

**AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE
CHAMPIONSHIP MEDIA DAY
May 17, 2022**



**JIM BUCHHEIM
STEVE STRICKER
NATE POKRASS**

JIM BUCHHEIM: Good afternoon and welcome to media day for the American Family Insurance Championship. It's great to be back in person for media day for the first time since 2019.

For those who I have not met yet, I'm Jim Buchheim, community and social impact officer for American Family Insurance, and it's my pleasure to serve as host and emcee for today's events.

To get us started, we're going to take a look at a video produced by Discover Wisconsin that takes a closer look at the American Family Insurance Championship and its impact on our community.

(Video played.)

JIM BUCHHEIM: I can tell you that the video only stoked my enthusiasm a little bit more. I'm very much ready for this year's American Family Insurance Championship, only 24 days away, and I think as you learned today, it may be our biggest AmFam Champ event yet.

I think the two individuals who have just joined me are also ready for this year's event. In fact, one of them is fresh off his first tournament win of the year and a major championship at that and we'll talk about that in just a moment.

Joining me are Steve Stricker, our player and host for the American Family Insurance Championship, and Nate Pokrass, the tournament director.

I would also like to acknowledge our Steve Stricker American Family Insurance Foundation board members. Steve serves on the board as do Nicki Stricker, Bill Westrate and Dan Kelly.

Unfortunately, our defending champ Jerry Kelly and our celebrity foursome host Andy North are unable to join us for this year's media day. You are going to hear from Andy a little bit later as he shares a video message about our celebrity foursome.

I can tell you that American Family Insurance is proud to be the title sponsor for this event and we're excited to have emerged from the pandemic with a return to a full week of events and the largest build ever at University Ridge. As you saw in the video, since the very first

American Family Insurance Championship in 2016, this tournament has raised more than 12-and-a-half million dollars for charity with the American Family Children's Hospital serving as the primary beneficiary of the charitable dollars. We're grateful for the opportunity to assist organizations doing important work in our community while also putting on an elite PGA Tour Champions event that has a strong economic impact locally and is a meaningful and enjoyable event for fans. We're also humbled and grateful for the incredible sponsor support that we continue to receive and we are on pace for a really strong year. Again, Nate will share a little bit more about this year's tournament.

We also want to thank you, the members of the media, for your continued work in covering and reporting on this event. I can tell you on behalf of the tournament team and the PGA Tour Champions, we want to say thank you for your ongoing interest and your ongoing coverage of the championship.

Today's media day, I'll start with asking a couple questions to Steve, then we'll announce our celebrity foursome, then we'll open it up to the media for questions. Let me just pause backstage for one second. Does that do it? Nope? Let me go backstage here.

All right. We're going to go old school for now. I'll hand this back in a moment.

So, Nate, I'm going to start with you in terms of just a couple of questions about this year's tournament. Unfortunately, in 2020 we had to cancel the AmFam Champ and then last year we had it back but with limited crowds. What do you want to highlight about this year's tournament?

NATE POKRASS: Yeah, we're thrilled this year ultimately that we don't have fan limitations so we have a full capacity again, which is exciting to be able to welcome everybody back to the grounds. With that, that allows us to have our full construction back. Even more so, similar to what everybody saw in 2019, we will continue with that and even more.

So our bleachers, our public bleachers on hole No. 1 will return On 14 green not only will the public bleachers return, but we've got venues both on golfer's left and golfer's right. So the 14 green will be fully horseshoed by public venues. No. 15 tee box will again have a venue fully horseshoeing the entire tee box on 15. As we go down to 17, the Leinie Lodge beer garden will return, a fan event, fan location that has been truly popular every year. And then we've got hospitality venues both behind the green and now on golfer's left. So the 17th green will be fully encompassed by venues.

And then same with 18 green as well, we've got hospitality venues all the way around the green and we've slightly done a redesign that allows for a larger public bleacher seating on 18. We've got great fan support, wanted to provide more seating opportunities for our fans on 18 and that will take up more on golfer's right.

