

STEVE STRICKER – 2024 SANFORD INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION

PRESS CONFERENCE (09.15.24)

Congratulations Steve. You completed a three-peat in dramatic fashion – how special is this one for you?

Yeah, this is very special. I touched on it on the back of the green there, I've been trying to win one all year for my dad that we lost in January and I just haven't been able to get it done. So, to do it here, to get a three-peat, Andy North being the host, this place is special to me. I feel like this is a home field, home course advantage for me with all the support I get and just the familiarity that I have with the course and the friends I've made here over the years, it's a sweet, sweet spot for me and a special win.

We teased you before the start that you couldn't possibly win without your wife Nicki in the bag – it turned out okay after all, didn't it?

Well, it was a little harder. Maybe we could've gotten it done a little earlier if she was here, but it's hard to win. I didn't hit the best of shots at times coming down the stretch and I just gutted it out and found a way, so yeah, I didn't think it was really going to happen after he (Richard Green) made birdie in regulation and he had all the momentum and I left a putt short to go into the playoff. So, momentum's with him, but I just tried to keep fighting and live to play another hole, basically, to start with.

Talk about that incredible shot you hit from the trees on the right because that was the shot of the day.

Well, I actually thought I could get it up there on top and have a legitimate birdie putt. The lay of the land, that was going to help me kind of maneuver it to the right and then back to the left, so I pulled it. I almost hit the tree actually, but I pulled it a little bit. But yeah, again, I was just trying to make a four and he was in great position every time, he drove the ball so well on this hole every time. And I felt like I was fighting to keep it going and then you don't expect to do that off the left rough and almost make it, but it's a special win.

Did you sense the gallery pulling for you all day long?

Yeah, I get that feeling here every time I go around here. I get a lot of support here, I get a lot of well-wishers, a lot of people that I've seen over the years continue to cheer me on and little kids and older people. It's a cool spot for me.

You hadn't won in a year, since last year here. So how big was this to kind of get that confidence back?

Yeah, very, very much so. I've been playing well this year – I haven't been just putting it all together. You know, bits and pieces here and there and had some opportunities to win. I had a four-shot lead at our tournament in Madison and, you know, kind of gave it up at the end and Ernie (Els) ended up winning in a playoff over me. So, I had some opportunities this year, I just didn't finish them off. So I was starting to feel like I got that little monkey on your back and you can't quite get it off when you're not finishing. So it feels good to do what I did here and yeah, keep plugging.

Did you think that shot (2nd shot on 4th playoff hole) was going to go in?

I heard the people start to get a little bit more excited and I could see the line was looking good from where I was at. But I'm just glad it hit the hole and stopped a couple feet away. Again, you don't expect to hit that, I was just trying to get it up on top for a change. I've been right down here every time going around and I was tired of that. So it was good to get it up there.

What went into your play today?

I got off to a good start – birdied 1 and 2, made some nice putts. And the course was challenging this week, you could tell from the scores. It was firm, it was fast, some of the pin locations were a little bit tougher than what we've seen here in past years. That's why the scoring was a little bit more difficult, so you had to kind of pay attention. If you didn't get in the fairway either, it was a struggle. I didn't do that at times, but yeah, it was a good start to the day, that's kind of what got me going.

How does this one compare to the last two years or three total?

I think this one's probably more special for sure. Like I said before, for my dad, for being a three-peat, Andy North – special connection with him and Susan, and the people at Sanford I've gotten to know pretty well over the years. They do a wonderful job here for the community and the players love coming here, let me just put it that way.

Doesn't success on this course help you moving forward?

Yeah, for sure. Coming here, you know, I have a good feeling just coming here knowing that I've won four times here in a short period of time. It's a good feeling for me to be here, it gives me a lot of confidence to be here, and I look forward to coming back.