

U.S. Senior Open Championship

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Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA

SentryWorld

Mark Strickland

Flash Interview

THE MODERATOR: Mark Strickland, low amateur for the U.S. Senior Open. Did that thought ever cross your mind before you tee'd it up on Thursday?

MARK STRICKLAND: For sure. Yeah, once you get by Friday and make the cut, it begins a whole new ballgame. And we had a great time out there. Today I didn't look at any scores. Just did my own thing, and then when we putted out on 18 I asked how we did and he said we did it. I didn't want to know.

Q. Looked like you were flirting with the cut line a little bit on Friday. Was it almost like a sense of relief because of pair of 73s on the weekend looked like you really turned it on come Saturday.

MARK STRICKLAND: Yeah, I did. I had an unfortunate incident on Thursday. My playing partner and I hit the wrong golf ball and really it had this going until that point on Thursday. Made a triple bogey and it set me back and kind of got my fired up though a little bit and a little bit more motivated because it was something so easily avoidable that I let get in anyway.

But I'm really happy with the way I played all week. I just love the golf course. It kind of fit my eye and I had a great time.

Q. Walk us through the incident on Thursday?

MARK STRICKLAND: Yeah, John Abera and I, who I've known forever through college golf, we both hit in the right bunker. I thought for sure I hit mine, and when we were walking up I told my caddie, I'm on the right, so he just walked over to do right side and then John got up and probably saw my caddie over by my ball and got in there and couldn't see any logos on it.

He hit his, and sure enough I couldn't see any logos and I hit that one. Then it was a few minutes. I marked it and picked it up and then after he was just about to putt and I



looked down and my heart just sank. I couldn't believe I was looking the at miss-marked ball. So I've done that before but it's been a long, long time, so learned a nice lesson.

Q. For amateurs that would play in a U.S. Open, how do you handle these kind of conditions? I know you played at a higher level.

MARK STRICKLAND: Yeah.

Q. There is a lot of people out there watching you this week that wonder how the heck do you get around this golf course?

MARK STRICKLAND: Yeah, this was my 19th USGA event and second Senior Open, and I think it's the hardest setup I played, and I played the U.S. Open amateurs at Winged Foot and Merion and Hazeltine, and I thought this was the toughest I've seen. It was really, really difficult and you really had to kind of think your way around and make sure you're in the fairway. It wasn't overly long.

Seemed like on the Monday and Tuesday it played really long. As the course dried out it helped some of the shorter hitters get some more roll in the fairways.

Q. Mark, I was going to ask you about having played in the Senior Open before and going 72 holes, how much did that help you this week?

MARK STRICKLAND: For sure. Yes, knowing that I could do it. You know, that's the big thing. I played at the country club at Omaha which was another difficult golf course and played well the first two days and then didn't play well on the weekend.

Kind of peaked that week on a Monday, Tuesday, and kind of slipped during the week. This week I felt like my game wasn't really on Monday and Tuesday and then each day it got a little better.

So it was nice the way it -- because that's what it's all about, is trying to peak at the right time. It's so hard to do. I felt like my game was trending the right way rather than the opposite last time.

Q. You just cited how long you've been playing in



USGA championships. I think you went back to the '91 Amateur Public Links?

MARK STRICKLAND: I go back to the '84 U.S. Junior. Yeah, so played in three United States Juniors, '84, '85, and '86, and after I qualified for my first one, it was '84 went to Wayzata Country Club in Minnesota and chipped in for par in the qualifying on the last hole to make it on the number.

Went to Minnesota and saw the bent grass fairways and the well conditioned course and told my mom and dad, I said I want to play in as many of these as I can. They're so hard to get into.

It was so much fun. Just that's what drives me, playing in the USGA events. They're so much fun.

Q. You may not know this yet but the low amateur is honored they prize ceremony at the end of the day?

MARK STRICKLAND: Yeah, that's fantastic.

Yeah, looking forward to it. Looking forward to it.

Q. I know low amateur also is exempt into a few more future USGA events. How much are you looking forward to continuing your USGA journey?

MARK STRICKLAND: Oh, I am. Cherry Hills, I know the Amateur, and then Sleepy Hollow, the Mid-Amateur. Next year at Newport. I think was it 2020 when the tournament was canceled? At Newport? That was a big disappointment because I had just turned 50 a year prior. You only have so many years, so I hated that it got canceled. It's going to be fun to see that golf course.

The fella who caddied for me is one of my best buddies from Atlanta, and he's super excited. I told him that get him an exemption too.

Q. Who's here with you this week?

MARK STRICKLAND: I have my wife and my daughter, as far as family goes. Then I had two couples from Atlanta. Then one of my good buddies from San Diego flew out. He left yesterday morning. The same crew came out to Omaha as well. We had a great time.

The only one not here is my son. He just had a baby.

Q. Was it all golf, or did you get out and see the area?

MARK STRICKLAND: We didn't. We rented an Airbnb and went to the same spot for dinner and got an ice cream

afterwards and I think seven days in a row. We found whatever was working and stuck to it.

Q. Same restaurant?

MARK STRICKLAND: Same restaurant, yeah.

Q. Which one?

MARK STRICKLAND: Hilltop. We've been there since Monday. I think we skipped Tuesday. We ordered some pizzas. But every other day. The then we go to Belts' for a little ice cream. Wait in line a little bit.

Q. If you go at the wrong time.

MARK STRICKLAND: Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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