

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
December 6, 2018



SEAN O'HAIR
STEVE STRICKER

DOUG MILNE: Let's go ahead and get started with our defending champions of the QBE Shootout, Steve Stricker and Sean O'Hair.

Thanks for joining us for a few minutes. I know you guys are obviously excited to be back. It's kind of a light-hearted, fun event. You've won together and you've each won with other partners. So just a few opening comments on being back here as the defending champions, and you guys can rock, paper, scissors to see who goes first.

SEAN O'HAIR: Obviously great, yeah. It's great to be here. The golf course is in great shape. Actually a lot tougher I think this year than it was last year; firm, fast greens and a little windy conditions.

But it's always fun to come back to a place that you've got fond memories of, especially when you won and you're defending champion. Got a really good partner and plan on jumping on his shoulders and I'm going to ride him as long as I can.

STEVE STRICKER: I was thinking the same thing. I'm not into it that good so I was going to ride it as long as I can on his shoulders.

It's always great to come here. I don't know, maybe my 11th or 12th year or something like that. It's an event that I look forward to every year, kind of kickstarts my year, the year coming up, and gets me back into the game of golf and practicing. Fun to play with Sean, and we had a great time last year, paired up for the first time. So we're looking forward to this again. It's fun, a good field, and the course, like he says, is in great shape.

Q. Can you each kind of just go over sort of where you are right now with your games coming off the season you're coming off of? And Steve in particular, are you just going to continue to play both tours going forward?

STEVE STRICKER: I haven't picked up a club for a couple of months since playing Sanford International the week before the Ryder Cup, and then I put the clubs away for a couple months. Then I came down here the last couple weeks, so I'm not really in tournament shape, but I've had the club in my hand for a while, two and a half weeks' worth. It's kind of scrubby at times, but some good things are in there, too.

Yeah, excited to play, and next year I'm taking my Top-25 Career Money List exemption and going to concentrate I think a little bit more on the regular tour, see how that goes to start the year. I'm going to start the year in Hawaii and play Sony and then Hualalai on the

Champions Tour. Hopefully play somewhere in that 15-event range on the regular tour and see if I can't get -- I'm not in any major or THE PLAYERS Championship, so kind of set my sights and goals on trying to get into some of those bigger events if I can.

Q. Does winning on the Champions Tour, obviously it makes you think you can win on the Champions Tour, but does it make you think maybe you can win on the other tour as well?

STEVE STRICKER: It's a totally different animal. Not to take anything away from the Champions Tour or anything like that, but scoring is much lower on the Champions Tour, the courses are easier than the regular tour, they're shorter, conditions are a little bit easier, pin locations are a little bit easier, and you're not going up against guys that are hitting it 340 and 350 off the tees.

I'm one of the longer hitters out there, which I'm one of the shorter hitters out on the regular tour. So totally two different animals.

But it does, it gives you confidence knowing that you can play and perform when you have to. I have used both tours to kind of get ready for each tour. I'll play on the Champions Tour and get some confidence and take that when I go play on the regular tour, then I play on the regular tour and the courses always seem a little bit easier when I go to the Champions Tour after playing on the regular tour. So I've kind of used it to strengthen both tours in my mind.

Q. And Sean, where are you at with your game?

SEAN O'HAIR: 2018 wasn't a great year for me. I kind of got off to a slow start. I almost won San Antonio, I finished second there. But other than that, that was pretty much the highlight of the year.

Took quite a bit of time off in the summer. I took four, five weeks off during the summer, which I've never done. That's kind of my heavy season. I think that really hurt me as far as points, getting into some of the -- guaranteeing me to get into the first two or three playoff events. I played well in the first playoff event, but it wasn't quite good enough to get me into the following week. So it was obviously disappointing not to at least make it to that third event, which was at Aronimink, my home golf course. So that was a little bit of a disappointment.

The fall's been a slow start, but I feel like I've got some things that I'm working on with my game, so it's kind of a work in progress right now. I'll focus on trying to get my ball-striking back where I feel I should be, and I feel like, you know, if I hit the ball the way I know how to hit it, I'll be fine. That's really kind of the goal.

This offseason is -- which isn't going to be much time at all, but I'm kind of a week and a half into some new stuff. Like I said, it's a work in progress and I plan on jumping on his shoulders and we're going to be playing his shots a lot and he's going to make a lot of putts

and we're going to be right there come Sunday.

Q. With the schedule changes next year, what are your thoughts on how the tournaments set up? Will that make it easier or harder for the players to create a schedule?

