

# U.S. Senior Open Championship

Friday, June 30, 2023

Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA

SentryWorld

## Steve Stricker

Flash Interview

THE MODERATOR: Steve Stricker, 1-under 70 today, even par and tied for sixth. How would you assess where you're standing going into the weekend?

STEVE STRICKER: At the start of the day, I was like let's just get back to even par for the tournament. It's a little disappointing -- you know, I bogeyed No. 6 and 9 to finish, but they're tough holes. Didn't drive it in the fairway on either one of those holes. So from that point, it makes it pretty difficult.

But I'm right in there. The scores aren't going anywhere. It's very challenging. It's very tough. If you don't hit the fairway, you're scrambling.

I'm in a good spot. It looks like three back for sure. Like I said, there's some tough pins out there today. The wind is up and down. The course has got a lot of teeth to it. Again, I feel okay where I'm at.

**Q. Steve, you certainly know what USGA Championships are all about, but how tough is it week to week making 20 to 25 birdies on the Champions Tour, and then you have to adjust your mindset to a completely different kind of golf here?**

STEVE STRICKER: It is. It is a different mindset, but it's one that we've played and you're used to. You revert back to that mentality pretty quick knowing that you have to get it in the fairway on the tee at all costs, and if you don't, then you become in scramble mode. How best can you get a ten-footer for a par, look at it on the green.

Again, it's different, but yet we played so many of these through the course of our career, and this is the way I remember U.S. Opens when I first got on TOUR, this type of difficulty.

So, yeah, it's a legitimate test this week.

**Q. Steve, you skirted disaster on 9 yesterday, but**



today obviously a little bit different. When they moved the tee back, assuming they do on the weekend, how will that hole play differently? Then is that hole in the right place for the weekend as opposed to maybe at the back end of the golf course? Could you imagine that hole settling this championship?

STEVE STRICKER: No, it's a little bit of a quirky hole. I don't even know if you could play it as a par-5. There's just nowhere to drive it if it was a par-5, and it plays into the wind.

I think, where we played is the first couple days, guys in my group have been hitting 3-woods. Driver can kind of get into the next part of the creek. So if they move the tee back, it's going to be a driver for sure. It will play -- you'll probably have a 6- or a 7-iron in there probably.

It's a tough hole. There's not a lot of space to hit it off the tee. It's one that, if you make a 4, you're ahead of the game.

**Q. Along with the L.A. Country Club comment, Padraig also said he thought this course allows for some chasing a little bit, like being a few shots behind is not the end of things. Do you look at that now on a Saturday, or is it still just about a number you've got in your own head and you're not really looking at chasing Bernhard or Rod or something like that?**

STEVE STRICKER: I'm paying attention to who's on top and where the lead is at. Obviously I wanted to get more under par than where I was at there coming in.

Yeah, it's just about patience too, and we're only halfway through and a lot can happen still.

Padraig's right. You can get it going here. I had it 3-under on the day in the middle of the fairway on No. 4 with a sand wedge in my hand and a par-5 coming up next, and I don't make two birdies there. Or I should have probably made one, you know. So it's out there.

If you play well, if you get it in the fairway, you can definitely shoot a good, you know, I'm saying a 4-, 5-under round, so would be a helluva round.

But it's tough.



**Q. You had that near miss on that chip-in; another birdie putt that just skated right by. Is it encouraging when you have shots that close because you know you're hitting it right and eventually they'll fall? How does that kind of work in your mind?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, the near chip-in at No. 7, I guess I'm disappointed that it didn't go in, but at the end of the day it was a good 3. So I walk off there feeling a little bit both ways.

You just can't get too high or too down on yourself here. Any U.S. Open you can't do that. You can't think that you got the course licked. Like yesterday, I make the turn 2-under, and I'm going to the back nine. I've got some birdie holes to start with, and all of a sudden, bang, I'm 2-over.

It can jump up and get you really quick, and you have to pay attention. It's a challenge.

**Q. Did Nicki have to calm you down a little bit on the last few holes, or did she more or less stay out of your way because you were a little ticked off on 9?**

STEVE STRICKER: It's just I know how important it is to drive it in the fairway there, and I just didn't put a good swing on a 3-wood. I tried to send it down the right and turned it over, and I started in the middle and turned it over.

That rough on the left is the worst on the course, and I know it is. My ball was straight down there. I had all I could do to hit a sand wedge 40 or 50 yards.

So it's -- yeah, I wanted to make a par and get under par kind of thing.

But again, I'm right there. I'm going to have to have a couple good rounds this weekend, but I'm right in there.

**Q. On No. 5, it looked like there was some deliberation between going for it and then laying up to where you did. Talk us through that. What ultimately did laying up -- how did that win out?**

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, laid up kind of in a wrong spot. I thought I was going to be far enough back, but I got a better look at what I need to do there if I'm going to lay up.

I had a number I could go for it with. I think I had 215 or 218 to the front, but that was a 3-iron that I would have had to hit. Then the tree is there.

I didn't know if I could hit it high enough to get it over the

tree, then I surely wasn't going to be able to stop it, so it was going to go in a back bunker somewhere. So that's why I decided to lay up. I can't believe that my wedge over the tree stopped so fast really. I thought anything over there would just skate down to the hole.

It left me with a putt that's super defensive, had a lot of break to it. That was the case today on a lot of holes, where the pin placements were in some challenging spots, right on the crowns. If you're on the wrong side, you're really defensive. It was hard to have a putt where you could be really aggressive with.

But that's a tough hole. You've got to first get it in the fairway, and then it provides all these questions in your mind what you should really do. So it's a good risk/reward hole.

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