

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Tuesday, June 27, 2023
Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA
SentryWorld

Steve Stricker

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming our 2019 champion Steve Stricker. Steve, how does it feel to be back in Wisconsin and playing a major here?

STEVE STRICKER: It's great to be able to hop in your car, drive up the road to compete here at a place that I won at 39 years ago. It's pretty crazy that all this time has flown by.

Yeah, it's a special spot. This is one of the first golf courses in Wisconsin, kind of like the new design kind of course that we were able to play as junior golfers. So it's pretty special to be able to come back here full circle, right?

To play a Champions Tour major out here is pretty neat.

THE MODERATOR: You've played here quite a bit. What are you seeing in the course this week that might make it a little different?

STEVE STRICKER: It's challenging. The rough is up. I was here a couple times over the last couple weeks, and the rough is up. Fairways are pretty narrow. Depending on how they set it up, it's a legitimate test. It's going to be a challenge.

It's in great shape. They haven't played any rounds here since last September, I guess, so it's in pure shape. Looking forward to the start of it.

Q. So you were born and raised in Wisconsin and you attended Illinois for school, and me and my family see you at Badger events a lot. When they play, who do you cheer for?

STEVE STRICKER: We can't say that very loudly, but I cheer for the Badgers. It's hard to go against my alma mater, but born and raised in Wisconsin, I was always a Badger fan growing up. Went to a lot of Badger basketball games, football games as kids. So it's somebody that I



always cheer and root for even when they do play my alma mater.

Q. I just have one question. What is your strategy to win this major?

STEVE STRICKER: Good question. Got to hit it in the fairway. I think that's going to be the key this week is we have to hit it in the fairway. The rough is thick, unless they've mowed it here the last couple days. It's very thick. It's very penal. If you're going to be playing out of the rough, it's going to be hard to get the ball on the green, first of all, or even close to the hole.

First step off of each tee is to get that ball in the fairway no matter how you can. Then there's some scoring opportunities, I think, if you can do that.

Q. I love the '80s. You love the '80s. You mentioned it, 39 years ago. Is there any little thing that you remember that gives you an edge here, or is it so different it doesn't matter?

STEVE STRICKER: I remember the flowers. That's what I remember. I remember shooting 76, 76. Now that's not going to get it done this week here. Beyond that, I remember my friends coming up. It was the state high school event here, state championship. I remember my family and friends obviously being here.

Beyond that and the couple scores that I shot, that's about it.

Q. Steve, it doesn't sound like this is going to be a bomb-and-gouge course where you hit it as far as you can and don't care if you're in the rough. Are you going to hit a lot of drivers? It's also going to play pretty long, so do you have to hit driver or 3-wood on most of the holes?

STEVE STRICKER: Most of them -- I shouldn't say most of them, but there are some long holes where you have to drive it. There's a couple of par-5s where, if you drive it well, you may be able to reach it. Obviously length in the fairway is going to be important, but then you turn around, and there's going to be some holes where laying it up in the fairway is going to be just as important.



You know, utility off the tee, a 3-wood. There's definite holes where you're going to have to drive it.

Q. Are you going to -- are the par-5s reachable for you?

STEVE STRICKER: There's three of them here, I think, right? I reached No. 10 the other day when it was downwind, but it was blowing pretty good downwind. I reached that.

I can reach No. 5, is it, around the water?

And then the other one, I cannot, No. 14. I think it's 14. I can't reach that. But a couple of them I can.

Q. In terms of playing aggressive, especially on those par-5s, are you going to be looking more at like Thursday, Friday, trying to go after those greens in two, and then on the weekend playing more conservative? How are you going to play that?

STEVE STRICKER: I don't know. I don't know if I've come up with a game plan yet as far as -- I'll see. I might be able to hit 3-wood off of 5 and still be able to get there. That's a tee ball where you're really going to have to be in the fairway. Well, all of them you're going to have to be in the fairway to try and reach it.

