

STEVE STRICKER

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I'm very excited to be back. I haven't played a Champions Tour event here yet, but came to The Woodlands early on in my career and played here when the tour was here in the 90s. So excited to be here. Forgot a lot about the course, but look forward to playing today and getting reacquainted with it. Excited to be playing and excited to be playing competitively again. It's been a long road, but a lot of good things, a lot of satisfying things. I'm feeling better and excited to be here.

Q. Steve, what have you missed out here?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, just seeing the guys, I think. The competition, too, is what I've missed also. These are a lot of the guys that I'm friends with and have grown up playing professionally with. I just literally got here, but I've seen a few of the guys already, and a few hugs. It's been a while since I've seen a lot of these guys. And a lot of them, to be quite honest, checked in with me periodically throughout my whole ordeal, so that means a lot to see these guys. Just to be back, you know, just to be back and playing. Can't wait to get out there.

Q. We spoke about a month ago, you said about 70, 75 percent back then. What would you say you are now?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that's a good question. I've put on a lot of my weight. Strength is still an issue. My clubs aren't going as far as they used to and I don't know if that's just because I'm a year older or all the things that have happened to me since, but probably a combination of both of them.

Yeah, I feel great. On a day-to-day basis, I feel fine. It's just the whole strength thing and the stamina. The practice has been -- I'm not able to practice as much as I used to I feel like yet, so I'm still working on building up that strength and that stamina.

Q. Will there be nerves Friday?

STEVE STRICKER: Oh, yeah. You know, even when I was playing out here on a regular basis or anywhere, anytime you tee it up competitively you get nervous. If I didn't, there would be something wrong and I'd probably not want to play anymore because that's part of what makes you want to be out here, is getting those competitive nerves going, the adrenaline, all that kind of stuff. Hopefully I'll pick up a little more distance with the adrenaline, but we'll see what happens.

Q. Are you ready to put the comeback into play on Friday?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah. Well, I don't know about my game is ready, but I'm ready to be here. I didn't know if I was going to be here, I just didn't know. I kind of crammed the last few days with my golf game a little bit. I'm ready to be here physically. I've just got to see where I'm at and see how I feel, if I can put three days together on a golf course walking. I walk a lot, but not -- I don't think there's anything you can replicate what we go through out here. We're out here probably six hours from the time we get here to practice, warm up, the whole time on the golf course, maybe some practice afterwards. And you start adding those up day after day after day, that gets tiring.

So we'll see where I am there. I just don't know where I'm at and that's part of the reason why I'm here. I've just got to see where I'm at because I've been working out, trying to get stronger, but it's a different gig out here.

Q. Do you have a schedule in mind where we'll see you again?

STEVE STRICKER: My schedule is to play these next two after this. Next week is in question just because I don't know where I'm at after this week. I'd love to go to Atlanta and play. Haven't been there for a while either, so I'd love to go there. But Regions is going to be a for sure. If I have to take next week off to get ready for Regions, I'll do that. My goal is to play this week, Atlanta next week at Mitsubishi and then go to Regions.

Q. Could you have played like a week or two ago or last few weeks health-wise? Could you have played earlier? What I'm getting at is, why did you decide to play this week?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I forget the way the schedule went, was it Rapiscan and then we had some time off? I mean, I was trying to do Rapiscan and I couldn't physically do it yet, and then we had this break here. Then last week was a potential, but then I looked at the whole -- it's a four-week block and I just thought that the way it worked out for us, we were in Orlando practicing and playing there and just the way it worked out schedule-wise to play, try to make this block of three instead of four. I don't think I'm ready to do four in a row. I don't even know if I'm ready to do three in a row. My goal is to play these three and then there will be a week off, so then I think it's the Senior PGA, so that's kind of my thinking is just to put these together like I am.

Q. Did they ever find out exactly what the illness was?

STEVE STRICKER: No. Still don't know to this day. There's a couple theories out there that it was a virus of some sort that they weren't able to put a name to it or a reaction to the vaccine potentially. Yeah, I had the shot about four weeks prior to me starting to feel kind of crappy and then it went from there. I'm really not sure what it was. I'm over it really and I've kind of moved on and I don't really care what it was really. At this point I'm just trying to focus on moving ahead and I'm feeling better and just hope it doesn't happen again.

Q. That's important. So you are feeling better?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I am feeling better.

Q. You've been kind of busy before that with the Ryder Cup and even in 2017 Presidents Cup and stuff like that. Now you can just kind of devote your time to just playing golf. Talk about that.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and I was excited to get the Ryder Cup in my past really, in my rearview mirror and concentrate on golf again. I hadn't been able to do that the last couple years just because my focus has been on the Ryder Cup. So I'm excited to kind of just put that aside and start working on my own game a little bit more and mainly just thinking about my game and my competitiveness and working at it a little bit harder and focusing more on that. I'm excited about that part of it. This is the start of it really. I was hoping to be out here in January, but life throws a curveball every once in a while. But I'm excited to be here now.

Q. When you played here on the regular PGA Tour, you mentioned you played here a few times, did anything stand out about this course or the tournament itself?

STEVE STRICKER: I just remember it being a great tournament, a course that was very tricky and difficult. You get any amount of wind and it becomes very tricky. I don't remember a lot about the course. I really can't remember some of the holes. Driving in here I went past No. 3 and I'm like, I didn't even remember that hole. So there's holes here that I can't -- I know the finishing holes, but I don't remember some of the starting holes. I look forward to looking at it again today.

Q. Realistically, how do you think you'll play this year after being inactive for so long? What's kind of your goals?

STEVE STRICKER: This week?

Q. For the whole year, but this week as well.

STEVE STRICKER: Well, this week I'm just trying to get the ball rolling. I'm just trying to see what I have, game, health, stamina, all that stuff. I come in here hoping to play well, I'm going to try to play well. That's the competitiveness in me, I guess.

In the long run, I'm just trying to get better each and every week. I don't feel like I can't get back to where I was last year or the year before or even before that. I'm working hard at it, I'm working out, I'm trying to get stronger. Now I can focus a little bit more on my golf, which I haven't been able to do, so I can do that and put it all together. Hopefully, I get back to playing well again.