

STEVE STRICKER

LAURA VESCOVI: Thank you for joining us today. You've had a great season on the Champions Tour so far this year, two major wins. So how does that help you in your mindset coming into this knowing it's a major and your decision to come here to Akron?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it was a hard decision. It was a hard decision and it wasn't. I mean, the hard decision was between two tournaments more than anything, not really about coming here because this is such a wonderful place and a great course. I've enjoyed my time here over the years.

So the decision was two great tournaments that I really like, but I decided to come here based on those other two major wins. I'm excited to be here, excited to try to do it again. We're at a great venue here, the course is in great shape. It's long, it's playing a little soft from the rains this summer so far, but it's in wonderful shape.

Q. Steve, as somebody who has gone 19 under and 18 under in majors in his career, I know it was only a pro-am today, but can you try to explain what was going on with Gene Sauers shooting a 56?

STEVE STRICKER: He shot a 56 today?

Q. Yeah, 29-27. He didn't really have anything going.

CHRIS RICHARDS: That wasn't his ball.

Q. So the scoreboard wasn't right?

STEVE STRICKER: It's a team score.

Q. That's a team score, okay.

STEVE STRICKER: Fifty-six.

Q. Were you in his team?

STEVE STRICKER: No, I was not on his team, nope. He's got four other guys helping him to get to 56.

Q. The rest of it then, just can you explain. Brooks Koepka, for instance, has like half of all of his wins are majors and some guys' games tend to be exceptionally good and

they just work in major championships. Is something like that going on with you in the Champions Tour that it fits your game well or are you just on a hot streak?

STEVE STRICKER: Oh, yeah, I don't know. I was never able to win a major out on the regular tour, so it's been pretty special to win a couple out here thus far. Really, I take every event very seriously, I prepare for every event trying to play my best. Just so happened I was able to win a couple this year being majors. Yeah, the one a couple weeks ago for the Senior Open was special. It's a USGA event and those I always held a little bit higher in stature as far as tournaments go. So to finally win one of those was pretty special. I had Nicki on the bag and my kids there. It was a great week.

Q. How often does she caddie for you? I remember writing about that many moons ago.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah. She's been caddying quite a bit this year. The kids have been traveling quite a bit. They enjoy coming, they like to come, and Nicki loves to caddie. I love having her out there. I don't know how many tournaments it's been this year, but this has been by far the most that she's probably caddied recently this year.

But after the U.S. Senior Open, she's like, "You know what, I'm done for now." She was tired. Emotionally, too, it takes a lot out of you. Trying to win that and you're leading every round. The tee times on the weekend were late, 3:25 in the afternoon. That takes a lot out of you because you're just worrying about getting out there and trying to play, so she was tired.

Q. But do you -- you didn't sound like you factored the major thing in at all on the decision to come here, but I would assume -- I think it's only been done like three times in Champions Tour history where they won three in a season --

STEVE STRICKER: Do you know that?

LAURA VESCOVI: Two times, this would be the third.

Q. I just wonder if that's a factor.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that did factor into my decision. And I had heard that there was only two other guys that have done it, so I was -- that was something that, you know, motivated me to come here, for sure. And I knew what I was getting here as far as the course and the area. I've had some success, minor success here, finished second a couple times here in years past in WGC events, so I enjoy the course and I'm not disappointed. It is in great shape, the best I've seen.

Q. Is there something about do you have a favorite story from Akron even back from the Bridgestone, you know, World Golf Championship or anything?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I think just coming here we went to Baker's restaurant last night and that seems to be a mainstay every time we come here. Obviously I hadn't been -- I had heard that it had burned down and they rebuilt, but the food was better than ever. So we were five of us there last night, friends and my brother-in-law and Scott Verplank. Yeah, we always seem to make our way over there and enjoy a meal over there.

Q. I didn't know it had been rebuilt.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's great.

Q. Steve, I'm wondering if you would -- this weird thing keeps happening to me. I remember when you were younger, I remember when Freddie was young like yesterday. Bernhard was up here earlier today. Is it a flash to you guys, too, that you were rookies on the Tour, you were young guys on the Tour starting out and all of a sudden you're here?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, yeah.

Q. Freddie's the ambassador of golf, he's trying to get his head around that. Does the passage of time, does it kind of freak you out, too, how quickly this happened?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, for sure. You know, I can remember my rookie year was '94. I've been out here a long time. Yeah, to think that I'm 52 years old and still playing and all those years have passed in really like the blink of an eye.

Yeah, why do you bring that up? It's not a great thing to think about. I'm just kidding you.

Yeah, it happened so fast. I wouldn't do anything different. I've had a wonderful career. I've experienced every high and low that you can imagine, except for winning a major out there on the regular Tour. Yeah, it happened so fast. All of a sudden, I look at my family, my kids are growing up and I've got one in college and that's where you really start to realize how old you are.

Then you look at your career and how long you've been out here. Yeah, it happens in a hurry. I guess just because we're always so busy. We're traveling from place to place. I was just telling Laura that we're already in the middle of July, it felt like we just started the year yesterday. It does, it flies by out here and it does happen fast.

Q. My last question, I'm just curious about Wisconsin. I was with Tom Lehman Monday night from Minnesota. There's been so many good players, Andy North, two-time U.S. Open winner. Guys from northern states that you think would not tend to be hotbeds for great players to emerge from. Can you explain? Just happenstance, coincidence, or is there something up there that we don't know about the golfing community, the hinterlands of Wisconsin?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I think from Wisconsin -- I was talking to Jerry, we had a little podcast yesterday with Jerry and I. We had a great junior golf program. We had an executive director who ran the WSGA who set things up very difficult. We had a bunch of players that made it very competitive.

I played three sports, so I didn't play golf mainly. Golf was my sport, but I didn't play it all the time, so I learned to do other things. Golf was always the one thing that I looked forward to and we got -- you got excited to play. So you spent those six months, seven months really working on your game and trying to get better.

But I don't know what it is. We've got a lot of great courses. You learn the game up there because you've got to play in some cruddy weather at times, different lies, different grasses. Yeah, good question. I don't know, I don't know what it is.

We had Andy North to kind of look up to. The guy before that, I'm drawing a blank on his name, another good Wisconsin player. Don Iverson, I don't know if you remember that name. But Andy was a guy that we all looked up to and idolized as juniors growing up, so we knew it could happen. So I'm sure he played a big role in all of us getting out here as well.

Q. Just one more. Do you like this playing both tours thing? Is that something you can see yourself doing for a while?

STEVE STRICKER: It's been a challenge to figure out which direction I'm going, but you know, next year I'll still play some on the regular tour being the captain of the Ryder Cup team and to see those guys out there and hopefully play a few more events out there to make sure that I'm visible and I can play with them, and just get to know some of the younger guys maybe on that team. That's kind of what I'm focusing on for next year is splitting my time again, and then probably after that I'll be out here full time. But it's been a challenge to see which direction I should go, for sure.