

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA

Saucon Valley C.C. (Old Course)

Steven Alker

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're pleased to have Steven Alker with us. Steven has won four times on PGA TOUR Champions within the last year, and of course won his first senior major, the Senior PGA Championship recently.

I guess to start off, how's it feel to be at a U.S. Senior Open? Because you've played in two U.S. Opens.

STEVEN ALKER: I have, correct. Pretty neat. I was out on the golf course today and it felt like a U.S. Open, just the way it's set up. It's not our normal setup on the Champions Tour.

It feels neat. Atmosphere was great. There's plenty of people out there. It's good to be here, yeah.

Q. Give us a couple of your first impressions of Saucon Valley Country Club and what kind of a course it is, what you saw the first couple times around.

STEVEN ALKER: Very old school, which I like. Just the rolling fairways and the greens. And even coming into the clubhouse, just the trees and just the setting, it was great. So I'm looking forward to the week.

Kind of up my alley a little bit. There's going to have to be lots of fairways, lots of greens this week, and have a good short game. I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Referred to as a journeyman quite often.

STEVEN ALKER: Right, right.

Q. Wondering, do you fit that label? If so, what exactly does that mean?

STEVEN ALKER: Yeah, I think so. I guess when you talk journeyman you've kind of been everywhere and done everything, and I kind of feel like I've done that. A lot of places I've been I haven't done it well, but some places I have.



Just been a lot of places, a lot of experiences. Starting out in the islands tour down in New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, and places like that, and ending up here.

Through that journey, Korn Ferry Tour, European Tour, Canadian Tour, Asian Tour, European Tour, everywhere. So I guess I can call myself a journeyman, yeah.

Q. Is there anywhere in the world you haven't played?

STEVEN ALKER: I don't think so. Maybe the Middle East. That's about the only place.

Q. Can you kind of give perspective on what the last year has been like for you, the last few months just with the way you've dominated?

STEVEN ALKER: It's gone so quickly it kind of really hasn't sunk in. I just had two weeks off, so it was kind of like breathe and kind of take it in a little bit.

I'm just kind of going to the next event like it's boom, done; let's go; what's next.

I guess where I'm at and what I'm doing right now, I've only got so many years left in my career so it's kind of like, okay, that's done, great, fantastic. What's next? That's kind of how I'm treating it.

Has it sunk in? A little bit here and there. I think the major was the big one. Obviously I won three times. Wow, that was great, fantastic, it was quick. But then to get the PGA was pretty neat, yeah.

Q. Was there a plan physically and mentally the last few years of your 40s that you had geared towards 50?

STEVEN ALKER: There was. That 48 to 50 period, just keep playing. I was on the Korn Ferry Tour and just kept playing. That was the main thing. Working hard on the body just the last 18 months just to get in shape, golf shape.

I think just wanting to come out here and play and be amongst these guys and have a second chance, that was the biggest thing for me, just really wanting to come out here and play.



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Q. You've had some ups and downs, a lot of tours. 2010 was there any thought, with the way that year went, that you thought about something else?

STEVEN ALKER: 2010, I don't recall. I don't remember it.

Q. I think it was 21 events.

STEVEN ALKER: I don't even remember. It's just a different time in my life, young family. Kids are young, 5 and 6, and just trying to get back on the PGA TOUR, just a lot of things going on.

Just a different place in my life right now. All I can say is that all those -- what happened back in those years, just bringing it forward and appreciate what I got now and kind of just ballooning from what happened.

Fortunately, I don't have to make cuts on the Champions Tour now, so that's probably a good thing.

Yeah, it's just all experience.

Q. What drives you to keep going through all the different things that have happened to you over the years? There had to be something there that said, I'm not going to give this up?

STEVEN ALKER: For me, yeah, I guess I just got a lot of perseverance, support from my family. My wife's been amazing. My kids support me and my family. So just having them to just -- there are times it's like your game's crap, look at doing something else, but I didn't really want to do that.

I might have done something else as well as golf, but I never really thought about just giving it away. I guess just my patience with the game and perseverance has kind of just kept me going.

Q. If you had had to have given it up, what might you have done for work?

STEVEN ALKER: I don't know, to be honest. Maybe just stay in the golf business. I might have moved back to New Zealand. My wife is English. I could have done something back there.

Never really seriously thought about, okay, now's the time to maybe do something else. Probably just stay in the golf business.

