

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**STEVE STRICKER**

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**MODERATOR:** We're joined here with Steve Stricker, the 2021 champion here at the Kaulig Companies Championship.

Just to start, how's it feel to be back here at Firestone Country Club?

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, it's always special to come back here. It's a course that we look forward to each and every year, and I say that each and every year just because it is, it's the truth. We played World Golf Championship events here. I don't know if I was young enough or old enough to play NEC here or not, or if I was eligible, but definitely a World Golf Championship event. It's just one of those great old-time golf courses that is always in great shape and we're always excited to come here and play.

**Q.** Steve, I'm wondering, obviously you had an incredible run in recent years and a lot of people could easily say that this PGA Tour Champions thing, Steve Stricker, what a perfect marriage, something came into existence for him at this time. But I would contend that beginning about 40ish, 38, 39, 40, something came together for you?

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q.** And you've never gone (inaudible)?

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q.** It's about a 16-year run. The best golf of Steve Stricker happened in his 40s, not in his 30s and 20s, the best version of him.

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q.** And it's continued in his 50s and hence the dominance. What happened back then? What came together for you in your maturation, your journey as a golfer?

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, we've talked about it a lot out here probably. I was playing rotten in --

(Cell phone interruption.)

**Q.** So sorry.

**STEVE STRICKER:** That's all right.



In 2003, '4 and '5 I was in not a good spot. I was 38 at the time, not playing very well at all. So just went to work on my game basically and found some things that I really needed to do day in and day out.

And I've really stuck with those same principles, those same things that I worked on 17 years ago, 18 years ago, and I still do the same things today. I think that's why the consistency has happened through these last 18 years or so, because I still do the same things that I worked on back then. I think just trying to keep honing it each and every year that I continue to try to do it.

**Q. Was it like a mental breakthrough?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** A little bit of both, I think. I wasn't in a good spot mentally because my game stunk, and then went to work on the things that I worked on, shortening the swing, putting the club in a position at the top that I really thought I could play from, and then just did some simple things and stuck with those.

You know, slowly my game came around, which what comes first, right, the mental side or the physical side, and you probably have to do both things to get better.

I started hitting better shots, seeing better results, all that stuff. Then the confidence level continued to grow each and every year. Like I said, I still think back on those days, I did it in the wintertime in 2005 and hitting balls in the snow and all that, out into the snow. Still work on those same things today.

**Q. Bernhard was in here earlier and he talked a little bit about just how well you are playing and in a sense dominating. You sort of wonder if you had -- if you committed to the full season what your -- what you might accomplish, what that would look like. Do you have any thoughts about that as far as --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Well, I'm committed to this season. I haven't been able to commit when I turned 50 because I still played some on Tour. I felt like I was still playing well enough to play on Tour. Then the Presidents Cup, Ryder Cup, all that stuff came along and I felt like it was important for me to be out there, you know, seeing the guys out there, being around them, playing with them.

So this kind of took a backseat until really last year, but then I got sick at the beginning of last year, because that was going to be my year that I kind of could commit to here, being out here after the Ryder Cup was over, so 2022. And then I end up getting sick and that kind of pushed that year back.

Then this year I made the commitment, and I've had fun out here. Even when I hadn't played a bunch out here, six, seven times a year out here in those early years, I had fun. Won a couple of times in there during that span.



Yeah, it's hindsight, right? Who knows where I would have been at, but I've got a good balance I feel like.

**Q. Yeah, I don't think he was being critical at all.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q. He just wondered how high you seemingly would have been. Are you going to the Senior Open?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** I am not, no.

**Q. This is all academic, but had you won at SentryWorld and of course you've had success here, would you have given some thought to going?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** I probably would have a little bit, yeah, but I'm going fishing in Canada so that would have been hard to pass up, too.

**Q. I'm not shocked. You say you're committed. What's the schedule look like then from here to Schwab?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, I've got some time off coming up after this, so I imagine I'll be antsy to play come Seattle and I think it's Canada. I'm not sure about those, but definitely Ally I think is after that, right? So I may just pump those three in together. Like I said, I'll have some time off coming up here, so I'll be anxious to play.

Izzi's starting her season at home for high school golf so I want to be around for some of that, too. The tournament doesn't start -- you've got to be there on Thursday for the pro-am, so there's time where I can get home to do that kind of stuff, too.

I really haven't given it -- I haven't committed -- I've only committed to Ally so far just because I'm past champion there. Yeah, I'm kind of leaning on going to play those two before Ally.

**Q. Regarding the first question and your second career here, it seems like you've never been better at closing out wins now, which maybe wasn't a strength earlier in your career. Is that just part of being more confident in your swing or did you find something out here as what it takes to win a tournament?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** I think just getting more mature, getting into that position more and more all the time, having that ability when you do close it out. You can have that -- you can look back at that and take that as a positive, right, and have the confidence that you have done it before and you're capable of doing it.



So I think just I'm getting in contention a lot more out here, which on the regular Tour I didn't get in contention like I'm getting in contention here. So you're just put in this situation a lot more and you find out what works, what doesn't work. Then when you do pull them off, you get that confidence and you can apply it to the next time you're in that position.

I think it's just the more times I'm in position out here compared to the regular Tour, you get in that on the regular Tour and it doesn't happen all that often, so it's like more pressure on you to get it done. I think -- and it's harder probably on the regular Tour, you know, just because you're not in that situation as much as you are or that I have been out here.

**Q. Was there one that took you longer than the others to get over that really stuck in your craw?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** On the regular Tour?

