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| **Mistake-Free Steve Stricker Leads By Six Strokes After Third Round at U.S. Senior Open Championship** |
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| June 27-30, 2019, Warren Golf Course at Notre Dame, South Bend, Ind.[mediacenter.usga.org](https://nam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Ficm-tracking.meltwater.com%2Flink.php%3FDynEngagement%3Dtrue%26H%3DbtYXC68syxnIlVIaW0qBweEUHWPFwuN5EgnqFgPj0oiC1OMl9zi1RuXkumpVyUNX90jviizQVZfe1V2Pd8uJs3Hb8t538o6TWGyle7asdhs3Hm3y9de1lg%253D%253D%26G%3D0%26R%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fnam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com%252F%253Furl%253Dhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Ficm-tracking.meltwater.com%25252Flink.php%25253FDynEngagement%25253Dtrue%252526H%25253DbtYXC68syxmDVppbhVzFoYHdeMNV9070xvOlf%2525252FNdDQ0wXj6aidRhm0w6DZoGITpCcLkftf8fVbwMeVq7YUOJ%2525252FmnmWvvTYk9qS%2525252FHstTyNu5DyViKpQpAwWHtGmNj933kV%252526G%25253D0%252526R%25253Dhttps%2525253A%2525252F%2525252Fnam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com%2525252F%2525253Furl%2525253Dhttp%252525253A%252525252F%252525252Ficm-tracking.meltwater.com%252525252Flink.php%252525253FDynEngagement%252525253Dtrue%2525252526H%252525253DAqX%25252525252Fyxxn%25252525252FCsKfNEzXNs%25252525252BvxKe7ZZW379%25252525252BIapVVCHkcj06tGRioNXHyfncDrdOWtx%25252525252Br0W1J4QLTGtbmyE4F7AZ2n8It7KEBxN%25252525252FCdm9mJlwE68TzozwkLFxVh7nnDmVKF8e%2525252526G%252525253D0%2525252526R%252525253Dhttp%25252525253A%25252525252F%25252525252Fmediacenter.usga.org%25252525252Fus-womens-amateur%2525252526I%252525253D20190530032742.000002d318f6%252525252540mail6-60-usnbn1%2525252526X%252525253DMHwxMDQ2NzU4OjVjZWY0ZGFkZGZhZGJiZjVhOGFlOGZmYzsxfDEwNDY3NTk6dHJ1ZTs%25252525253D%2525252526S%252525253D-wl7Lfzw6R078grqnkBzKAhz-_Rh5pxal6osU8RqYVk%25252526data%2525253D02%252525257C01%252525257CBDePasquale%2525252540USGA.org%252525257C78e72703bae847c6c7f608d6e4af299a%252525257C17abf7083a064391bdbd06808d1b9f81%252525257C0%252525257C0%252525257C636947838303744122%25252526sdata%2525253D15SAuU5V1rjvw1FsrdDXhoyUUOZ%252525252BEAedxTMqVl6wjtw%252525253D%25252526reserved%2525253D0%252526I%25253D20190606150115.0000048d49d6%25252540mail6-114-ussnn1%252526X%25253DMHwxMDQ2NzU4OjVjZjkyYTgxZGZhZGJiZjVhOGFlOWJmMDsxfDEwNDY3NTk6dHJ1ZTs%2525253D%252526S%25253DG15OQMvyd8t6YXgiu65qpg12S9Yt5UD1OAwolskz4mc%2526data%253D02%25257C01%25257CBDePasquale%252540USGA.org%252) | [ussenioropen.com](https://nam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Ficm-tracking.meltwater.com%2Flink.php%3FDynEngagement%3Dtrue%26H%3DbtYXC68syxnIlVIaW0qBweEUHWPFwuN5EgnqFgPj0oiC1OMl9zi1RuXkumpVyUNX90jviizQVZfe1V2Pd8uJs3Hb8t538o6TWGyle7asdhs3Hm3y9de1lg%253D%253D%26G%3D0%26R%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.ussenioropen.com%26I%3D20190630005011.000000f1e13c%2540mail6-113-ussnn1%26X%3DMHwxMDQ2NzU4OjVkMTgwNzQwZGZhZGJiZjVhOGFlYzAzNzsxfDEwNDY3NTk6dHJ1ZTs%253D%26S%3DAMZ0I6Qp4YmEQHPmi0F8_xAIyPuH-d0PW7Bj0BXy2-Q&data=02%7C01%7CJAltstadter%40USGA.org%7C1301799709cc4f9f2dff08d6fcf57372%7C17abf7083a064391bdbd06808d1b9f81%7C0%7C0%7C636974528483644502&sdata=w0JfzdHZxXUYDAB7AiWWL1u6YTHYeDStNRGOzYa2n2E%3D&reserved=0) | @usga\_pr (media Twitter) |@usga (Twitter and Instagram) | USGA (Facebook) | #USSeniorOpen |
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| **What Happened** Usually when people in the Hoosier State see someone lapping the field, it’s taking place at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, about 150 miles south of South Bend. But this week, Steve Stricker has performed in the 40th U.S. Senior Open Championship at Notre Dame’s Warren Course like he’s in an Indy Car and everyone else is driving an Edsel.Starting Saturday’s third round with a two-stroke lead over fellow Madison, Wis., native and longtime friend Jerry Kelly, Stricker stretched his margin to six over Kelly after posting a bogey-free, 4-under-par 66 on the 6,928-yard layout. The six-shot advantage is one off the largest in championship history, held by Dave Stockton, who won only by two over Hale Irwin in 1996 at Canterbury Country Club in Cleveland, Ohio.Stricker, however, hasn’t shown any chinks in his armor through 54 holes. He’s hit 44 greens and made only one bogey, a consecutive stretch that currently stands at 48. His 66 matched the lowest round of the day and he’s the first player in championship history to post the lowest score in each of the first three rounds.His 18-under total of 192 shattered the 54-hole scoring mark previously held by Kirk Triplett (2017) and the 52-year-old has a good chance to break the 72-hole scoring mark of 264 (Kenny Perry in 2017). He could also surpass Fred Funk’s record for total in relation to par (20 under in 2009 at Crooked Stick in Carmel, Ind.).“I think I'm just going to keep doing the same things I've been doing,” said Stricker, who won the first PGA Tour Champions major of the season, the Regions Tradition, in May. “My whole objective is to get it in the fairway and then see what pins I feel comfortable shooting at or steering away from. That's been the game plan, and I've been putting well.“I'm swinging at it a little bit more confidently, feeling good with what I have in my hand. And I hit it well last week. I hit it well at the Memorial [in early June]. So I'm kind of building on those tournaments.  