I'll go around here these next couple days and kind of -- I'll just play nine holes today and nine holes tomorrow, and I'll get a better idea of course conditions, how they are today and tomorrow, and really how I feel when I get up on the tee box.

You know, it's really not -- for me, it's just all about getting it in the fairway. It really is going to be just as simple as that, to be able to try to go for it. I don't have a lot of extra power in there. I may be able to get it out there another five or ten extra yards if I swing a little bit harder, but it's going to be about getting it in play in the fairway.

Q. The past year, two years, you've been playing very hot. One, what has been working? How do you make sure that you bring it into this week? Also, what would it mean to win at home on such a big stage?

STEVE STRICKER: It's just about doing the same things that I've been doing. I think it's just been consistency for me. I've been doing pretty much everything fairly well, driving it in the fairway, getting it on the greens. I've been putting better lately. So just doing everything fairly well.

I don't think you've got to do one or two things great, but just if you can do everything pretty consistently, and that's

what I've been doing.

To win here would mean a lot. It's a major championship, first of all. It's right here in our backyard, and I've had history on this golf course. So it would be a really cool, really cool spot to win.

Q. Obviously there's an air quality warning and there's a haze out there. Does that affect your ball flight? Does that affect your shot-making ability? The other thing is just walking the course can you feel it? Or will that affect you as you play?

STEVE STRICKER: So far it hasn't. Any of this stuff hasn't -- we could smell it down in Madison a little bit more, I thought yesterday, for some reason. I think I haven't really noticed it affecting anything out on the golf course, and me personally, I haven't noticed anything affecting myself from a physical standpoint.

Q. I subconsciously called Jerry your name. I don't know if that's a compliment to him or you. You take that for what it is. How would you describe your relationship with Jerry? He described it as brothers.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, we are. We're very close. We're root for each other. Our kids grew up together. We don't see a lot of each other at home as much as we probably should just because we're -- once we get home, we're kind of running in different things. I got girls that are playing, so I end up going to a lot of things for them.

So we don't probably hang out as much as we probably should at home, but when we do, we have a great time. We enjoy being with one another.

Again, that goes way back to junior golf days here at SentryWorld and in our state that I got to know Jerry and be with Jerry. He's a great guy. He's got a great heart, great family, and love the guy. He's a special guy to our family for sure.

Q. Another home major for you. Is this different than maybe 2010 and 2017? Just a two-parter. Do you feel a little bit more pressure coming into this one given your recent success?

STEVE STRICKER: I would say it's a little bit different than the majors on TOUR just because the point in time where I am in my career, I'm kind of just enjoying things a little bit more. Back in those days when we were playing at Whistling Straits or Erin Hills, I felt probably more pressure.

Now it's kind of like, okay, let's just go have fun with this and I got a different perspective on life and golf lately. So

it's just let's go have fun and see where it goes kind of thing.

That's kind of the way I'm playing. You can play better that way, I think, and I'm enjoying it a lot. I've got Nicki on the bag this week. She'll be here. It's been a lot of fun. I would say it's a different kind of pressure than -- obviously I'm feeling pressure this week. I want to play well. I want to compete and try to have the opportunity to win, but back then that's a different level, I would say, and I felt probably more pressure back then.

Q. Just what went into picking Nicki on the bag this week?

STEVE STRICKER: It's her bag any time she wants it. She couldn't make it today, so I'm going to have to have, I don't know, Gary. Gary will go around with me. So just she couldn't make it today, but she'll be here tomorrow and the rest of the week.

Like I said, it's hers whenever she wants it, and I leave it up to her. Sometimes she has enough of it, and sometimes she's like, yeah, I want to go. So it's totally up to her.

Q. Just wondering what to do with your last two weeks off, Steve? I know you came up here with the girls maybe, but what else did you do to sort of relax?

STEVE STRICKER: Went up to Wisconsin for a little while, for ten days. Went over to watch Bobbi play in the UP. She played an Epson TOUR event there. Hit this on the way back down, so I was able to see it a couple of times.

Yeah, it was golf in there, but I was able to get away and fish a little bit and just kind of do nothing for a few days.

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