**Q. Yeah, like in the majors?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, I had a couple opportunities in majors that just didn't, you know, didn't do very well on Sundays. I don't know if any one stands out in particular, but --

**Q. Did they stick with you for a while --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q. -- or were you able to let them go?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, no, I was in contention over at a British Open I think the year that -- well, I played with Sergio coming down the stretch there, but I was right up there. I shot 64. It was at Carnoustie on Saturday, I got myself right in there. Then hit it in there a few times right away on the first few holes on Sunday, didn't make the putts. I was definitely rattled, kind of outside my comfort zone, for sure. Had a really good opportunity over there to do it. There were a couple U.S. Opens I got up in there, didn't really sniff it.

So yeah, those stick with you, too. You think about what you need to do to try to get better and try to go from there.

**Q. You're close to winning nine majors titles with Tiger now.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** (Laughs.) Yeah, no, I don't think about that at all. We were just talking about him here. What has he won, eight times here?

**Q. Yes.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** That's a helluva career.



**Q. Steve, we were talking about your wife earlier. Talk about how important a wife is, understanding of what you have to do.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q. You're making money for the family, but yet you have to have somebody who understands that, right?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, no doubt about it. She's from a golfing family, she loves the game herself, she plays it a ton, she's trying to get better all the time.

Yeah, it's vital that I have her in my corner, right? She's not at home saying, "Why are you going again to a tournament, why don't you stay home?"

She's like, "When are you going to go? Am I going with you?"

She loves to caddie, she loves to be out here. Like she's off this week because our daughter has to be home. So there's that balance she has to try to take care of, too, with at home and then being with me, too.

Yeah, but it's important to have that support system, and I have that with her. And my kids love to come out and follow along. They like to see me do the thing that I enjoy doing.

Yeah, it's all key elements to playing good golf.

**Q. Stevens Point made some Strick9 beer --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q. -- for The Open. I'm having trouble finding that in Pittsburgh. Are they going to make some more? Are you now on the verge of becoming a major beer baron?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, I don't know, but it did go well.

**Q. It sold out.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** It sold out, I think they made 80 cases and they're going to do some more, I think. Mario, they're going to do some more? They're going to do some merchandise.

So we could send you a hat or a decal or something. Maybe instead of a V on the top of your head, we could put Strick9 beer right over that.

**Q. It's available for the right price.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** All right. But it tastes good, I liked it. My dad who's 85, he doesn't



hardly drink anymore, he had two, put him to sleep at about 7:00 at night, so he loved it.

**Q. Is there a chance they might consider expanding that a little bit?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** We don't know. It did get some traction there and people were enjoying it, liking it on tap, in the can. Yeah, it was a good thing, it was fun.

We were able to test about three different kinds of flavors that we had told them that I liked, you know, certain other beers. They came up with three different tastes, so we tasted them, had a little tasting party with some friends and we picked out this one and it was good so far.

**Q. Your face isn't on the can, though.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** No.

**Q. Should it be --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Bearded, bearded, yeah.

**Q. I think the face should be there.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Goatee like Al here, yeah.

**Q. We're obviously getting on in the summer and the Ryder Cup comes up all the time. I mean, it just does, it's just natural.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q. Are you having more conversations with Zach and the guys --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q. -- as you get closer?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Oh, yeah.

**Q. Not to give away secrets, but what are the topics, I guess?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, we get weekly emails of the projections of the top players, the top points, the guys at the top -- I don't know what's on that list, 20 or 25 guys. So we see every week what the top 6 are, what the top 12 are, what the top 20 are, 25.

And the team is looking really strong from my standpoint, and I think from Zach's, too. We'll chime in once or twice a week. We're all on this text chain. Yeah, there's starting to be some more conversation, but we're liking how the team is shaping up, for sure.



**Q. Do you think this is potentially one of the most difficult Ryder Cups for a U.S. captain to be able to pick six guys? There is -- there's a lot of guys.**

**STEVE STRICKER:** A lot of guys, oh, yeah. But if you look at the 7 through 12, I mean, they're all playing really good golf. That's a good thing.

Then when you start getting outside that number, 13, 14, I don't know, I haven't looked at the -- I don't have it in front of me, but there's guys that are playing well there, too. That's the part that becomes difficult.

I'm sure the last -- we still have a couple of months to go, so I'm sure these last couple months it will kind of -- guys will separate themselves and it will become a little more clear on who he wants to take.

**Q. Steve, when you said you were 38 and you were in a dark spot and you shortened your swing, was that a friend chiming in saying, "Hey, shorten your swing," or was that a last resort to try to save your career --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, I wouldn't say last resort, but it was --

**Q. -- find the clubface again?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, and just figure it out for myself. I had my father-in-law kind of help me. Instead of him, I kind of took more ownership of my swing is really what happened. He's a very knowledgeable guy about the swing and he's more of a contact and ball flight guy. All of a sudden I saw some things in my swing that I really didn't want or like, so I said this is what I want to do.

So instead of him telling me what to do, I finally, you know, got it across to him to say this is what I want to fix, this is what I want to do, I think I can do this under the gun, got the ball moving one direction. Then he was kind of my eyes and he would check in with me occasionally.

But I spent a lot of time just looking in the mirror and putting it in a spot at the top where I wanted it and just trying to figure out what could get it there on a consistent basis.

**Q. And with the shortening of the swing, you found like no distance loss and more accuracy?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** More accuracy, for sure. Distance, you know, hard to tell, right? The equipment has gotten to the point where everybody's gaining more distance. I probably did lose a little bit, but definitely more consistent, more consistent swings under the gun, which that was the goal is to be able to repeat it more times than not.



Yeah, so I had to be comfortable with that. And then being able to fix it if something went wrong, that's kind of really where I was going. Like OK, what can I rely on and go back to on a daily basis to try to keep doing what I want to do.

**MODERATOR:** Thank you, Steve.

**STEVE STRICKER:** Thank you, guys.

