



# Stricker

## Eyes His Third Straight John Deere Classic Title



Steve Stricker celebrated the 40th anniversary of the John Deere Classic by posting his second consecutive victory at the tournament and breaking the event scoring record by a whopping four shots.

Stricker's 26-under par 258 total was two better than that of Paul Goydos, who grabbed the world's attention when he shot an opening-round 59, only the fourth player in PGA TOUR history to do so. Stricker, who shot 60 in the first round, nearly matched Goydos' iconic number, but his approach for eagle to the 18th green at TPC Deere Run skirted by the hole and he had to settle for birdie.

"It was a great week," Stricker said after recording his ninth Tour victory. "You know, a lot of cool things happened here at this tournament, not only for me, but Paul Goydos shooting 59, only the fourth man in history... I feel fortunate to be sitting here [as the winner]."

It wasn't easy, even though Stricker took a six-shot lead into the final round after setting a new 54-hole PGA TOUR scoring record at 25-under par 188 (60-66-62). He needed the entire cushion, as Goydos, in his words, kept "pushing, chipping, grinding, and biting" at Stricker en route to a 5-under 66.

Despite a birdie-birdie start on the first two holes of the final round, Stricker finished with a 1-under 70. But his clutch 12-foot birdie putt on the par 5 17th enabled him to maintain a two-shot lead on Goydos going to the difficult final hole.

"The putt he made on 17 was a world-class putt," Goydos said. "That's what Top 5 players do. That's what Ryder Cup players do. [Stricker] didn't have his best game today. It's tough to play with a seven-shot lead, I'm sure. But when it really mattered, when it really got down to the nitty gritty, the guy hit as good a putt as you could get, and that's what champions do."

“Anytime you can win three times in a row would be great,” Stricker said. “It would be fun to come back and try.”

Stricker, who turned 44 earlier this year, drew on his experience.

“I’ve made some big putts over the last few years when I’ve had to,” Stricker said. “I look back at some of the big putts I’ve made and, you know, there’s nothing to be scared of, and rolled it in... to go to the last hole with a two-shots instead of one was huge.”

Stricker bogeyed the 18th, meaning that Goydos could have tied him with a birdie. But Goydos’ hit his approach shot into the water left of the green and he, too, made bogey.

Both Stricker and Goydos broke the previous tournament record of 22-under set by J.P. Hayes en route to his victory in 2002. Stricker, a native and current resident of Wisconsin and a University of Illinois alumnus, recorded 31 birdies, tying him with Phil Mickelson and John Huston for second on the all-time list for birdies in a 72-hole event.

Having won earlier in the year at the Northern Trust Open in Los Angeles, Stricker’s victory at the John Deere solidified his place on the 2010 U.S. Ryder Cup team.

Coming into the tournament, Stricker already was exempt for the British Open, meaning the exemption available at the John Deere would go to the next highest finisher not already eligible. That turned out to be the 46-year-old Goydos, who said, “Playing in a British Open at St. Andrews, I think, is about as cool a thing that you can do.”

Stricker, Goydos and a couple dozen other players and their traveling parties flew directly to Scotland via the John Deere Classic charter service, originated in 2008 to make it easier for players to compete in both events. The jet has helped attract higher-ranked players and more major champions to the John Deere Classic.

Stricker’s victory was the first successful defense at the Quad Cities-based tournament since David Frost posted back-to-back wins in 1992-93. The only other repeat winner was Deane Beman, who won the first two Quad Cities events in 1972 and 1973.

Goydos said events like the John Deere Classic have a more intimate atmosphere, which he said appeals to him.

“I think John Deere is a wonderful sponsor,” he said. “I think they support the community here as well as any tournament does. It’s a great kind of small-town event and we’re kind of losing our small-town events for more corporate type events. This is more of a hometown kind of feel. It’s just a fun week and I love playing here.”

The week would really be fun for Stricker were he to three-peat in 2011.

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