

Walker Cup

Friday, May 7, 2021

Juno Beach, Florida, USA

Seminole Golf Club

Alex Fitzpatrick

GB&I Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome England's Alex Fitzpatrick who's competing in his second Walker Cup after representing Great Britain and Ireland in 2019 at Royal Liverpool. Alex, as the only returning GB&I player from 2019, what's some advice you've given to the rest of the team about this week?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I think the thing I took probably from the last one, the thing that I think was most important to me, was to understand that there's going to be a lot of people out there. There's going to be cameras behind you and there's going to be people applauding you and there are probably going to be people speaking on your backswing, and I think that's something you've got to realize and get used to. There's going to be 36 holes a day of all of that, and especially this week rather than last year, there will be a lot more supporters against us than with us, so probably a little less applauding for good shots for our team and more for theirs.

Q. You've been on the course a few days now. What are your thoughts?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I love it here personally. I've been lucky enough to have been invited to play here a couple times, so I feel like I have got the experience of playing here a lot. It sets up great for me, and I know it sets up great for a lot of other guys on our team, and it's a lot of bombs-away drivers really, which makes me a little happy.

Q. This year has been a little bit different than two years ago, at least in the lead-up. How have you guys managed to handle this adversity that's been thrown your way and make sure that you're prepared when the balls go in the air tomorrow?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think for the guys that haven't got the stomach bug that's going around, it's just a case of coming here and getting down to business is what you need to do, and making sure you feel 100 percent prepared for what's coming this week, just making sure that when you step on that first tee come Saturday that you're

ready and you're ready to go. I think having the right attitude is probably the most important thing, as well as being ready for the golf course, just making sure mentally that you're prepared to go out there and get a point for the team.

Q. Has any of this affected you guys' pairings at all, and how have you had to kind of scramble this last day or so?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it's difficult to say really. It's a stomach bug, and I guess it's gone around both teams. Like you said, it's a little bit of adversity to deal with, but I think it only lasts for 12 to 24 hours or something, so hopefully we have the full team back by tomorrow. But other than that, I can't really comment more just because I'm not entirely sure with what's going on and kind of who's been -- I guess who it's happened to, especially on the U.S. side. I have no idea about their team. But I know they've had some players out as well as ours, so we'll have to see really.

Q. When did this begin to happen this week? My understanding was that a couple guys on your team perhaps as early as Monday started to feel ill. How did it start to play out?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: So I think it was -- being honest, what is today, Friday? I think it was around Tuesday or Wednesday we had a couple guys sort of fall ill, and I guess we weren't sure what it was to start with, and it was weird, we had two guys from each team apparently go, and the next day happened, we thought people would get better and then suddenly four guys were out.

It's difficult. It's something that it just happens, and it just happened to be at a time like this when it's happened to these people, and it's unfortunate, but everyone is doing everything they can to get better for Saturday, and hopefully everyone is healthy soon.

Q. How many players has it affected for GB&I?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Maybe five. I think it's five for both teams from what I've been told, but I couldn't -- don't clarify



me on that.

Q. As this is going on, how are you mentally trying to handle that and get ready for obviously what's going to be happening while perhaps not even knowing how it's going to be happening or not, whether the format might be impacted? What has that done in terms of harming or hurting or how has it affected your preparation?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Being honest, I don't really think it's affected mine at all, obviously unless I fell ill. But me personally, I'm just trying to go out there and play the best golf I can, and I know it's difficult in foursomes where your partner hits the next shot, but all I can do is play my game, and hopefully that will be good enough in singles and hopefully that helps a lot in foursomes, but I'm just trying to get my preparation in as well as I can and make sure I'm ready to go on that first day.

Q. Are you waiting for the other shoe to drop? Are you concerned about getting sick yourself?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I mean, I'm taking -- I'm being very cautious with what I eat and where I go, and I'm sanitizing as much as I can. But it's kind of luck of the draw really. I'm hoping that it doesn't happen to me and that I can be healthy for tomorrow's match.

Q. Obviously there's a lot of things as you know that go on during the week. Have you guys not spent time with each other as you normally would, maybe not done dinners together, all the things that you normally would do?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, this year's Walker Cup has been a lot different to the one at Hoylake. COVID is such an unfortunate thing, and the experience has still been phenomenal and it's still everything I could have asked for, but just little things like having to sit six feet away from people at dinner and not being able to be with your team all the time is frustrating, but it's something that you have to do and you have to live with, and the week itself is still going to be amazing, so yeah, I'd say that's about it really.

Q. I know from a preparation standpoint you're probably a little different than some of the other guys. Those guys were in the UK and just came over here, they haven't had as much access, right, so have you talked with them about how hard it was to get prepared for this?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: A little bit, not much really. I know a couple of the lads have been able to play in little tournaments at home that started to pick up towards the

middle of the year heading towards this tournament, which was nice. They got some experience of playing tournament golf.

