

THE PLAYERS Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Steve Stricker

Quick Quotes

Q. Could you run through the itinerary? When did you wake up? When you did get phone call? How did you get here? Just your itinerary from the moment you woke up today.

STEVE STRICKER: Well, it started yesterday because I knew I was second alternate yesterday and I knew Justin Rose wasn't feeling so good and I heard that Harry English was, had a little bit of a back problem, so I started to plan yesterday. I found a local guy down in Naples, Florida, that I could use his plane kind of at the spur of the moment kind of deal, and the TOUR was keeping me up to speed, and then I get a call at -- I'm laying in bed this morning at 6:45, just kind of woken up, and they said that you are now the first alternate. And I'm like, well, I'm coming. And because I knew Rosie wasn't doing so well. He hadn't even hit a ball from what I understand. So they scrambled the pilots together and I actually got in the air at about 8:30, quarter to 9. Got here at, I think about 9:35 I landed. Straight to the testing center and tested and I was actually out here a couple hours ahead of time before the tee time and just went to the back of the range, waited for my test to come back negative, and hit some balls, tried to get my bearings, and putt, chip, do all the little stuff.

Q. When did you hook up with Eric Larson? When did that happen?

STEVE STRICKER: This morning. Still laying in bed, he had called me and he was keeping me kind of up to speed on Harry as well, and I'm like, Well, E, do you want to just stick around and caddie for me? I've used him before as a caddie and we get along great, a fellow Wisconsinite, just a good guy. And he's like, Heck, yeah. And Harry was there on the other end and he's like, Go for it. So it worked out great. It wasn't someone else I had to bring in. My wife wanted to come, but we still have my little daughter and a friend, and it was just going to take too much to get her here, and it is just one less person to get tested so it worked out really well.

Q. How long did it take you to fly from Naples to here?



STEVE STRICKER: It was about a 45, 50-minute flight.

Q. Did you think, man, I'm early, maybe I should just go back to Naples and get a bigger breakfast?

STEVE STRICKER: Well, yeah, Eric, he gave me some breakfast out in the parking lot and I wasn't able to go inside until my test came back negative, so any ways, I was just happy to get the call, I was excited to be here and excited to come, all week long I started as fifth alternate at the end of last week and then Brooks withdrew so I moved up and then John Huh, the guy I really need to think is like John Huh. He took his name off that alternate list and he was one, I think one or two guys in front of me. So I wouldn't have gotten in if he would have decided to play. So yeah, never thought I would be here, but excited to be here.

Q. Was it the St. Augustine Airport you flew into?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah.

Q. So that's closer, right?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah it was about 30-, 35-minute drive up and by that time I knew I had plenty of time. Yeah, just needed a negative test at that point.

Q. How did you, who drove you from the airport?

STEVE STRICKER: The players transportation left a car there for me it was waiting plane side when I opened the door I stuff was in there and I was gone. So literally from the time I left my house in Naples to the testing center was a couple hours.

Q. Do you have accommodations setup for tonight?

STEVE STRICKER: I hope so. I don't know yet.

Q. What about the way you played? Obviously not having a practice round and actually doing pretty well today on a tough course.

STEVE STRICKER: There's always some benefits, at least I look at them as benefits, I didn't have to put myself through the grind Monday Tuesday and once, I actually



didn't even play or hit a ball Monday or Tuesday at home or back in Naples. I played Bay Hill last week, that kind of beat me up a little bit, especially on Sunday. I just got some rest, played about 14 holes yesterday, didn't even hit any balls, I played with my wife and then -- so I came here with not a lot of expectations, I guess, and but excited to be here and I know my game is in decent form, so I was excited to come here to a place that I have played a bunch before and the hard part was just trying to get the speed of the greens, the chip shots, how they're going to roll out, all that kind of stuff. How you play those shots out of the rough. That was the hard and challenging part.

Q. You birdied five of the first eight or something like that. Are you thinking what's going on here, I mean just like this would be sort of a storybook moment?

STEVE STRICKER: Well, you know, I mean crazier things have happened, right? And I keep telling myself that. I got off to a good start today, I'm 2-under and it was a good solid first day and you just have to pay attention going around here it can jump up and get you at any moment. So I took those holes, I made four birdies in a row and I wasn't trying to get ahead of myself or anything like that and I think I just kind of was running out of gas on the other side, just trying to make pars at that point and get it to the house.

Q. Still kind of riding high on the Waste Management performance as far as confidence?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, that gave me a lot of confidence, knowing that I'm doing still some good things at my age. I've been feeling better, I've been doing a lot more taking care of my body, working out a little bit more, stretching a little bit more and it seemed to have paid off. I feel a little bit younger than I did last year. So I'm swinging it a little bit better, I think, and my putting's starting to come around, so I feel good where it's at.

Q. (No Microphone.)

STEVE STRICKER: We discussed that, but it's, no, it's all right. I was on the phone with him this morning and I just said do you want to stick around and caddie for me. So he was right there with Harris and he asked Harris and Harry said go for it. And he was a guy, as I said, that was already in the bubble, he's already tested, and he's been around the course this week too the first couple of days in the practice rounds, so it's someone that I could kind of ask and bounce some of my questions off too.

Q. How long did it take for that test result to come back?

STEVE STRICKER: A little over an hour. An hour 15 or something like that.

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