

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
**September 13, 2023**



**STEVE STRICKER**

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**THE MODERATOR:** All right, Steve, thank you for joining us here at the Sanford International. Two-time champion here, including last year. How does it feel to be back here at Minnehaha?

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, it's a great spot to come back to. Feels a lot -- well, it's Midwest vibe, right? Great tournament, great people. They put on a nice event here. Yeah, to be a defending champion is always a special feeling, and just it's a great feeling to come back to a place where you've had some success. Look forward getting the week started tomorrow.

**Q. What is it that kind of makes this place feel almost like home for you?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, you know, I don't know. I mean, it looks a lot like home. You know, just one of those courses where you have to pay attention to. We get some wind here. The greens are pure. You have to manage your way around here, especially when it does get windy sort of like today.

So, yeah, it's just a course I feel comfortable on and played well here, so when I come here I feel like I should play well.

**Q. How do you feel your game has been the last couple week leading up to this?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, haven't played a lot to be quite honest with you. I can't remember where I played last.

**Q. Ally Challenge?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Oh, yeah, Ally. Was in Rome last week so didn't get a lot of prep leading into this week, so it's been a little bit cramming for a test kind of mentality the last few days. I'll get to practice a little more today and hopefully catch on to a few things for tomorrow and the weekend.

**Q. Will this be a family affair like in the past?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** It is not. Nicki is at home. My kids are all either in school or playing -- my oldest is playing a tournament, an Epson Tour event in Alabama, so we're kind of all over the place. I've got a friend who's a caddie on tour. Been a caddie on tour for a lot of the years. Never had him as a caddie but always been friends with this guy, so I'm looking forward to spending some time with him.

No, it's not a family -- Mario is in the field this week, brother-in-law, so that's the family this week.

**Q. It'll be odd because Nicki carried the bag for you...**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah, and you know, once my youngest, our youngest is in school again, kind of limits Nicki leaving Wisconsin. So we still have a 17 year old at home that needs to have some parental guidance yet. She's staying at home and may come out a few tournaments here and there, but it gets tough.

Nicki just qualified for the U.S. Senior Women's Am. Yeah, that's at the end of the month. So, yeah, it's a busy time.

**Q. What is it that fuels your competitive fire these days?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** I think just the competition. You know, obviously on top of the Schwab Cup standings fuels a lot of my desire to continue to play and play well. Just I love to compete, try to get better. I still feel like there is room to get better. So, yeah, it's that constant drive. That's what golf does for all of us I think. You'll see guys out here practicing trying to get better all the time and I'm no different. Just like the competition to try to win golf tournaments and get in contention come Sunday.

**Q. How inspiring is it to all you guys to see Bernhard at the age 66 --**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Right.

**Q. I'm 68. I can't imagine doing what he's doing. How inspiring is it for you guys?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** It is incredible, isn't it? I told him, I said I want to be like you when I grow up. It's very inspiring. Shows that we can continue if you keep care of yourself, eat the right things, work out a little bit, stretch. You can play this well into your 60s with success. He's shown that.

So it's very cool to see. And he's a great guy, someone that I've looked up to throughout my whole career. Even on the regular tour the way he goes about his work and his business. Great family man on top of all that.

So it's very easy to root for a guy like that and to see him enjoy the successes that he's had.

**Q. Steve, how have you seen this event grow and evolve since you first played it?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** You know, I think it just gotten a little bit bigger and better each and every year. You know, the buildout seems about the same as last year. Maybe even a little bit bigger. The crowds have gotten a little bit bigger I think each and every year.

The word out amongst the players is that it's a lot of the fun to be at and to play. You know, it's a fun course to play. It's always in great shape.

So, yeah the word is out. That's why the field is always pretty strong here. Yeah, so I think it just continues to grow, just like with each new event. You learn from other years and you try to get better and they are.

**Q. The crowd support, that you play in front -- I mean, that's a big deal to you guys, right?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** Yeah.

**Q. Doesn't that make this one of the highlights of the tour?**

**STEVE STRICKER:** It sure does, yeah. We get a lot of support here. I personally get a lot of support here just because I think of winning this event for a couple times. You know, or just Wisconsin is just down the road. It's not that far away. So it's always fun to come here and see a lot of familiar faces with Sanford and other people that I've met here throughout the years. So it's a joy to come back.