn't see very much difference with the irons in my numbers, which is a good thing. I loved the irons before, so it was an easy switch to get into that. The ball I thought was great. It was very small change, I couldn't really even feel it, so, yeah, I'm really happy with that stuff.

Q. I was going to ask because talking to Tillery or Dewey, they seem to think, or they say you're not a guy that changes a ton, you seem like you try to keep it simple, not want to tinker much?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, definitely don't, I'm not a tinkerer. Once I'm set like I'll play these irons probably the rest of the year without even thinking about switching. Yeah, I don't like to really switch a whole lot, but these numbers were really similar, pretty much the same on the irons, and so it was a really easy switch for me. I always tell the Srixon guys, just don't change anything about the irons, they're great, just keep re-marketing.

Q. Obviously new greens on the Stadium Course, felt like they were much firmer did, that put even more of a priority on your approach play?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, for sure. The ball striking was huge on the Stadium this week. I felt the greens were a lot softer today than they were the second round when I played. I actually spun a couple back up the hill on the front nine I think, that kind of caught me off guard a little bit. Yeah, I think they did a great job with the new greens, having them this playable, and I think they did a really good job with the golf course setup.

Q. Two questions: One, that 64 you shot on Stadium, a couple people on this row think that's when you won this golf tournament. Did you feel like that was a --

SEPP STRAKA: Which hole?

Q. No, on Stadium, on the second round, when you shot 64.

SEPP STRAKA: Oh, yeah.

Q. A couple people figured maybe you had won the golf tournament because you were going to La Quinta and then coming back here. How did you feel after that round?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, 64 around there, that was one of my best rounds I've ever played probably. No, I played great. I kept hitting my spots and I kept giving myself birdie looks and made a lot of those birdie looks. I putted really well that day, struck it really well that day, and any time you can have your low round of the tournament be at Stadium it's a good thing, it means you've done something right that day. That was definitely the biggest round of the week for me.

Q. You mentioned playing those irons the rest of the year, speaking of the rest of the year, you got a win early, you didn't win last year, but you won in 2023, now you get this win so early does, that change much for you this year?

SEPP STRAKA: Not really, no I'm still I think my schedule's going to stay pretty much the same. Still, you know, it's all a process. It's great to get a win early, it's awesome to get ahead of the curve, but it's a long year, so you just got to keep stacking good results and keep playing good golf and, yeah, that's going to be my goal the rest of the year.

Q. Was it the first win that maybe made you feel comfortable that, like, your good is good enough, or was there an epiphany at one point for you where you felt like, hey, my best is really good out here?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, I don't know. I think I probably felt that my best was good enough before, I just didn't put my best together for four rounds a lot. Yeah, when I did it there at the Honda, it was, you know, it definitely gave me the belief, but I feel like I already had that belief that if I played my best I could win. It's easy to feel that way when you're playing well, when you're not playing well it seems like it's so far away, so just trying to manage those highs and lows I think is really key as a golfer, because the highs are really high and the lows are really low, so try to stay even keel throughout all of that is pretty important, I think.

THE MODERATOR: All right, while your wife Paige and Leo couldn't make it, you had a chance to FaceTime, what words did they have for you following the win?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, a bunch of goo goo, ga ga from Leo, which was great. He got to watch today, so that's special. Yeah, just really excited to get back home and celebrate with them, first win as a dad, so this one's going to be really special.

THE MODERATOR: Had a couple group of players stick around, friends to support you, seems to be the trend with the same group that you guys stick around for each other's wins. What's it like to have that group on the road as you

guys are road warriors and oftentimes away from your family?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, it's so great. There's a good group of guys that, like you just said, those guys that stuck around and that we share houses with when the family's not on the road. It's huge because it can get pretty lonely playing on the PGA TOUR. Yeah, to have that community kind of on the road is so great to have those guys, and I feel like we do a good job of pushing each other each week and, yeah, I think we've played some pretty good golf as a group.

THE MODERATOR: Did you guys share a house at all this week?

SEPP STRAKA: I shared with Brice Garnett this week, so, yeah, it was a fun week this week. I guess I'm picking up the tab for that one, so, yeah, excited for that (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Any plans to celebrate tonight or when you get home?

SEPP STRAKA: I'll be celebrating on a redeye back home, and then, yeah, we'll figure something out when I get home.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. Sepp, again, congratulations, and we appreciate the time.

SEPP STRAKA: Awesome. Thank you so much, appreciate it. Thanks for everything, guys.

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