

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**September 16, 2021**



**STEVE STRICKER**

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**CONNOR STANGE:** We're here with Steve Stricker, the 2018 champion here at the Sanford International.

How's it feel to be back here?

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, it feels great. Got in late last night. It's been kind of a whirlwind for me the last week, or last three years for that matter, but it's great to be back here. Love coming to this area, love the event. Sanford's a great sponsor, Andy North being the host, a boyhood idol of mine growing up as a kid, so it's a wonderful place to come back to.

**Q. Steve, I'm guessing this will always have a special place since you won the very first one?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, yeah, very much so. I enjoy Minnehaha and it reminds me a lot of home. It seems like a small, tight-knit community, they came out and supported this event from day one. A lot of money's raised I understand going back to the community here. Yeah, it's a special event, and anytime you win at a place like this or enjoy success, it's always nice to come back.

**Q. How much have you focused on your golf game because of what's going on next week?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Not much, yeah, a couple hours here or there. I've been very busy in a good way, trying to make sure we get everything ready for the Ryder Cup next week, but my game has definitely taken a back seat. Got a couple hours in yesterday and that's about it. But that's fine, I know where the important stuff lies for the time being and get this Ryder Cup and look forward to that for sure and get that going for next week is the most important thing right now.

**Q. In a way is this kind of a nice stress relief for you to come here and play?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, at times, but there's still all the other things to do. Once I get out inside the ropes today and over the next three days, I'm sure that will feel good and give me the opportunity to do what I know I'm supposed to be doing at this time is playing golf and enjoying the area here. But yeah, I'm looking forward to getting out there and getting some competition under my belt.

**Q. How excited are you for next week? It would almost feel like it's a dream as a Wisconsin guy to captain the Ryder Cup.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, very excited. I never thought I'd have this opportunity to do this let alone right in my home state of Wisconsin. Extremely excited, looking forward to the challenge. And it's going to be tough. The European team is always very strong. We've looked better on paper, but they've played better in the event, so that's going to be the challenge for us is to try to bring that cup back home and we're excited for the challenge and the opportunity.

**Q. What is it for you, because it's different for everybody, what is for you that makes the Ryder Cup so special?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** I think just being together with the other players, the assistant captains who invest all the time into trying to make it good. You come together for this one week out of the year. Usually it's an individual sporting event or a team -- you know, we just don't play any team events, so it's all individualized and you come together for this one week with the one common goal in mind and that's to win the event and bring the cup home.

So you gain a lot of friendships that week. You go through a lot together and those things hang on. You think about those things for the rest of your life and how special those moments really are.

**Q. Andy called this year's field the best in four years. How would you assess it looking back just from your first year here, just how much deeper the field has gotten?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** I couldn't even tell you the field here, I haven't had the opportunity to look at it, sorry. From what I understand there's some other guys -- like I said, sorry, I can't answer to that, I haven't looked at it. But if it is, that's great news for the event and for the tournament. I know some of my assistant captains are here, so we get to see each other and go over a few things here and there. Yeah, again, we're all excited to be here.

**Q. Steve, Cobey's here from Sanford Children's Hospital and he's got a question for you.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Cobey, how ya doing, buddy?

**Q. Do you have any tips on the opening tee shot for tomorrow?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Are you doing that tomorrow? Take a couple of deep breaths, enjoy the moment. Yeah, do you practice a lot?

**Q. Yes.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Then I would just put in your mind, you know what, you've done it a million times, you've hit that ball a million times, you've done it well before and why not do it

right now in front of all the people. Yeah, take a couple of deep breaths and let it rip. Good luck.

**Q. Does that work for you?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** It works for all of us, yeah. Yeah, we all have to do that. It doesn't matter where you play or when you play, either; those first tee jitters are a real thing. Even if you're teeing off for fun at your local club, it's just the start of a new round and it's always a little bit nerve wracking. Yeah, it works for everybody.

**Q. With you and your three assistant captains, are there any bragging rights on the line this weekend who finishes best?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** We haven't talked about that yet, no, but we're all big competitors, we all want to beat up on the other guy. So I wouldn't imagine or see it any differently that we all want to beat each other and want to play well going into next week would help, too.

**Q. Does that kind of apply to this tour in general? Jim Furyk is one of the new guys and he talked yesterday about how he really wants to see the Champions Tour grow and he wants the 50-year-old guys to join the tour and play full time so it's stronger. Is that kind of way you feel about it?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, and everybody is at a different point or time in their career when they turn 50. Some guys are still playing strong, like Phil, so it takes longer for them to get out here. Some guys maybe have gone away from the regular tour when they're in their middle 40s and then they get excited to play again. That's always the tough thing, to get the guy out here right when he's turning 50, but yeah, we all want to see the best players come out here and compete on a weekly basis.

The nice part about this tour is that they're spread out throughout the whole year and they play in chunks of two or three events. The guys play every week nearly, they don't take many weeks off, and there's 24 events I think there were last year on the schedule. So guys go home, they get that week off for something and then they come out and play a couple more. Yeah, for the most part they just keep playing. So that's the cool part about this tour. You know how good these guys were when they played the regular tour and they continue to be as strong. That desire, that drive, that competitiveness, that doesn't go away. So they know how to get it in the hole and that's what makes this tour so great is that they still play at a high level.

**Q. When we talk about the inspiration that Bernhard is to all you guys, to see somebody 64 --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Crazy.

**Q. -- shoot 64 and he's leading the Money List?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Right, I know. Like I said, when I grow up I want to be like Bernhard. It's an amazing thing and we all watch him in amazement. He's still believes, right? He still thinks and he still dreams of doing big things even at 64. So we can all learn from that and learn from him. We all watch him in amazement to see how he's still doing it at 64. He keeps himself in shape, he works at it extremely hard and that's what you need to do to continue to play well.

**Q. How much are you looking forward to hunting season?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** (Laughs.) A lot. I've been counting -- I don't want to say -- I want to enjoy the Ryder Cup. I want to enjoy this week first, this is where I'm at and that's kind of where I live my life is where I'm at, where am I right now and this is where I'm at and I want to have a good week here, I want to play well here. Then we look on to next week, right, and that's a whole 'nother week, and then I'm looking forward to the week after that, for sure.

**Q. Steve, Sioux Falls recently extended its agreement to have this event here. Just based on your previous experiences, do you think this is a good home for this event long term?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, I do think it's a great home. Minnehaha, you're saying?

**Q. Yeah.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** And I had heard the rumblings of maybe not being here any longer, so I'm very excited to be able to come back here and for the guys to come back here. I think it's a great venue for us. It's challenging, the greens are great, they're tricky and you get a good support system here. The people show up here to support the event. Yeah, I was concerned when I heard that, so thanks for sharing good news that it will be coming back here.