SEAN O'HAIR: You know, I think there's not much difference with the west coast, and the Florida is I think better because you've got Sawgrass right there, so you've got all the events in Florida kind of all at once.

I've always felt like we have our west coast, we have our Florida swing, we've got a bunch of Texas events, so why not make it a Texas swing, and why not make kind of a Caroline swing. I know that sponsors and timing as opposed to some of the big events has a lot to do with the field and all that, but it just -- the second half of the season for me just doesn't make a lot of sense. I know there's a lot of people that have -- you know, a lot smarter than me making those decisions, so I just do what I'm told and play what I can get into.

Just when you look at the whole season, there's so many events that are kind of close in one proximity, it would be nice if they kind of paired it into some areas so guys like me who don't like to fly, we can actually drive to events. That would make it a little bit easier.

But like the Texas events is going to be interesting because, I mean, my whole career I've always played Colonial, Byron Nelson, and to do those two back to back -- excuse me, I think it's Byron Nelson and Colonial. I think there's, what, PGA now? We're going Dallas or Ft. Worth to New York and back to Dallas. It's just a little bit kind of all over the place. I think it's going to hurt some of the events that have good fields normally.

So it's going to be kind of a learning curve just like anything else, but like I said, the guys that are making these decisions know what they're doing, so I trust them.

Q. Steve, talking about schedules, will it make it easier for you or harder?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, scheduling has been hard for me the last couple years since turning 50. It was much easier for me when I was 46 and 47, I knew I was just going to play about 15 events and head 'er home. Yeah, since being eligible for the Champions Tour, I've added more events. I'm playing a lot more it seems like, and that's been the challenge for me personally is just trying to figure out where I should go and play.

I still feel like I've got enough game to compete on the regular tour, so that's my pull is to still be out here. Then, you know, it's fun to go play on the Champions Tour. Bottom line, it's fun to compete, it's fun to win again, and that, too, there's a pull for me out there, too. So that's been the challenge for me. Quite honestly, I don't know where I'm going yet this next year. I want to concentrate on the regular tour, but we'll see how it goes and see how I play and take it from there.

Q. Steve, do you know if you'll play in the Naples event here?

STEVE STRICKER: I'm not sure yet if I'm going to be here or not.

Q. Sean, what did you do during those weeks off? Are you just totally away from golf, not do anything, not watch it?

SEAN O'HAIR: For me, I always find it hard to watch tournaments that you're not in, especially when you're disappointed and not in the field, so I did not watch any golf.

I played a lot. I worked on my game a lot. I probably should have taken some time away from it, to be quite honest with you. And for me, I'm kind of a grinder, so if something's on my mind I'm going to go out and work on it and try to figure it out. But I feel like some of the things I'm working on are going to help me. I'm not going to see results immediately, but I think come the west coast I'm going to be, you know, ready to compete, to win a golf tournament, which is really the goal.

But it's always hard, you know, when you're not in major championships, you're not in World Golf Championships and you've been there, you've done it and you know what it takes and you feel like you're good enough to be in it. It's very frustrating and I'm just tired of it. So that's kind of the whole point of making some changes and trying to get a little bit better.

Q. I think Tiger was in Australia and he mentioned wanting to -- he's probably said it before, but he wanted to be a playing captain. Just your thoughts having been in the captain's role and also played in a Presidents Cup, what that would be like?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I think there's been only one other captain to do that, Hale Irwin I think maybe was the guy. Yeah, he's surely capable of doing it, especially the way he played this year and especially the way he played at the end of the year.

Yeah, I think it would add an interesting wrinkle to everything. It would put probably a little bit more on the plates of the assistant captains. You would want him to be -- if he's going to play and play three or four times, that you would want him to be focused on playing. I think you would take some of the duties away that normally a captain would do maybe. I don't know. Knowing him, he'll want to have his hand in everything and take control of it all.

I actually heard from his yesterday when he was over there and he's like, "Man, there's a lot of pictures and a lot of media." I'm like, "Wait a second, we're talking about Tiger Woods." I'm like, "Aren't you used to that?"

So he was over there getting a feel for it. It should be good, it should be interesting, and it will be fun to see if he can do that. I think it would be great. It would be history again, you know?

Q. Either of you watch the Tiger-Phil thing?

STEVE STRICKER: I didn't.

SEAN O'HAIR: I did not.

DOUG MILNE: Well, gentlemen, we appreciate you all. Wish you the best of luck.