

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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STEVE STRICKER

MODERATOR: Steve, thanks for joining us, (Inaudible) where you are defending, just some overall thoughts just being back here and defending this week?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, super excited to be here. Obviously a very special week for American Family Insurance, our foundation, the people here in the Madison area. The Stricker family, obviously it's very special for us, too.

Yeah, finally -- hopefully I should say that the rain is done and we can move on and we can get some drier conditions. The course is in wonderful shape and we're all looking forward to the start of it tomorrow.

MODERATOR: Go ahead and just assess where you think your game is right now, too. I know you haven't gotten your first win yesterday, but I know you're trending in that direction.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's not as sharp as I would like it to be, I would say. Last year was a special year and this year I've come out a little flat, I would say, more than anything. Just trying to find my way into contention on Sunday. I've been close a couple of times, but putting hasn't been great, driving hasn't been great. So been focusing a lot on that and hopefully get that ironed out this week and have an opportunity come Sunday.

Q. Nicki said that you found a driver head from a guy in Naples? Tell me -- I know you broke your driver a while ago and you were searching, so is this a new head and how do you feel with it?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, super excited. Once I got it back in my hands, yeah. So I broke my driver the Friday of PLAYERS Championship week. Noticed I was hitting a shot that I hadn't been hitting for a while. Got towards the end of the Friday round, was going to miss the cut and looked at it and saw kind of a hairline fracture in there. It was a Callaway Epic Speed head. They don't -- you know, that's a few models ago, let's put it that way. I'm kind of one of those guys that finds something and sticks with it.

I'm like, you know, I'm a big boy, I should be able to try to hit some of this new stuff. I tried some Titleists, I tried some of the new Callaway stuff, and it's just not the same for me.

Reached out to this guy from Naples, Florida, that we've gotten to know over the years, Tom from The Golf Guys. The Golf Guys is the name of the shop. Family business, been around for a long time. I said, hey, do you happen to have any used Epic Speed heads, 9-degree triple diamond, all this kind of stuff, told him what mine was. He's like, I'll get back to you. Sure enough he had a brand new one still in the wrapper. I'm like how fast can you get that

to me?

Monday morning at 6:30 the Amazon guy dropped it off at my doorstep. Monday morning I was out there hitting it. The start lines are much better. I had to do a little finagling with the weights on it and all that kind of stuff. Then I go in the trailer this week and they found me another one. All of a sudden I got two where I didn't have one before that, so things are looking up.

Q. Could you repeat that? (Laughs.) Are you hoping that seeing the fans here once again kind of kickstarts you? I know that you started off where you didn't want to be, and how amazing have the fans been to you here at the AmFam?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, this is a special for us to play here, not only me but all the players. The way the fans support the players, come out and support the tournament. I went around all day today and say hi to the volunteers, thank them for being here, but I don't know how many times I heard thank you, thanks for doing what you're doing here. But that's the mentality, everybody's thanking each other and everybody's helping out for the good causes that we're donating to.

Yeah, it's a special spot for me to play. I get a lot of support here, I feel the love. It's fun when you play well and hopefully I can do that again.

Q. Steve, American Family shared a cool video with you narrating just a video about dreams and how important dreams are. Just wondering how important dreams were for you in your career?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very much so. If you're not dreaming and looking forward, I think you're kind of stuck and not moving forward. That's been the case for me since I was a little kid. You know, at each level I would dream about trying to get to the next level. Then for this tournament it was a dream of not only mine but of Jack Salzwedel, the former CEO. It was something that was put together based on our dreams and beliefs that it could work.

Yeah, it's something that in this game you've got to dream and you've got to dream big to continue to improve, to keep working towards those things you're dreaming about. Yeah, it's been very important. It was a dream of mine to win this event some day and I ended up doing that last year. It was exciting.

Q. At this stage of your career, what do your dreams look like now?

STEVE STRICKER: Say that again?

Q. At this stage of your career, what do your golf dreams look like now?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that's a good question. Probably getting in a fishing boat and fishing a little bit more. Those are my dreams. It's maybe not as much golf related anymore.

I still have aspirations of playing well and dream of winning again. You never know when your last one's going to be. I haven't won this year again, but I still think and work hard and dream about winning again, winning majors out here again. That's what keeps me motivated and working on my game.

Q. They announced Jordan Love would be an ambassador for the tournament.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very cool.

