

U.S. Open Championship 2017

Friday, June 16, 2017

Steve Stricker

Flash Interview



Q. How did it feel today, and what kept everybody from getting close to under par?

STEVE STRICKER: It was a good day for me. I struck the ball nicely, had some opportunities. Rolled a few putts over the edge.

But the course is, I would say, a few shots harder than it was yesterday. The pins were a little bit trickier, I think. The speed of the greens seemed to pick up a foot maybe of speed. A couple greens that are more exposed were faster, so it was hard to get a feel for the correct speed. It's just, you know, it's got your attention on every hole, because you know if you miss the fairway, you're going to pay the price.

I just think it's still a U.S. Open. It's still difficult, and you have to hit quality shots to make your pars or have a chance at birdie.

Q. It looked like you might have had a lot of wedges into the greens today. Did you leave a few out there, do you think?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, they put the pins in areas that are still dicey to get to. On 18 is a prime example. There are five -- if you hit it five short or come back off the green, or hit it five past that pin, it goes over the back. So you still have to be pretty precise on a lot of these shots into the greens. It gets your attention, for sure.

Yeah, I felt like I left a shot or two out there. I had all good looks at it at 7, 8, and 9 on the way in. Didn't make one. Couple other putts out there. But I made some really nice putts today, too. All in all, I hit the ball really well. I think I only missed a couple fairways, and hit about 13 greens, I think. So pretty good day ball striking.

Just hard to get some momentum around here. You know, it's just a long course for me. You're sitting back there, I hit a 3-wood into a par-4 two days in a row, No. 3. Today I hit a pretty good drive, I thought. So there's some length out there that you still have to deal with.

Q. You were speaking of momentum to get the birdie on 18. You had a birdie chance on 1. Do you feel like that was a putt that if you could have sunk that birdie on 1 that would have been the momentum swing for you?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah. I made the birdie at 18 and

I'm going to 1 and 2 with potential birdie looks. I almost three-putted No. 2. I had a little brain cramp there. But ended up making a good 12-footer for my second putt. But, yeah, that was a period of holes there where I could have gotten some momentum.

Then I end up three-putting No. 4 after hitting a good shot out of the bunker. Then all of a sudden I felt like I'm struggling, you know?

I made a great up-and-down at 6 to kind of right the ship. But it still can get you here. The scores, so far, aren't really doing much. So it's only going to get tougher. If we stay dry or we miss some of that rain tomorrow, it's going to get some teeth on this course yet.

Q. The other day you detailed everything you went through to qualify to get to this point. Through two rounds, do you feel it's all been working?

STEVE STRICKER: Oh, yeah, yeah, for sure. I wish I was about five shots better. But, yeah, I've enjoyed this experience. It's been unbelievable. The amount of support that I've received every hole I walk up to, every tee box, it's been unreal. The standing ovation on 18, it's been really cool.

I wanted to experience our first U.S. Open more than anything here in our state. I'm glad I went through it, and I'm glad I'm here.

Q. You talked about these two weeks, obviously playing the Open and then you get to play your championship the next week. These two weeks, it's exciting for you as a professional to play here and then being able to play here and then getting to play in your own tournament next weekend?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very much so. Next week is for totally different purposes. It's about raising money for our foundation, and giving back to our area and our community. That's a totally different feel for me next week. But very rewarding to be a part of that Am Fam Championship.

This here is more on a playing level. This is more like I want to play well and move up the leaderboard. I still feel like I've got a lot of good golf in me, and that's what I'm trying to do this week. Next week takes on a different light.

Q. The greens, are the hole locations making it tough to take advantage of maybe your advantage with the putter?

STEVE STRICKER: I made a lot of nice putts today, and I hit a lot of good putts. The pins today are in some areas where there's a lot more break around the hole so you have to be on the correct side. If you're not on the correct side, then you're playing defensive a little bit.

Just on No. 9 there, I hit a nice shot in there, but I got a straight downhill putt and could break a little left, could break a little right. But you're just kind of trying to find the break. There were quite a few pins like that today where you get on the wrong side of it and it gets pretty defensive all of a sudden.

Q. Steve, could you talk about the course set-up? Jason Day said in spite of some of the low scores yesterday there was no knee-jerk reaction from the USGA today. Did they play with it a little bit, make it a little tougher? Or do you still feel like it's as fair as it was yesterday?

STEVE STRICKER: I feel like it's fairly similar. I feel like, if anything, it's just a touch harder. But they didn't go overboard. They moved 18 all the way back on that tee box. But I think some of the bigger hitters are still going to get home in two there because it's playing downwind. I thought the pin locations for the most part were just slightly harder, if anything. But nothing to the extreme of where we saw all the tees moved back and all the pins tucked, you know, as tough as can be. But fairly similar, but slightly harder, I would say.

Q. Steve, is there a goal you'll zero in on tomorrow to try to make your way around?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, keep moving up the leaderboard and see how good you can get, I guess. I'd like to shoot a good round here. I'm on the verge of it, I feel like. It's just, like I said, you've got to keep it in the short grass, out of that fescue. Don't make any bogies. It's hard to make a lot of birdies for me around here. If I can make four birdies around here, that would be pretty good. So you've got to minimize those mistakes, minimize those bogies.

Q. The fescue is so high, does it mean the wide fairways are going to have a lot of birdie chances? But the one bad swing can be trouble, like Jason had two triples?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, the big number is there on every hole, and that's what gets your attention. But they do give you plenty of area to hit it off the tee. There is ample room to hit it, so it's really fair. It really is. This year is really a fair test, I think.

Ultimately, I'd love to see the fairways narrower, with the fescue less hazardous. We've played some of that in some British Opens where you hit it in the fescue, and you can give it a rip and get it up there near the green, you're taking a chance. But this fescue here is so thick in spots it's almost unplayable. Too extreme, almost.

Q. Are you a little concerned sometimes that they may have a touch of (Indiscernible) in there?

STEVE STRICKER: You could. You could. There are some areas in there that are so thick that you'll have a hard time getting it out of there. I did in one of the practice rounds. I was afraid to take a cut at it because it was a practice round. But there are some really, really thick areas.

I think the USGA has done a nice job. It looks like they've tried to cut some of those really thick areas and thin them out a little bit. But it depends. Some areas are not so thick, and some areas are hopefully just get it back to the fairway kind of shot.

Q. The local support you mentioned, is there that tug of war at all of the self-imposed pressure of wanting to do well in a major versus every hole where people have positioned themselves to watch you because you're the local guy, and not wanting to disappoint that crowd on that hole?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very much so. That's the challenge of playing at home. You have to try to put all that extra pressure -- you've got to deflect it somehow, I guess, is what I'm trying to say. It's hard to do because you're hearing it on every hole, every shot, and you want to play well.

But over the years I've gotten a lot better managing that. When I first played in the GMO, that was the hardest thing. You just felt like you're letting everybody down when you're not playing well. But I've gotten better with that. I've really enjoyed it. I've just been easier on myself when I come to play in our state, and just trying to enjoy it a little more than I have in year's past.