

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
June 22, 2018



STEVE STRICKER (-8)

Q. Steve, you got off to a fantastic start. How do you go from the process of hitting the tee ball and playing and starting to make birdies, because you obviously knew you needed to make a lot out here?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I didn't know that to start with. I mean, we had a little bit indifferent day with the weather the way it was. The wind was out of the northeast, which is a wind that we don't see very much of this time of year. So there was some holes to start with that played pretty tough and I got through those holes in good shape. Then just kept giving myself a few opportunities. A little hiccup on No. 9, but other than that it was a good round today.

Q. What were you hoping to find early on in terms of coming from the Open here? It's a different mindset where you're playing for par last week and now you're playing for birdie out here.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it is a little bit different, but it's still golf. Get it in the fairway and then get it on the green, give yourself an opportunity, and did I that today. I took one shot at a time. For the most part I never got too far ahead of myself and, you know, just got it in the fairway, got it on the green.

I made a couple really nice putts early on today and missed a couple short ones, but overall I putted really well. And yeah, I think once that U.S. Open is done and behind you, you kind of revert back to what you know how to do. Play out here on the Champions Tour is such that you need to go low, you need to be ready to make some birdies and this course is no different. So you need to come out here and be a little bit aggressive and roll a few putts in.

Q. Your legs and energy obviously pretty good. Was that a concern earlier in the week or did you think you would be fine?

STEVE STRICKER: I thought I would be okay by today. I had a good couple days of rest Monday and half a day Tuesday, practiced a little bit Tuesday afternoon, but I feel okay. I'm looking forward to that next two weeks, I can tell you that, but I feel good. I'm excited to be here and I'm excited to play. You know, it's a lot of adrenaline this week, that's kind of what I'm running on, I think. It's a big week for us and so I'm just going with it. I'll hit the wall I'm sure next week.

Q. I know you would rather walk off the last green in front on Sunday, but what does it mean to walk off at this point with the lead?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's good. You know, just to get off to a good start, which is key out here. There's only three rounds, so you need to kind of do it every day kind of attitude. So this was the first day and I did well today, and I've got to do the same thing tomorrow and just keep doing what I'm doing. Just keep putting it in play and giving myself opportunities.

Q. Kind of a non-golf question, but the Shaq circus was pretty fun. I know you didn't get to see it, but --

STEVE STRICKER: We heard them. Yeah, we were on 15 tee and Vijay actually had to kind of step back and wait for them to be done with whatever he was doing. But we could hear him. What was he doing?

Q. He was announcing David Toms' group coming up.

STEVE STRICKER: Oh, was he? Well, look forward to a lot of that tonight. I'm anxious to see him and hopefully get to meet him and see what kind of DJ he is in between these groups that we have tonight.

Q. So you'll be going, this doesn't change anything?

STEVE STRICKER: No, not at all. I'll be going. Kind of been looking forward to tonight and seeing the whole thing. You know, I'm sure some of those REO Speedwagon is going to kind of make the brain think of high school all over again, so it should be interesting.

Q. How do you like that, though, Steve? You seem to keep adding something every year. This year Shaq seems to be making a stir, but last year it was the concert. How do you like that in terms of this whole tournament?

STEVE STRICKER: Well, that's our goal is to kind of encompass the whole community, get everybody aware of what's going on, what we're doing out here, why we're doing it, to raise charity monies to give to the hospital and other organizations. So it's just our way of kind of giving back to the community and making people aware of not only American Family Insurance in our community, which they're a great company and a great neighbor to everybody, but what we're doing, you know, to raise money to give back. So it's part of the plan to get everybody involved.

Q. It's become more than a golf tournament?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and that was the goal, to get it to be just more than a golf tournament and to bring more people in to what we're doing into the game. If they want to maybe come out and enjoy some golf, they can do that, too. But if they just want to go to the concert tonight and have fun with that, they can do that.

Q. Would you like to see not ball in hand tomorrow or does it matter?

STEVE STRICKER: It doesn't matter really. It's the same for everybody. It's a little wet out there at times. You know, I think the mowers even had a hard time getting into some of the spots because of the softness, but not that big a deal. The course is in great shape. It's the best it's been in three years we've been here. It won't be a problem if we have to play it down. We did get some mud balls today here and there, so it was good to play it in hand, but I could see with the forecast looking good that we might play it down.

Q. Did the bogey on 9 kind of kick you in the pants for the back nine?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that wasn't a fun bogey. I hit it in the bunker, I couldn't advance too far down the fairway and pulled my 8-iron and then plugged the lie. But I hit a really nice little bunker shot out of there and hit a good putt, too. I thought it was going to break a lot more than it did.

But yeah, that hurt. And then I go to 10 and hit it in there to about 10 feet and miss that, too. So I thought, okay, this isn't the start on this side that I really wanted. Turned that around pretty quickly 11, 12 and 13 so it was a good solid day today.

Q. Was there any shot in that stretch of 11, 12, 13 that was maybe more important mentally than the other?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, probably the putt at 11. I just missed a couple of putts and I had a tricky little five-footer at 11 and it's a par 5, you don't want to let that get away from you. Hit a good putt there, made it in the middle and then --

(Jerry Kelly shouts toward flash area.)

STEVE STRICKER: -- and then -- wow, I just lost my whole train of thought.

Q. And that's never happened with Jerry.

STEVE STRICKER: No, I should have been prepared for that when I saw him coming. I should have known that he was going to say something.