

U.S. Senior Open Championship

Wednesday, June 26, 2024

Newport, Rhode Island, USA

Newport Country Club

Steve Stricker

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome 2019 U.S. Senior Open champion Steve Stricker here at the Newport Country Club. This golf course seemingly provides a different test than normal. What would you say the most challenging aspect is going to be here at Newport?

STEVE STRICKER: Potentially could be the wind, the weather. Today was pretty gusty. I would say a good solid 20 miles an hour with some bigger gusts at times. Yeah, that potentially could be the challenge here.

It's a wonderful layout. The facilities, the clubhouse we're staring at right there is really nice. Just being here in Newport is quite a treat for all of us, I think. All the downtown area, a lot of shops, a lot of places to eat. It's a little different than our normal venue, but it's really cool.

Q. I noticed you out there working on your putting. What is it you do to get your stroke dialed in before a big tournament like this?

STEVE STRICKER: It's been a little bit of a challenge lately on the greens for me. I've been -- I think I'm going to go with a different putter, to be quite honest with you. A counterbalanced putter sort of like -- well, it's the exact same thing that Wyndham Clark putts with.

It just feels a little bit more stable, especially in these windy conditions. I found that it's heavier. It seems to hold the line a little bit better, the putter does, I should say. It just seems to track on my line a little bit better.

That's the one thing that's been kind of letting me down so far this year is getting the ball in the hole. And it's tough to practice right there where we're getting battered around in the wind. That green is a little bit different than the course. It's a little thinner. They aerated it. There's still some marks in there from the aeration hole. It's not as good as the golf course, so you sit there maybe too long.

Yeah, I'm just trying to dial it in, trying to get a good feel.



Q. What's your favorite drill to do to get that?

STEVE STRICKER: Really, I just putt. I've never been a drill guy. I just putt just like I would do out on the golf course and try to get a feel for my stroke, tempo. I really don't have any drills that I do.

Q. Your brother-in-law is in the field this week. How is that experience preparing for this together?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun. We played every practice round together. Dinners together.

We do this almost every week nowadays. He's getting into a lot more of these events on the Champions Tour. When I'm out he's usually out playing, so we spend a lot of time together which has been a lot of fun.

Yeah, watching him, rooting for him, and hopefully he has a good week this week. He hits it nice. He's starting to figure out his putting a little bit, so hopefully he puts it all together.

Q. When you said the putting thing, are you looking at changing anything other than the putter, like the grip?

STEVE STRICKER: My mind.

Q. The shaft?

STEVE STRICKER: On my original putter?

Q. No. Yeah, like while you're changing putters now.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that's a whole different -- it's a complete 180 from where I'm at. This putter that I'm putting with, it's more face balance. It's got a different neck on there. It's a big ole grip. It's counterbalanced. It's longer than my putter.

It feels just a little bit easier to keep the putter head on my line right now, and I've been struggling with consistency with mine. It's a smaller blade. I've gotten older. It's getting harder. It's something that I may just switch to this week.

I really haven't been putting worth a lick, so I think I'm



going to do it. And it can't hurt, I don't think.

Q. When you talk about getting older, and I guess as you get older, your body changes, struggling a little. You weren't one of those guys who would come out here and play every week. That means you're going home and usually practicing. Do you still do the same routines, or are you just kind of taking it more easy than you have been in the past?

STEVE STRICKER: I would say it's getting harder to spend the time at home, to prepare. I still play a lot of golf when I'm home. The kids are playing, Nicki is playing, so I end up playing a lot of golf. But sitting on the range or the putting green, I just don't do at all anymore, or very rarely.

So just kind of play to get in shape, so that part has changed too. I still come out here with a lot of desire and competitiveness to try to play well and get an opportunity to win here. We've got a great venue, a great tournament, USGA event, and it would be a good one to win.

Q. So going back to 2021 with the Ryder Cup win, what lessons did you learn from that experience that can be applicable to this week at Newport?

STEVE STRICKER: Probably really no correlation, I would say. I was a captain; didn't even play. Just trying to make sure the guys were all on the same page. They're going to be playing with the guys that they want to play with and who we feel like would make a good team. A lot of communication between the captains and the players. So there's no real playing part to it. It's two different things.

Certainly a wonderful time for myself and my family for that event, the Ryder Cup in Wisconsin. But, yeah, completely different.

Q. Switching gears a little bit, what kind of things need to happen for someone to win the U.S. Senior Open this weekend?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, you're going to have to get a good draw. You don't want to get on the bad side of the draw, I don't think, which potentially could happen here. That would be the first thing.

Then I think just putting it in the fairways. The fairways are generous, for sure, but the rough is up on the edges. It's thick. It lays down. There's some grain to it, so you could get some bad lies.

Then a lot of the greens out here are kind of bowls. They're high on the edges all the way around. Short-siding yourself here is not going to be an easy up-and-down.

I think it's going to take all parts of your game to manage the conditions, manage the game, your nerves, and obviously making a few putts.

Q. Last year you and Jerry Kelly were kind of in a host role being in Wisconsin. Billy Andrade and Brett Quigley are kind of in that same role this year. What is that like to play in your home state, and did they offer any insights to you about Newport prior to coming here?

STEVE STRICKER: I knew nothing about Newport. I just heard from Billy that it was a great venue, one that we're going to really enjoy, and we have thus far.

Yeah, I think there's expectations that are put on those guys. We're in their home territory. You feel a little bit of that added pressure. You want to play well and get off to a good start, get in contention, all that stuff.

Yeah, there's a little extra pressure put on yourself, but you can use that to your advantage, play well, and people can get behind you, which really can help too.

Q. When you first stepped on this property -- and you've played all over the world -- what are maybe one or two courses that this reminded you of?

STEVE STRICKER: It kind of has that Shinnecock feel a little bit. A little. It's just you step here, looking at the clubhouse, I went up to the locker room, beautiful view. I'm at the very top there looking out to the ocean. The American flag is sitting right there in my face.

It just gives you that U.S. Open feel right out of the chute. You're at an old venue, historic venue, and one that quite frankly we're lucky to be at for us on the Champions Tour.

We're excited to be here, and it's a good spot.

Q. What would you say then over the next four days that someone who wins this would have to do well in order to hold the trophy at the end?

STEVE STRICKER: I think just what I said to the other gentleman there: I think you're going to have to do everything well. You're going to have to put the ball on the fairway. Generous fairways, but you're still going to have to put them in the fairway.

Potentially, if the conditions are favorable, I think you're going to see some good scores. But if the wind kicks up like today, like it did today, I think it's going to be a challenge.

Q. Have you seen two courses more dramatically different than last year at SentryWorld and now here in Newport?

STEVE STRICKER: Small town in Wisconsin just like Newport, but definitely a different feel. Got this northeastern feel here. Like I said, a little bit Shinnecock, Long Island-ish kind of deal, and then you're in the heartland of Wisconsin, small town.

I didn't see any seafood restaurants in Stevens Point last year, a lot of Culver's, but completely opposite feel.

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