

Steve Stricker | Regions Tradition | Day 1

Q: In general, you have to be feeling really great about yourself. First major of the year, you shoot 65, you're in the lead by three, you're doing exactly what you've always done?

A: Yeah, you know it's great to be out here playing again is my mentality. I have a little different perspective after going through what I went through so I'm just enjoying it now a little bit more, and having fun with it. I'm still trying to get my body back to where it was, that will be ongoing for a while, but I feel really good and I'm doing some good things on the course.

Q: Are you putting extra expectations on what you should be and getting back to where you were last year before everything happened?

A: I would say I'm doing the opposite, I'm giving myself a break. I'm coming out here and seeing what I have, and it's been pretty good. I'm doing a lot of the little things well – the chipping and the putting – which I had a lot of time to practice on before I got back into hitting and the long game. I'm just managing myself around the golf course pretty well, and that has always been a good thing about my game. Hopefully it will continue, but this is just one round and we have a long week with three more rounds. I'll keep plugging.

Q: You lost some length when you were ill. Bringing that length back, is it harder to find it off the tee or your iron game?

A: It's weird, two months ago I had nothing as far as speed. It's been the last month or so that I started to pick up a little more speed. I'm probably not as long as I was last year, I'm close. The more I play, the more I come out here, the more I go out to the range and hit balls, and working out on the side when I'm not out here I'm getting stronger. I didn't have really anything, but the last two months is where I really saw this progression of getting stronger.

Q: How much fun are you having right now, considering where you were two months ago?

A: It is fun. Like I said, I have a different perspective on things and I'm just going out and enjoying it. I'm not trying to get to uptight things, and have more fun with it. And having Nicki (Stricker) on the bag is fun, we've been enjoying our time together. We're reliving when we first came out on tour back in the mid-90s so it's been fun (to do it again).

Q: What do you like about this course, and why do you think you're playing so well here?

A: Coming here, I love the heat. It feels good when you're 55-years old and you have 85-90 degrees, you feel pretty loose. The course I enjoy, there's some key holes you have to play well on and there's some you have to take advantage of, and I did all of those today. I'll keep trying to do those things and play smart.