

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
October 9, 2019



HENRIK STENSON

Q. Henrik, two runner-up finishes here, four top-six finishes. Just talk about being back at a place that you're obviously very comfortable.

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it's good to be back. It's a little different. We're playing it in the fall. It's bermudagrass instead of what we have in April. I think the course is going to play a little different this time around. Maybe a little bit more emphasis on fairways and greens than it has been on the other end. The runoffs aren't as slippery and treacherous as they can be, so I think the balls are going to stay up out of the water if you miss a green on the wrong side. At the same time you've got those tricky chips and shots out of the Bermuda, so fairways and greens I think's going to be crucial this week.

Q. Henrik, we saw yesterday that your 3-wood days are done. Do you have a eulogy prepared? Do you want to say a few words for it?

HENRIK STENSON: I think I'll post something on social media when the time's right. We've got a new one in the bag that seems to be working pretty good, so I'm not too worried on that. But when a club gives up that you've had for a long time, it's going to take a little bit of time to get used to.

Q. How long had you had it in the bag?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, the model came out in 2009 and the one I had from the beginning gave up in February '17. The replacement was probably 95 percent good but not quite as good as the original one. Now this one gave up and the backup I had was probably 75 percent, so it was time to get something new. Technology's moved on. Certainly the newer 3-woods are -- is a better technology, they go further. So I've got the Epic Flash in the bag now instead of the old Diablo Octane.

Q. How different does it feel this time around, this time of year and all the changes?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, I think it's certainly a different feeling. I felt that driving up to the golf course yesterday. We saw Houston during the week before the Masters and all the emphasis on the year's first major and all of that. And then playing it on a different surface is going to be different, too. But all in all, we're back in Houston, it's nice people around, good crowds out there and it's a good golf course I like and I've done well in the past. I hope I can have a good week.

Q. What went into your decision making to come play here this week in Houston over Italy?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, I haven't played that much golf in the last couple of months. I played a lot up until the WGC in Memphis, that was my 18th tournament for the year and I was pretty worn out and I needed some time off. I got a big run on the back end here on the European Tour and playing the WGC in China and then I play in South Africa and Dubai and so on. So it was just a question of being back in the States and being at home and getting some practice and some rest, and this one fit nicely in to have a short trip instead of more jet lag and so on. Yeah, they'll have a good week in Italy, but I couldn't unfortunately be there this year, we're here in Houston instead.

Q. What was the tipping point that you thought, okay, I need a break, I'm worn down after 18 events?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it was probably when I felt like I was just playing golf for playing golf in Memphis and that's not what you want to feel when you're at one of the biggest tournaments of the year. You don't want to feel like you're just going through the motions. I guess at 43, even though it was a very hard decision not to come back and play the FedExCup Playoffs, I just felt like I had not much left to give. Even if you play okay, if you're not mentally there, you know, I just felt like I needed the time to recharge and hopefully we're a little fresh now than we were back in early August.

Q. Henrik, how would you compare your game now to say when you won the Open?

HENRIK STENSON: Not even close. Do I need to elaborate more on that? (Laughs.)

Q. How close? 95 percent?

HENRIK STENSON: No. Fifty maybe. I don't feel like I'm going to go out there and shoot 63s in the final round at the moment, but it's a game you've got to have patience, you've got to keep on working away. There's certainly some parts of the game that's not too bad, but all in all, I don't feel like I'm super confident with my game at the moment. The stretch that I had behind me is decent results, but it's nothing fantastic. We've still got some work to do to find that form where you can freewheel it a little bit more. Yeah, every day, every practice session you hope you get a little bit closer, so we just keep on grinding away.

Q. Are you working on anything specific at the moment?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, it's been more with the long game. Putting, when I played at Wentworth a couple weeks ago I was putting really well, but striking-wise, there's still some things to be asked for. I think overall my short game stats aren't that great around the green. It hasn't been near as tight as it needs to be and, even leaving one or two shots out there every day when you're sharp, you don't. So yeah, there's plenty of things to work on.

Q. Based on what you said about your game, is it weird that you're the highest ranked player in the field this week?

HENRIK STENSON: Maybe not highest ranked, but if I'm the favorite, you might have to reconsider (Laughs.)