So in the end we've got a lot of exciting holes, it creates an exciting environment for our fans, for our sponsors, creates a great venue for Steve and all our 77 other players

competing to create this really exciting venue as they play the back nine and ultimately try to win the trophy.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Thanks, Nate. Certainly we've seen some of the images from other tournaments around the country and it's great to see the fan support that exists there. That's part of the reason why the tournament's making that kind of investment in these fan experiences, to be able to accommodate large crowds again out at University Ridge. Last year again we had limited crowds, but we also had to scale back some of the events during the week.

Can you talk more about some of the other events that are coming back for this year's tournament?

NATE POKRASS: Yeah. As we look back to when the tournament started, we wanted to create a week-long celebration for the community of Madison and with that we're able to bring back all the activities during tournament week. We'll open the week the Saturday before with Carbone's Race for Research 5k run-walk out at the cross-country course at University Ridge. Great opportunity to walk and run on a nationally renowned cross-country course.

Our Friday night our concert returns, Breese Stevens Field with Lady A, Boyz II Men and Edwin McCain. Always a popular aspect of tournament week and excited to bring back that concert of course right across the street from here at Breese Stevens Field.

Then we're going to hear shortly from Andy and Steve to talk about our celebrity group, which is always an exciting part of the week that everybody looks forward to. We'll be announcing our guests here shortly with that. So we're excited to have our full week of events in addition to tournament play.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Nate, one more for you. I know that on the insurance side of the business we're dealing with supply chain issues when it comes to car repairs, home repairs and the like. What are we experiencing with the tournament when it comes to inflation and supply chain issues?

NATE POKRASS: Yeah, just like with the economy, we're certainly seeing in the golf tournament business, whether it's materials, labor, transportation, costs are exponentially increasing, but with that, we're prepared. We're getting great support from all our fans and our sponsors. We're certainly going to have a significant economic impact, but we're also focusing too on family-friendly pricing as well, so we're going to keep our concession prices extremely reasonable. We want this for the fans, we want this for the community. So while we're certainly seeing the supply chain challenges, our team is ready for it. We've got great partners in place and everybody's going to see an outstanding tournament.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Thanks, Nate.

Steve, let's turn to you. You're coming off a pretty great week. Congrats on winning your second Regions Tradition. Can you talk a little bit about that experience and how well you played over the weekend?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's a special spot for us. I enjoy the area, enjoy the course. I've had good luck there since I've played there. Yeah, and having Nicki on the bag going around there, getting off to a good start, end of a three-week stretch for us not knowing how I was going for finish off the three weeks health-wise and if I was going to be able to be strong enough to do it and passed with flying colors.

So I'm excited about that and excited about what I got in store moving forward and trying to get a little bit stronger. But it was a great week, we had a great time and we enjoy Alabama and Birmingham a lot.

JIM BUCHHEIM: I want to bring you back to the AmFam Champ and ask you a quick question about our two-time defending champ, Jerry Kelly, who won last year and then won the previous time that we had played in a three-player playoff that included you. What's it been like playing against your fellow Madisonian both at the AmFam Champ but also just out on the Champions Tour?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, Jerry's great. We had dinner with him and Carol this last week and it's always great to be out with Jerry. It's hard. We're friends. We don't get together as much as we should probably just because our lives take us in different directions, but always been a great friend.

And we compete hard against each other. We each want to beat up on each other I know and I know he's taken a lot of pride in winning the last two of these AmFam Championships. But we're out to get him this year, at least I am. I'm out to get him. He's tough to beat here and I'm sure he'll be ready and he'll play well. It's great to have him back again this year playing.

JIM BUCHHEIM: So I mentioned earlier that you're a member of the Stricker Board, but when it comes to the tournament, you're primarily hands off, you let Nate and team kind of run this event and they continue to do a great job and put on a great tournament.

At the same time, you do get involved in maybe some decisions or some recommendations and certainly you're hearing from the players about the tournament as a player-host. What are some of the things you hear from your peers about the tournament, whether it's the tournament itself, Madison as a location, tournament purse, which is among the very highest for a nonmajor on the PGA Tour Champions?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I know to stay in my own lane and let these guys take care of all the good stuff that they do.

Yeah, I hear nothing but positive things from the guys out on tour not only because Madison

is such a great place to be and to come visit and it's a beautiful spot, a number of guys stay downtown, take advantage of the restaurants and the fine hotels downtown, some stay out by the course. They can do whatever they want.

