

Steve Stricker

*Steve you joined a pretty impressive group with your fifth senior major, third win here at the Regions Tradition, tremendous. How much did the last four holes of yesterday improve your confidence?*

They did very much so. I needed to go around 4-under yesterday on the back-9 just to stay in reaching distance of Robert and a couple of other guys who were up there, but to get to 6-under on the back with birdieing the last four. Then to come out today and make a statement early, I think that was just as important, I birdied the first three today. I felt comfortable, my game was good, I rolled in a few putts, and so it was a great day.

*You've taken a commanding lead in the Charles Schwab Cup race, does this commitment maybe change at the end of the year if you can maintain this lead?*

I plan on playing, I really do. I'm part of the Ryder Cup team, and there's other family things I like to do, hunting, my daughter is playing tour school at the end of the year, there's a lot of stuff on my plate in the fall, but I like my position where I'm at and I'm going to continue to play here. I have a busy stretch coming up here after this next week off, and then we'll see where it goes.

*Steve, you're the defending champion, take me through today's round. We had some weather, but that didn't seem to delay you, you just kept dominating, and you have another major under the belt. What does it mean?*

It means a lot, it was a special week here again. I don't know what it is about this place but it brings out the best in me for some reason, I've played some really good golf here and today was no different. I got off to a good start, birdieing the first three holes kind of settled my nerves a little bit. I played really nicely all the way around. I had one little hiccup on the par-3 on 14, but other than that it was a really solid round. I made some putts, hit it in there close, and it's always nice to win out here, especially with it being a major.

*It was your first win with Joe (LaCava) on the bag, take me through the week with him being here.*

He's such a great kid, I've known his dad forever, this is I think the third tournament that I think he has caddied for me, we haven't done as well as we did this week. It's nice to get him his first win on any tour. He's excited, and again he's a hard worker and he's a good caddy as well.

*You said you liked watching the leaderboard so you've either tied or broke your other course record with 23-under. We're you watching that just to see how bad you were dominating?*

Not really, I was just seeing where the guys behind me were. After the rain delay when I came out and hit that putt and Robert missed his that made me feel a lot better. It could have gone the other way, I could have missed he could have made and all of a sudden it looks a lot different. We had some water coming up and then you never know. It was a big putt at 15 and then I just played solid.

*Talk to me about the putter grip and what the change was.*

I put the putter grip on last week, Sunday in Atlanta, hadn't been putting very well, just not very solid. I put that into play last Sunday, decided to give it a rip here, and I've actually played with it one other time before about a year or two ago. I've practiced with it at home a lot so I was like let's put it into play. I had some hiccups along the way, I didn't make them all but I definitely putted better and I made some nice mid-range putts, 10-20 feet, which I hadn't been making. I was a little shaky on some of the shorter ones, but all-in-all it was a good change and it felt the best it has today.

*What about the putt on hole three.*

The putt on three was nice. They were going in with proper speed, my speed was really good. The first couple of days I was a little bit of a scatter brain, I really didn't have the speed down and I wasn't paying attention. Then today I felt like was conscious of what I was going to do on the greens, my line, and that's something I haven't been doing. It was good to have that today when I needed it.

*You look back, I know you don't like looking back in your rearview mirror, but it's been a year, this was the breakout win last year. Is there thoughts over that?*

It is back there, I have so much moved on from that. I count my blessings when I think about that, but I feel like I'm way past that. I'm feeling good, I just keep trying to move forward and play better. I'm 56, I'm not getting any younger, but this makes me feel younger.

*How are you going to celebrate?*

I'm going home! I get to go home, see my girls, and then Nikki and my oldest take off to play in a tournament on the Epson Tour so I'll just see them for a day and then they're gone. I think Izzy is going to caddy for me at the Senior PGA. It'll be good to get home.

*Talk about this course and how much you enjoy playing in this state.*

I really do. I don't know what it is about playing here, the tournament, the people, I really enjoy coming here and competing here. It's a four-round tournament, that adds a little extra for us, it's a major so it feels good to come out on top here again.

*You were sick not too long ago, but now here you are dominating on the Champions Tour. When you were bedridden during that time, did you ever think you would get to this place?*

When you're in the hospital going through some of that stuff you're just trying to think about it one day at a time and getting better, and golf was a motivating factor to get better and get back to playing. But no, you never think about all of the good things that have come after me. That's in my rearview mirror now, I'm truly excited about the way I feel playing, and this is a special one again. To win a major anytime out here is a special week.

*You start with three straight birdies, four in the first five holes. How comfortable were you out here today?*

It was good to get out to a good start. I hit it to a foot on the first hole, anytime you can do that you build some confidence right away. I tried a new putter grip this week, that took a few days

to feel comfortable, that's starting to feel better and better all the time. To make a statement early like that, and to get out to that lead was a big deal.

This was a continuation of a dominant ending to your third round. How important was it to carry over that momentum from your third round into your final round?

I needed that finish yesterday just to keep touch with the leaders. I was thinking if I could get a couple of birdies coming in and I ended up getting four of them. Like you said to start off with three today that was seven in a row, and that kind of put me in a position where it was my tournament to win. It's good in a way, but also hard when you're trying to win a tournament, you just don't want to screw up. You're trying really hard, you're protecting, that's a hard way to play sometimes. After the rain delay I came out and hit a nice putt to make birdie at 15 and that settled me down too.

*How does it feel setting a record?*

I hadn't even thought about it, but it's always a nice thing when you can set a record that has been around for a lot of years. Especially when you can set it against a guy named Jack Nicklaus who had it before. That was just icing on the cake.

*Are you going to try and got 24-under next year?*

I just love coming here, I appreciate what they do here in this area. I try not to jinx myself by saying anything dumb. I don't know what it is about the course, but I enjoy playing here and I've had some good rounds over the years.

*What about getting Joe his first win?*

It was very cool, he's such a good kid. His dad has caddied for a lot great players in our game over the years. This is about the third tournament that I've had Joe on the bag and he's a great kid who works hard. To get him his first win on any tour was pretty cool.