Like we all know, with what happened at home and the weather, as well, it just played into the hands of if you were over here you just get more valuable time of playing tournament golf. I know for a fact that come Saturday they'll all be prepared just as much as anyone else who's been out here for however long, including the Americans. They'll be all ready to go.

Q. You were here obviously preparing all week before we had the torrential downpour last night, and at least an inch of rain I believe we received. For the layman casual golf fan that's never seen Seminole on TV that doesn't understand what rain does to this place, can you describe what this course was like playing earlier this week and how different it might be after the rain?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, this golf course normally sets up a bit like a links course in a way. There's a lot of wind. Fairways can be fairly firm, not quite as firm as a links golf course but still pretty firm for an American-style course. As well as the greens, you sort of pitch it on the greens and they one-hop and they might check or may even just roll out. Even with chipping it can be difficult to stop your golf ball.

But the torrential rain that happened yesterday was crazy. We couldn't get out of our team room. We were stranded in there for about two hours, and we were looking out the window and seeing that the whole course was underwater, and being out there today we were spinning chips back and you could just tell that the course was just a little damp and I'd say it will make it a bit more for target golf, but at the same time that can be a bit dangerous with all the runoffs. Yeah, it'll be interesting to see how much it's affected play with what you prepared for at the start of the week and what today has been.

Q. I know you're based here in the States at Wake Forest; a lot of the Americans in 2019 had different equipment changes they made to prepare to play at Hoylake. Any of your guys make equipment changes to suit Seminole or has anything changed equipment-wise for anyone?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: No, not really. Everyone is just playing their own thing. I don't think anyone has gone down the Bryson route of making an extra inch and a half on your shaft. Yeah, everyone is playing their own equipment, and yeah, everyone is excited to go.

Q. What was your experience or had you seen this

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

place prior to this week? You've been with your brother or anything?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: We have some family friends that are members here. We've been incredibly lucky to have that opportunity to be able to come here beforehand, so I've played here maybe 10 to 15 times. Every time I come here I love it just as much. It's my sort of course where there's no trees by the side of the tee that I'm worried about hitting. It's just a lot of drivers.

It's a fairly wide course. I'd say the fairways are kind of narrow between the bunkers, but other than that, outside of the bunkers, it's a little wide, which I personally love.

But yeah, I was ecstatic when I knew that the Walker Cup was here, and I was obviously privileged to get a pick. But yeah, I'm looking forward to this week and seeing what happens.

Q. Do you know what your best score is here, best 18-hole score? Do you remember?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I think I shot 4- or 5-under. I remember I had a putt for birdie on the last to shoot 29 on the back nine, but that's a little different than being stood in front of 2,000 people with a lot of people watching at home. We'll have to see. All I can do is play my best, so I'm hoping for that.

Q. In terms of what your role is on the team, obviously you're coming back for the second time. How vocal are you? How much obligation do you feel to be a vocal leader? Did you tell your captain where you wanted to go, first, last, whatever?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I mean, I guess I've had a little bit more experience than the rest of them in terms of the Walker Cup, but all the boys have played their own game to get here, and they don't need me to tell them where to hit it on the golf course and where not to hit it. They all have their own experience, and they all know what they're doing.

I've had little bits to say every now and then just in terms of just trying to get them to realize maybe like how many people are going to be out here and the cameras and that stuff, but nothing to do with golf really. They're all good enough players to know what to do themselves.

Yeah, I wouldn't say I've been overly vocal, but if they ever want to ask me questions, I was always open to answer.

Q. Have you ever experienced a bug like this in a team setting before, maybe with your college team? Have

you had people in and out, or is this kind of a new experience this week?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: It's funny you say that; I was injured last week so I didn't play my conference championships, which was incredibly frustrating, but in terms of having some health issue to do with the team, this is the first time. Normally you kind of get one that's -- someone might not feel well, but it's just one person and they might not -- I guess they might not be well for a couple hours or whatever. But this is the first time I've seen kind of like a row of people just get wiped out. But hopefully everyone picks up and everyone will be okay for Saturday and Sunday.

Q. A lot has been said so far just on social media and whatever about the discrepancy between the World Rankings of the two teams. What do you have to say to people who think this is going to be a cake walk?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Ranking is just a number. It doesn't matter, you could be ranked 500, you could be ranked 1. It really doesn't matter in match play. For me personally, I think if you're No. 1 you've got way more pressure on you than someone who's 500.

The chances are that the higher ranked player is probably a better player, but that doesn't mean that they're going to win. Stroke play is a little different. I think if stroke play ranking might matter a little bit more. But in general it's just a number and it doesn't mean you're a bad player.

I know a lot of guys who when I came to college, first couple of events I played, I was fairly highly ranked I would say when I came to college, and John Smith was shooting 12-under for three rounds and I was like, this guy is pretty good and he's 2,000 ranked. I was like, this doesn't make sense. I think since I've come to college you soon realize that it's not just about the ranking. It's about putting a number on the scorecard at the end of the day and you do that for three rounds and see who takes home the trophy.

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