

STEVE STRICKER (-7)

Q. Do you know who you're tied with?

STEVE STRICKER: Mike Small? I do, I know exactly are I am. Hopefully we'll get to play tomorrow, that will be something to look forward to.

Q. How long have you known Mike?

STEVE STRICKER: Since 1985, so 33 years, 32 years. Good guy. We stayed in touch all this time through the years. He's doing a bang-up job at Illinois in the golf program, and he plays well. We're giving him a spot again at our tournament in Madison to come up and play. He's a good guy. He still plays great golf and he embodies everything a professional golfer and a good person should be, so it's cool to see him playing well.

Q. So you had the eagle early today on 2. You had a lot of pars for a while until you kind of caught fire on the back nine. Was it kind of a matter of just staying patient today?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, yeah, I had some opportunities on that front side, too. Hit some good putts I didn't make. I gave myself a lot of opportunities and I stayed patient for the most part. I need to do that out here. You need to keep plugging along, try not to -- try not to feel like you have to make birdies, just keep giving yourself a lot of opportunities and that's what I did today.

Q. How do you feel about the position that you're in after the first day?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, we're only a third of the way done. It's a long ways to go yet but a good start, which I'm happy about. Hopefully, put two more up just like that.

Q. Will you see Mike tonight?

STEVE STRICKER: We're going out for dinner one of these nights, either tonight or tomorrow. Maybe we'll wait until tomorrow.

Q. So you shoot 7 under, yet there's a bunch of guys who are right in that same range. Is that kind of typical for the PGA TOUR Champions?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and for this course here. You know, it's not an overly long course, it's in great shape. If you hit the fairway you have short irons into the greens, and so you get a lot of opportunities. So the scores are low and guys are going to shoot lights out

here. You've kind of got to keep pace with everybody and keep trying to make birdies.

Q. What club did you hit off the tee at 16, the par 3?

STEVE STRICKER: 16 was a little 6-iron.

Q. And what about 17 off the tee, was that a hybrid?

STEVE STRICKER: It was a hybrid, yep. I've been hitting 3-wood there in the practice rounds, in the pro-am round, and you really got to hug the water with a 3-wood. I knew where the pin location was, it was a pin that I can't really go after anyway, so I figured if I just hit utility and I figured I was going to have another utility in and just hit it left and try to get it up and down, so it worked.

Q. And what's the thought process when you're on the tee at 18 on this course?

STEVE STRICKER: Hit it between the water, something that I didn't do last year. It's just a good hole. Then the wind kicked up right when we were on the hole and it played a little more difficult for us. Yeah, you just want to get it on some green grass and knock it on the green, make your par. It's a par hole is what it is. You've just got to do that and move on.

Q. Is that a hybrid also?

STEVE STRICKER: No, that was a 3-wood. 3-wood and a 5-iron.

Q. Was it nice to play that hole probably the way that you wanted to play it today?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and it helped actually to be into the wind. Last year on Sunday there wasn't much wind at all. I hit my 3-wood a long ways around here with the elevation that we're at, and the warm temperatures. Actually, with the wind into me it's a better 3-wood for me. When there's no wind, it becomes kind of an in-between club for me between a 3-wood and a utility, and so it's a challenging tee shot and a challenging hole.