Q. How special is it to have the greatest athletes in Wisconsin be here supporting?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very cool, and what a year he had last year. It was such an anticipated start for him last year and then I think he not only blew everybody's expectations out of the water, and I'm even a Bears fan so I can say that I was super excited for him and happy to see how he performed because to follow in the footsteps of the last two quarterbacks and to come out and do the things that he did was pretty impressive and super cool.

Again, you know, as a Bears fan you don't like to say this, but they look like they're in a good spot again as a quarterback goes. It was cool to see, and it's cool to have him be a part of the ambassador brand for American Family Insurance. I look forward to meeting him, I haven't met him yet, and it's going to be fun to have him out here come Sunday.

Q. I know that drama and excitement's a big part of what goes into determining the success of an event, but tomorrow Titus is coming out, young kid's going to hit the ceremonial first tee shot. That speaks volumes to what this tournament and the hospital does. If I could just get a comment on Titus and just how much on that level the tournament means?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I haven't been able to meet Titus yet. Our event got rained out on Tuesday when I was supposed to meet him, or Monday night I think it was. So I think I'm going to meet him today, this afternoon, so I look forward to meeting him.

Yeah, just the children's hospital, the American Family Children's Hospital here in general is an unbelievable asset that we have for our community and the state and nationwide. I know people come from all over the country to come here to get the services they provide.

We're super fortunate, blessed to be able to provide to the children's hospital and to that part of our town. I mean, it's so important. To meet these kids that have gone through just enormous things we can't even imagine going through, and they're coming out on the other end of it usually with a smile on their face and happy to be alive. And being a part of this, you know, it's why we're doing this. It's what makes this event work.

Q. Steve, this is the last year of this event here at U Ridge. What's this course meant

to getting this tournament off the ground and kind of growing it --

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, yeah, it's been a great spot for us. University golf course, we're here embedded in a university town, we wanted it to be -- to have the help and the backing of the university, we thought that was important at the time and it's a wonderful venue for us. I think the players have really enjoyed our time here.

Yeah, they've been a great partner in this and it's been a wonderful ride with them. It will be sad to -- you know, it will be bittersweet I should say, we're going to be leaving here and we're going over to TPC Wisconsin, which I have close family ties with, but it's been a great ride here, they've been wonderful.

Q. I read some of your transcripts from recent interviews and there's like hints of retirement in there. You've talked about waning, your feelings waning. How much are you thinking about next year and years after? How much are you going to be playing? Are you going to be cutting back on your schedule? Does this tournament mean you're going to keep playing for a while longer because of this tournament?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that's a good question. Yeah, the desire is still there. Some days it's harder to practice when I'm like at home trying to get ready for tournaments, it's been harder to get going and motivated to practice.

I think last year doing what I did and winning the Schwab Cup, I think that was a dream and a goal of mine and then doing it, I'm like OK. Winning majors out here would be a lot of fun, winning this tournament would be a lot of fun.

But there's more important things that I feel like that I want so take advantage of while I'm still healthy and able to do things, and that's spending time with Nicki and the kids, watching them and helping our girls get better.

And then just yeah, I've had a lot of golf in my career. I don't fish enough and I don't hunt enough, and those are the things that are starting to catch my attention.

And how much do I want to continue to play. I don't know what that even looks like anymore. I've kind of just been taking it -- shoot, if you would ask me a couple months ago, I was ready to say I'm done, but I think I just need to get away at times and get that desire back, do some other things and then I seem to come back a little bit stronger and fresher.

Q. Does it feel like an event like this kind of gives you that spark back? This week some of the stories I've heard from just different people of places they may have seen John Daly in town. It kind of gives Madison this energy that any other week it wouldn't have. What does that mean to you?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very much so. Yeah, this excites me for sure, to be here, to play well. When we drive from 9 green over to 10 tee, they have this kind of photos and the

memories of years past. We've had a great list of people here. Shaquille O'Neal and Brett Favre, Jack Nicklaus, just all the greats of not only entertainment but other sports. Michael Phelps again this year, probably the most decorated Olympian ever in history. We've been very fortunate.

And it's all done to help raise awareness for what we're doing and to give back to the opportunity to show these athletes off to local people here. Hopefully Tiger Woods, you know, in a few years, a couple two or three more years, hopefully we can get him here and coming back.

Yeah, it's been a special ride and for sure gets me motivated and I'm pumped to be here and playing.