Q. Padraig Harrington mentioned that you and he have played some round together in Europe. What do you

think his ceiling is out here?

STEVEN ALKER: Sorry, what? His ceiling?

Q. Yeah. How much could he win?

STEVEN ALKER: Yeah. The sky's the limit. You look at someone like me just coming back out and wanting to play and doing as well as I am, again, if he stays fit and stays strong, hits it long, as long as anybody out there, yeah, the sky's the limit.

Looks like he's kind of in between here and playing some Europe and still PGA, so he's got all that going on. He's had some good finishes, which he's still got some game for sure.

Yeah, my focus is here, and his not here fully right now. I think when he decides to do that, he'll do very, very well, for sure.

Q. Have you ever -- when you first started playing pro golf, did you have a really good friend that kind of, okay, I'm packing it in early in my career? Was there ever a friend of yours that you think maybe gave it up too early?

STEVEN ALKER: Quite a few guys, to be honest. Guys that I traveled with when I started playing Australasia and the islands tours. A couple of guys decided this is not for me. They did their two, three years and thought, no, I'm not up for it. They probably had the game and decided not to, did some coaching.

I'm not going to point anyone out in particular, but there's a bunch of guys I traveled with that decided not to. I think my focus was kind of different. It was more long term against the short term.

Q. I would think, if you're going to try to play global golf and around the world, you're coming from about as far away as you can come.

STEVEN ALKER: Exactly.

Q. Like a California kid who can play in all kinds of mini tours within a few miles of his house.

STEVEN ALKER: I like to travel too. I like experiencing other countries. I did that when I was young. I started traveling when I was 15 with New Zealand Golf just all over the world. So I was just kind of -- that's just what I wanted to do, enjoyed it.

I think that's half the battle is enjoying the lifestyle and

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enjoying the grind. I enjoy that grind, and I think when that goes, that's kind of when I'll probably hang it up. When that enjoyment of the grind goes.

Q. Who did you look up to when you were young that made you want to get into this game?

STEVEN ALKER: When I was playing amateur golf, we had guys -- obviously Bob Charles was our big guy in New Zealand. Frank Nobilo is one who is doing very well; Greg Turner. We had a bunch of those guys who had a pretty good impact on me.

Dad played as well. My father, he's passed now, but huge, huge impact on the game and just teaching me etiquette and all those small things that you need to learn as a youngster.

And I was lucky enough, when I was younger, to be around guys like Bob Charles. Before I turned pro, my coach used to work at the golf course that Bob played at, and when Bob was home, not playing the Champions Tour, he'd be hitting balls every day.

I'd just hang out with Bob Charles chipping and putting, go hit some balls with him. We would go and play a little bit maybe. It was a lot of fun.

Q. Thinking about Bob Charles, he played on this TOUR eventually, and now here you are doing the same thing.

STEVEN ALKER: Yeah, it's pretty good. We've had some correspondence and he's been giving me some help kind of getting back out here and just picking his brain. It's been fun.

Q. How many times have you tried to qualify for the PGA TOUR?

STEVEN ALKER: Yeah, a few. I've lost count of the TOUR schools. I can't remember. Actually, I never got through a tour school, to be honest. I got through the Korn Ferry Tour all three times, I think. Yeah, just a lot of tour schools, a lot of grinding.

Q. You mentioned your age, 48 to 50, on the Korn Ferry. Those are the only three years you played on it?

STEVEN ALKER: No, I started playing back in 2002 was my first year. Then I was back and forth, played some PGA, went to Europe, then come back again.

Q. Got to keep yourself grounded, and now that you're

out here playing with legends, Hall of Famers, you're their equal now.

STEVEN ALKER: It's tough. Up until a few weeks ago I hadn't played with guys like Ernie Els and Vijay Singh, Steve Stricker. Never played with the guys, never got a chance to play with them out on the main TOUR.

I'm finding the hardest thing is trying not to watch them when I'm on the golf course playing in competition, trying to stick in my game and do my stuff. That's the hardest thing. I'm still trying to learn. I like watching and trying to learn things.

I played nine holes with Rocco Mediate today. I think I played with him once before, but just watching him play little shots around the green and shots he's hitting. I like watching guys.

Q. I'm sure he made you laugh a little bit.

STEVEN ALKER: For sure. He was at it for nine holes. He's always giving me heck. It's good fun.

THE MODERATOR: Steve Alker, thanks for your time. Good luck this week.

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