One more day, if I can do the same thing [on Sunday], we'll be in good shape.”With the greens firming up, the wind changing directions and some tougher hole locations, Stricker built on his lead with a 3-under 32 on the outward nine. He then holed an 8-footer for birdie on No. 11 before coming home with seven consecutive pars.Kelly, the winner of last week’s PGA Tour Champions event in his hometown, admittedly struggled all day with his game (11 of 17 greens and 30 putts), but still managed an even-par 70, the same score posted by defending champion David Toms. Toms, who is seven strokes back at 11-under 199, kept it together, despite hitting just 5 of 18 greens.Bob Estes is eight strokes behind in solo fourth following a 68. Five golfers, including two-time U.S. Open champion Retief Goosen, are nine back at 7-under 203.Now the only question remains: Can anyone apply pressure to Stricker or will Sunday turn into a victory lap?“I'm going to have to be the aggressor,” said Kelly, who held a one-stroke lead going into last year’s final round only to lose by a stroke to Toms. “He's hitting it long and straight. He's got a lot less in [to the greens] than me. He can pick apart a golf course. I'm going to have to play flawless. And I'm going to have to make a lot of putts.“If I can get three birdies on him early, I can make him start pressing. But it's going to be tough catching up with that guy. He's just doing all the right things.”**Notable****Steve Stricker’s** one bogey is the fewest through 54 holes in a U.S. Senior Open. **Kirk Triplett** (2017), **Craig Stadler** (2004) and **Hubert Green** (2000) previously held the mark with two.Defending champion **David Toms** had 13 one-putt greens in Round 3.**Tom Watson** saw his streak of matching or bettering his age (69) end at two after the 1982 U.S. Open champion carded a 3-over 73 for a 54-hole total of even-par 210.While no amateurs qualified for the weekend, 11 players who were not fully exempt into the field managed to make the cut. It is the fewest in championship history. Previously, the lowest number of sectional qualifiers to make the cut was 14 in 2017. This year’s group is headlined by **Gary Nicklaus**, the son of four-time U.S. Open and two-time U.S. Senior Open champion **Jack Nicklaus. Steve Jones**, the 1996 U.S. Open champion, also was among that list along with Indiana native **Jeff Gallagher.**Sectional qualifier **Ken Duke** made the biggest jump on Saturday, moving from a tie for 42nd to a share of 14th, thanks to a 4-under 66. The low 15 and ties are fully exempt into the 2020 U.S. Senior Open at Newport (R.I.) Country Club.**Quotable**“The golf course is definitely playing harder. The greens were baked out a little bit today. It was starting to bounce. It'll be tough to shoot a low number, but I know I can do it on this golf course. It's just a matter of going out there and giving myself enough opportunities to shoot a low score.” – **David Toms**“It looks like [Steve] Stricker is untouchable this week, but we'll see.” – **Miguel Angel Jimenez** on how well the 54-hole leader is playing“No, we love having him out. Are you kidding me? It just shows us how much more we need to really push. We shoot low scores out there all the time, and trust me, he's pushing us. There's no question about it. And that's a great thing. I want to have to make more just to catch up to him. That's totally fine. I'd love to pass him, too.” – **Jerry Kelly** when asked if he preferred **Stricker** playing more on the PGA Tour“Yeah, it's comfortable yet kind of weird in a strange way. We've been partners in team events … Not too many times we come up head-to-head. Last week we had a playoff against one another, and that felt weird, too. Usually we're rooting for each other and not really playing all that much head-to-head in a final round, especially in a major out here. It's fun to play with him, and it's fun to be out there with him, but yet it's kind of awkward, too [laughter].” – **Steve Stricker** on playing with good friend **Kelly** the last two rounds of a major“I'm just going to go out and play golf tomorrow. That's what I do every day. I'm glad to be here. I'm a little wounded, but that's okay.” – **Tommy Armour III** after posting a third consecutive round in the 60s“This is a 10-year gig. I'm on year 7. I don't have to combat it. Well, actually they pay more than one guy, right? So if you can get it and get against him and get within a couple of him and make him think about it, you can wrestle him in the mud a little bit. But you've got to drag him down to your level because we ain't going up to his.” – **Kirk Triplett** on the uphill battle against **Stricker**“It was a pretty erratic round. Lots of good golf and lots of bad, and my scorecard reflects that. But I haven't been able to practice very much, so I'm not sharp as I would be. Plus, I'm just kind of getting back into the flow. It's only my second tournament in three months (elbow issue). Some of the shots that I hit are kind of to be expected, and some of the shots I mishit I'm still kind of working on, and hopefully I'll be better in the future.” – **Bob Estes**### |
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