

# U.S. Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 22, 2022  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA  
Saucon Valley C.C. (Old Course)

## Steve Stricker

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the interview area. We are here with 2019 champion Steve Stricker. Steve, just talk about your impressions of the course.

STEVE STRICKER: It's beautiful. First time here. I've never been here to this area before. It's a wonderful area. It's beautiful. The course is perfect. It's in great shape.

The rough is up. It's a real good test, strong test.

#### **Q. What kind of golf is going to have to be played here for someone to hoist a trophy here on Sunday?**

STEVE STRICKER: You're going to have to play really good golf because, if you stray too far off the fairways, like I said, the rough is thick. Most times you're going to get a bad lie where you're just trying to get it onto the front of the green somewhere, two-putt, get your par, and get out of there.

You can catch some good lies, but for the most part it's pretty challenging.

And then the green surfaces are great, but there's some severe greens that the USGA is going to have to deal with and so will the players.

There's a few holes out there that pin locations are going to be tough to find. So that will be a challenge.

So par on a few holes are going to be really good, and then you're going to have to take advantage of some other holes.

THE MODERATOR: Talk a little bit about the atmosphere at a Senior Open. It's a little bit like a U.S. Open. And even today on Wednesday, crowds were great.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, for sure. You feel like you're at the regular U.S. Open. You've got great crowds here, a stern test, and it just -- it feels legitimate. It doesn't feel like



a Champions Tour event. It feels like the real deal.

So it's great to be here, and so far this week they've put on a great show.

#### **Q. Can you talk a little bit about some of the holes specifically that the greens are going to be most challenging?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, No. 11, par-3 up the hill. It's severe back to front, a lot of undulation in that green. And I imagine they'll move us up probably a little bit just so we'll have something with a shorter club in our hands to try and control it a little bit more.

Yeah, if you don't -- if the pin's in the back and you don't get it on the back plateau, you're coming all the way down to the front of the green.

The greens, I felt like, were a little bit slower today. I don't know if it's because of the overcast skies or what or if they did it on purpose, but I think there's a couple holes out there, 11 and then 17 as well, the other par-3.

And even -- yeah, those two in general for the most part. Those par-3s where it's going to be a little bit of a challenge to find four pin locations. There may be one or two, but to find four is going to be a challenge.

#### **Q. How about No. 2, which combines a little bit of length as well as that green?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, you've got length to that. I only played it yesterday; I didn't play it today. Yeah, there's quadrants there, where if you don't get in the right areas it's going to be a tough up and down or tough two-putt really, and that's got some length.

I think I hit 5-iron in there yesterday to a front hole location, and that after a good drive.

And if you don't hit it that fairway, you're not more than likely going to get to the green in two. So it's a really strong test. It will be fun to play.

#### **Q. You had to take some time off, you came back, played really well. Talk about the state of your game in general coming into this week.**



STEVE STRICKER: It's okay. My physicalness isn't where I really want it to be yet, so I'm kind of trying to play a little bit and work on that part all at the same time, and it's been a little bit of a challenge.

My game, it's okay. I think I'm in an okay spot this week. We'll see, though. The big thing is to get the ball on the fairway here. If you can do that, then things will ease up on you a little bit.

**Q. Just curious, when you were out, and we know about the illness right after the Ryder Cup and stuff, is that as long as you've been away from golf in how many years?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah. Probably forever really, since I started playing the game. I didn't play -- I think Jim Furyk's event in October I played, and then I didn't play all the way until I think May or in April, right around the first of May. Yeah, it was a long time, six months probably.

I don't think I've been away from the game -- and plus, during that time I didn't pick up a club for four of the months just because I wasn't physically able to. So that was probably the hard part.

Then really the big challenge is my body changed so much after those three months. I lost all my strength, and all this whatever muscle I did have was gone. So that part's been -- it's coming back, but not as fast as I'd like.

**Q. The difference between playing -- you've kind of gotten accustomed to playing 54-hole tournaments, and now you've got 72; just the difference. You're used to 72 for years, but you get away from it and kind of have to remind yourself.**

STEVE STRICKER: Right. And then we played 18 holes yesterday, and we're out here again today. It's a bigger week for all of us. We're not used to that.

And usually our practice rounds are in a cart, so we kind of can take it easy on Wednesdays and Thursdays, Pro-Am when you're in a cart.

So, yeah, everything about this week is more like a regular U.S. Open. You're here earlier. You're practicing more. And it's 72 holes.

**Q. Steve, you played a little bit of practice round with David Duval. It's his first time and your first time you won. Did he pick your brain at all about --**

STEVE STRICKER: I didn't play with him this week.

**Q. At all?**

STEVE STRICKER: No, I didn't.

**Q. I thought you were playing with him today.**

STEVE STRICKER: No, I didn't play with him today. Yeah, we were on the tee sheet, but I don't know what happened there. We didn't play.

He's a great guy, a great competitor. Yeah, you never know. He could play well. But whoever plays well, like I said, is going to have to drive it in the fairway.

**Q. I did have one last one. What was the first time in your career you ever knew about ball speed?**

STEVE STRICKER: Good question. Now we talk about it all the time, right? Even 50-year-olds and guys on the Champions Tour are talking about it and trying to create more speed.

I looked up into that system that Fitzpatrick was using to create higher ball speeds. I'll probably order one as soon as I can, but I guess you can't get it until August.

Yeah, we're all trying to find that little bit of an edge. Even if it's five yards, ten yards, it's a big difference at times. I can't answer that. I don't know when.

**Q. It seems to me it's this generation.**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah.

**Q. But like you said, kids that are 16, they know their ball speed.**

STEVE STRICKER: We knew of swing speed probably more before the ball speed stuff, right? Those two go hand in hand.

I can remember first coming out on TOUR or right when the TrackMans came about, getting on some sort of machine at the Titleist fitting center where you knew your swing speed, you knew how fast you were swinging it.

Then all the data that the TOUR collects, then you start paying attention to that when you're out there playing because it's different than when you just go hit range balls.

So the swing speed was kind of first, and now it seems to be all about the ball speed, which is the same, one and the same. Yeah, we talk about it all the time.