And they love the fan support I think more importantly when they come here. There's a lot of tournaments out on the Champions Tour that don't have a great fan support, but here in Madison is quite different, so they really enjoy that. It feels like a regular PGA Tour event, the atmosphere is really second to none from what I've experienced so far on the Champions Tour.

Hats off to our community, to our sponsors, to Nate and his team for putting on a great tournament. That's why the guys love to come here and play, and they're playing for a lot of money thanks for you guys. You add all that up and that's why we get such a strong field.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Thank you. One more from me before we move on to the next portion of our media day. The last time I think we were in person together, we were reflecting on the Ryder Cup, but this was last fall. We're a few months removed from that, but are there any special memories that you look back on and reflect with particular pride or joy as you think about your Ryder Cup experience?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that it's over, that's the best thing, and that we won obviously. But to get that in the rearview mirror and move on, it was a long process, three years. But Wisconsin was great, our team was great, the guys really rallied together. A lot of great memories that week, but I'm glad it's over.

JIM BUCHHEIM: We'll open things up for questions in just a moment, but first I want to announce the AmFam Champ Celebrity Foursome hosted by Andy North. Again, the celebrity foursome is back for the first time since 2019. Although Andy North can't be here, I do want to start by thanking him for all of his involvement with this event and for being a great ambassador for this tournament since our launch in 2016.

So let's announce our celebrity foursome. I'll start with that believing you can never have too much of a good thing, we are bringing back our big three: Andy North, and two Hall of Famers in their sports, Packers great Brett Favre and New York Yankees legend Derek Jeter, who is also an American Family Insurance brand ambassador. These three greats have attracted large galleries, entertained crowds with their own personalities, and their ability to draw these type of crowds and galleries really translate to us into big crowds, big paying crowds on that Saturday and that just means we have more dollars that can go to charity, charities like the American Family Insurance Hospital.

Then we have a fourth player in the celebrity foursome. First, though, this is the fourth appearance for both Andy and Brett in the celebrity foursome and the third appearance for Derek Jeter. Andy and Brett will team up for one of the teams and Derek and our other celebrity will make up the other grouping. The teams will compete in a friendly competition for a cash prize to the charity of their choice.

Now let's talk about who our fourth and newest participant will be. This player, like Andy, is a two-time winner of the U.S. Open. This player's also an owner of five other major titles. This player, like Steve Stricker, has played in and captained a U.S. team in international competition and, like Steve, this player is a winning U.S. captain. This player, like Brett and Andy, is a Hall of Famer with 31 Tour titles in addition to three consecutive U.S. amateurs.

So I'm thrilled to announce our fourth player in the 2022 celebrity foursome and the first player from the LPGA, Juli Inkster.

And now let's hear from our celebrity foursome host, Andy North.

ANDY NORTH: Good morning. Sure wish I was there to join you. I'm down at the PGA Championship trying to see, trying to figure out a way to get it done or who is going to be the winner of another great major championship.

Sure excited about June 11th and the AmFam celebrity challenge that we're going to have, but obviously Derek Jeter being back, Brett Favre, you can't thank those guys enough for all the great golf they've shown us over the years.

But really excited to welcome Juli Inkster. Juli, amazing LPGA player, seven-time major champion, Hall of Famer, more wins in the Solheim Cup than any other American. This is a legend in women's golf and we are really excited to have her in Madison, Wisconsin, to show folks what kind of great player she is.

So it's going to be a great day June 11th and look forward to seeing a lot of people there. Thank you and have a great rest of the day. See ya.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Well, we're very excited about this year's celebrity group.

Steve, quick question to you. What do you think about this year's foursome, particularly the newest member, Juli Inkster?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I think it's great. To have her an LPGA Hall of Famer, a great ambassador for the game of golf, the sweetest person you'll ever want to meet, she's just very classy. Has gone about her life and her career in the most professional way, so to have her here, Andy said it the best, is really a feather in our cap for her to be able to come here and showcase what she's all about. So we're extremely excited to have her.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Any predictions on the competition between Brett and Andy and Derek and Juli?

STEVE STRICKER: I hope I'm in that group that's right by them, I think, and then I get to watch some of it. You know, Andy's always tough in there. He turns his driver backwards and does all these fancy things to get it done, but it's always a great event and we look

forward to having it again this year.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Before we open things up for questions from this group, a couple housekeeping details to share with you or remind you.

