

**STEVE STRICKER**

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**Q. Steve, can you just start, overall thoughts on being back here at Firestone this week?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, always exciting to come to Akron and to play Firestone, Bridgestone SENIOR PLAYERS. It's a special spot. We've come here over the years on the regular tour and some of the WGC events, and then to continue to come here and play in a major on the Champions Tour, it's always nice. It's in great shape, it's a wonderful layout, it's a tough course and you really have to play well or strike it well here to play well.

**Q. Jerry mentioned you picked this over Hartford.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah. I had committed to Hartford as well and I didn't know which direction I was going to go. Like I said, this is a special spot, so it's always fun to come here. Been here a number of times and had some good finishes. Never won here, but it's nice to come here. And I really enjoy the course. It's, like I said, in great shape.

**Q. Having the chance to get into THE PLAYERS on the -- you know, the other PLAYERS, do you think that's a really big caveat to this?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Carrot?

**Q. Yeah, carrot.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, anybody who wins here, that's the first thing they're going to think about is playing next year in THE PLAYERS Championship. Yeah, it gets everybody's attention. You know it's an important event. We're here at Firestone, it's a major and guys are fired up to be here.

**Q. When Phil won, I was wondering if a bunch of like 48-, 49-year-olds would say, "I don't want to play the Champions Tour."**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Right.

**Q. Do you think that will have any ripple effect down the road?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** I think you've got to listen to your own body and your own mind at that point in time in your career and how you're playing on tour. Phil's a unique player, a special player, and he's still got that flexibility and that length that most guys when they turn 48, 49, you know, even before that they're losing distance, and he picked up distance. He's worked

hard at it, so he's a special player. For him to be able to do that was something extraordinary. I think you've just got to see where you're at on your own game. Guys are going to -- guys are going to see that and they're going to say, "Hey, it's possible," for sure, and maybe work towards that. But everybody's a little bit different, especially the older we get.

**Q. How are you balancing this? I know you've got the Ryder Cup guys to keep in touch with, but do you figure after that you'll --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Play here more?

**Q. Yeah.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, I was expecting to play out here full time this year, but then the Ryder Cup didn't happen and we all know what happened from there. Yeah, I probably plan on being out here a little bit more, but I'm still trying to -- I've still got a few events on the regular Tour this year. I'm about 150th on the FedExCup point list, so I'm trying to make the Playoffs yet, trying to get in there and see if I can't do it one more time.

**Q. One more thing about having fans back. Did you realize how important it was after they came back or was it just this huge void even when it was --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** It was right away. Yeah, it was right away. When there were no fans, you realized how important they were right away when we first came back and played at Colonial. It was great to be playing, don't get me wrong, but they add so much energy and excitement to the event. It fires up the players to hit a good shot and to hear the crowd react to that. You noticed it right away and you knew a big part was missing right away.

**Q. So you didn't even miss the "you're the man" and all those people screaming?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** "Mashed potatoes."

**Q. Yeah.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** No, none of that. I guess you miss it because you don't hear it at all. It was like crickets, right? We love having the fans back and it's great to see people out here this week already, too.

**Q. Is that the craziest thing you've heard, "mashed potatoes," or is there another one?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** No, no.

**Q. "Baba Booy"?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, there's a gillion of them. Yeah, you don't mind hearing it now. You realize that you really did miss that kind of stuff.

**Q. I mean, is it hard to like get your adrenaline flowing when there's no, you know --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, it was hard, and for other players probably harder than most. Like the top players in the world, all of a sudden they're playing with nobody when they're used to playing with thousands of people in front of them. Yeah, I imagine it was harder for them. Some guys maybe didn't notice it at all depending on who you were, I guess.

**Q. I guess playing in absolute quiet would take you back to like your high school and college days, wouldn't it?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, college days, for sure, yep.

**Q. Maybe you don't want to revisit that.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** We're all in a better spot out here being able to play, for sure, and having fans is the only way to do it.

**Q. Got a favorite spot in Akron you're going to this week?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** No. Baker's we usually hit when we're in town. It's a little ways away from here, but we usually go there every time. Probably hit that spot.