First, please remember to apply for media credentials by June 3rd for access to the media center at University Ridge during the tournament. You can contact Janet Masters on our media relations team if you've got any questions or needs in that area. You can also visit the For Media page on the tournament website at AmFamChampionship.com for additional media information and other news. Again, media relations team members can also assist you with any of the needs that you might have.

The news release about the celebrity foursome will be posted and distributed later this afternoon. You can also pick up a hard copy today at the registration table if you would like one.

Now, with that, we will open up the floor for questions and I think Janet has a microphone for whoever wants to go first.

Q. Steve, you talked after the victory the other day about focusing on your health the last couple months. Did you have to scale back your involvement in planning this thing at all?

STEVE STRICKER: No, not so much. I mean, I don't -- I don't do a whole lot anyways. Nate and his team, they're first class. I mean, they do everything right. They don't need any help from me really. I work on the players end of things if need be. I get a lot of requests for sponsors exemptions that seem to come my way and all that kind of stuff, but yeah, these guys do a great job and yeah, I haven't -- I don't stick my nose where it's not wanted, or belong.

NATE POKRASS: But to add to that, though -- he's underselling it a little bit -- when you look at the foundation work that we do from the charitable giving and looking at our charitable grants and the scholarship winners that we offer, Steve and Nicki are highly engaged in that process and have always been a phone call away. Even as he was working through his time, he was still accessible and highly engaged in that process. He's slightly underselling it, but he's been there right there for us.

Q. Steve, I know you don't like talking about yourself, but here we go, I'll make you talk about yourself. How do you describe the last few months between winning the Ryder Cup, your health scare, the recovery, winning a major, now trying to win in your hometown? It's like a Hollywood movie. Have you got scripts? What is it like for you?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's been a little bit of an up-and-down road, you know, but I feel really good where I'm at right now. The Ryder Cup was one thing, it was something very special for me and my family and my career and our team, the state of Wisconsin, all that

put together. And then a month later that wasn't so good.

I'm kind of focusing now on moving forward. It was kind of the same message that I kind of gave to the Ryder Cup team, like we can think about we've got our butts kicked all these last few Ryder Cups, but let's not. Let's think about moving forward and thinking about what we need to do to come out and win and play good golf. I'm kind of like reliving that and thinking about what I need to do. Forget about what happened to me in November and get my blinders on and think about what I need to do to become a better player, a better husband, a better father, all that kind of stuff moving forward. That part's been good, I learned a lot the last few months, but I'm also kind of not trying to think about it anymore.

Q. Steve, you've always understood perspective pretty well, family first. Just going through what you've been through the last eight months and culminating in that win on Sunday, you know, how has your perspective shifted, if at all, with the journey that you've gone on?

STEVE STRICKER: Being in the hospital that period of time, that's where I got that perspective. It's like this was not a great place. They did a great job there, the doctors were phenomenal and all that, but you don't want to be there, you know. It's not a place to be.

But yeah, learned a lot of things about life in general and yeah, it's just something like I don't like to talk about it anymore really and I'm hoping that this win this last week kind of answers all those questions like, hey, I'm -- I know I have -- I'm probably 90 percent back where I was. I feel great. My body isn't quite the same yet, I'm still learning a few things about that because it's changing all the time. So yeah, but I know I'm on a good path, I know that I'm improving, I know my health is good. I'm still getting checkups regularly and nothing's, you know, come about that. It's just now about getting stronger and getting my game progressing where I think it should be and those things are. So that's kind of what I'm focusing on.

But yeah, I learned a lot. I told somebody else today I wouldn't really trade that experience that I had just because I learned so much from it, even though if you put me back in there in November time during that time frame, I wouldn't want to be there, but looking back now, I learned a lot from it.

Q. Steve, this tournament continues to get the best fields on the PGA Tour Champions besides the majors, but it almost has become the sixth major. There's five on the PGA Tour Champions. Do you no longer have to tell guys, hey, come to Madison? Has this tournament kind of set itself up now to be one of the best on the tour?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I think it has. I think just from, like I said earlier, the fan support. The status of us being an invitational tournament raises the level a little bit. The purse that AmFam provides for us to play for, what we do in the community, the amount of money that we give back to charities, guys see that and they see that that's very important.

So you throw all that together and it makes for a special event. Yeah, there's not much selling that we have to do anymore. There's guys that want to come and play, so that's always a good thing. Knock on wood, the sponsors keep coming and providing and giving us that opportunity. The fans keep coming and Nate and his team and AmFam keep doing a wonderful job. We're on a great path.

Q. You played in 38 Champions Tour events, you won eight of them, it's a 21 percent win rate. That's unbelievable in the game of golf, but you haven't gotten the win at your home tournament. How much would it mean to you to win the AmFam?

STEVE STRICKER: I'm just trying to beat Jerry. If I beat Jerry, then I should be able to probably win the thing because he's right up there all the time.

No, seriously, yeah, it would mean a lot. It's something that I've got to work on though because I want to win it so badly that I probably get in my own way. Sometimes Breese Stevens has gotten in my own way, but it's all for good causes, right? We're having a good time, we're raising a lot of money. So I'm trying to go down this path that can lead me to that victory and Breese Stevens is one of those that I've got to be careful of. So it's a fun week. If I never win it, so be it, but I really would want to and I try probably too hard, but hopefully this year I can give it another shot.

Q. You mentioned Jerry. I know you don't control who wins, but just how big for a relatively young tournament is it for a state guy just to win the last two championships just to help gain popularity for the event?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, no question. It gains a lot of traction in our community when you have a guy like Jerry, who lives in the community, who's embedded in this community and is very much a part of all this. It's great to have him win even though it grinds on me that he won, I'm going to be quite honest. We want to beat up on each other until we're partners and we've been partners in competitions before, but when we're playing separately, we want to beat each other. But it's all great. It adds credibility to our event, all of the above. He's done a wonderful job, he's a great ambassador for the state of Wisconsin and the state of golf and our tournament. So to have Jerry win is really cool.

Q. Nate, you look like you're lonely up there, so I want to ask you a question. How important is it to have a guy like Steve Stricker back at full health to be the face of this tournament?

NATE POKRASS: I'm just Steve's caddie up here for the moment, that's what I'm doing.

No, it's great. We rely on Steve for so much just input, feedback, what does he see at other tournaments, insights, a lot of insights from the players and feedback that way. And now competing, of course competing. Him and Nicki both are so valuable to us on so many different fronts from tournament operations to foundation work to just be able to have that source of knowledge that they can share with us, we enjoy it. Wish we could spend more

time with him. He's out playing a lot and a lot of other activities, fishing when he can. Wish we could have more time together, but certainly a great resource. Thrilled, thrilled that he's at 90-plus percent and ready to compete in a couple weeks.

Q. Steve, what parts of your game are you happy with right now and what do you think you still have to get a little better at going forward, especially when you get back to Madison?

STEVE STRICKER: I think my consistency kind of comes and goes yet, especially with the driver, and that has been one of my strongest suits. A couple drives here and there, a couple times when I really want to give it the extra power, I don't seem to have sometimes. It's getting better.

My chipping and putting, my wedge play has been really good. It's always been a strength, but I was able to spend so much time in January and February and that's all I did was hit a lot of wedges, short irons, chip around the greens, putt a lot. I putted a lot. That's about all I could have done at the time. So I'm kind of seeing the fruits to that labor paying off now and that's been really neat.

And I think the more I progress and get stronger and comfortable again, I mean, I hadn't played for so long that you go out there and your swing under the gun is always different than what you practice, we all know that. Even when you step on the course to go have fun, it's different. So just trying to build that consistency back up a little bit and it's getting better.

Q. Steve, you mentioned Jerry a couple times. Is there trash talk involved? Has he kind of held it over your head that he's won back to back and you haven't yet?

STEVE STRICKER: No, he knows that it bothers me, but like I said, it's all good. If I wasn't going to be able to win it, he would be the next guy I'd pick to win it. He's a great guy, a great family man, like I said. He's meant a lot to our family over the years. We've been friends forever, all the way back to junior golf, so Jerry's a good guy and love his family.

JIM BUCHHEIM: Any other questions? If not, thanks again for attending today and we look forward to seeing you out at University Ridge for this year's American Family Insurance Championship. Thanks, everyone.