

Walker Cup

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Juno Beach, Florida, USA
Seminole Golf Club

Cole Hammer

United States Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the 48th Walker Cup matches here at Seminole Golf Club. We'd like to welcome Cole Hammer, who is competing in his second Walker Cup after representing the U.S. in 2019 at Royal Liverpool. This is your second Walker Cup. Any advice that you've offered to your teammates?

COLE HAMMER: You know what, I'm really excited to be back. This is going to be a whole lot of fun, and I'm blessed to be able to do it for a second time. Three of us are lucky enough to have this opportunity, myself, John Pak and Stewart, and we're really just trying to get the guys fired up to compete for their country because I remember standing on the first tee last time and how cool of an experience it was, and I also remember how fast it was over. So I want to kind of encourage the guys to really sit there and soak it in and enjoy it because this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we're ready to go out and represent the United States.

THE MODERATOR: What are your thoughts on the course? You've been here for a few days, heading into tomorrow.

COLE HAMMER: Right. Seminole is obviously one of the most well-known, and for a good reason, best golf courses in the world, and I cannot think of a better course to play a Walker Cup match on. I mean, the strategy involved in it, the little intricacies around the greens, short game is vital. It's just going to test every aspect of our game, and it's in unbelievable shape right now, so kudos to the superintendent and his staff for getting it in this good of shape, especially after the rain we had last night.

The golf course is going to hold up well, and it'll be a big part of the storyline.

Q. It's been kind of a strange week. Just kind of talk about how this team has managed and navigated through this adversity, and has it taken any focus or pressure off of what's going to come tomorrow?

COLE HAMMER: You know, it's obviously unfortunate. All

20 guys have worked really hard over the last two years to make this team, and to kind of have an issue like this is no fun. But everybody is making the most of it. We're pushing through, and we're just kind of having to make some decisions on the fly here. But everybody has been great, trying to get healthy, but everybody is chipping in for the better of the team.

There really hasn't been any issues in the team room whatsoever, and everybody is just excited to get going tomorrow no matter what capacity they're in.

Q. Also kind of looking forward, you obviously have this match, you have a PGA TOUR start next week and regionals right after. How are you managing your energy level and what are you looking forward to about this three-week stretch?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, obviously this is a lot of golf over the next three weeks and then leading into NCAAs. But it's a lot of fun golf, as well. This week we got here really early to prepare. We came in on Saturday. But we've been trying to lay low. Obviously we're staying at The Breakers, which is an unbelievable hotel, so we've had the opportunity to kind of lay low in the afternoons. We'll play nine or 18 holes in the morning, and practice a little, and then by about 1:00 or 2:00 every day we've been done, trying to get some rest.

So I'm trying to use this week to kind of prepare for really the next month.

Q. How much do you guys pay attention to World Amateur Golf Ranking and have you seen the discrepancy between the two teams?

COLE HAMMER: You know what, we do look at it, but mainly for personal reasons when it comes to exemptions like such as U.S. Open sectionals and stuff like that. But honestly, I couldn't tell you how our team stands up next to theirs in terms of ranking. Obviously we have a lot of highly ranked Americans, but I don't know how they're ranked.

At the end of the day this is alternate-shot or foursomes



and singles and anything can happen, so it doesn't really matter what it looks like on paper. We've just got to go out there and do everything we can to bring it back.

Q. Can you maybe shed some light on what your biggest learning curve was the last time you played the Walker Cup? What did you leave Hoylake feeling like you had learned that's maybe helping you this week, this format, this event?

COLE HAMMER: Honestly it was just an experience I had never been a part of before. Having nine guys around me, kind of pushing me to be the best I could was really special. A college team is that way, too, but when you're put on a team with peers you've competed against for a long time, that you have a lot of respect for, and to kind of have them pulling for you and rooting you on is something that I won't forget, and I just hope that the new guys feel that from all of us.

Yeah, it's just a great experience. I wouldn't say that like I learned a ton about myself, but I learned a lot about what it's like to be on a team on the golf course and compete for a bigger cause than just myself.

Q. Do you think it's easier to come back and do this this time having done it last time?

COLE HAMMER: Oh, 100 percent. I'm still going to be nervous tomorrow; don't get me wrong. But it's great to have the experience at Liverpool under my belt. But it's going to be a lot different competing on home soil, that's for sure, and competing in front of a home crowd. I know Stewart has done it before, so he's kind of trying to get us prepared, but doing it back two years ago was definitely helpful.

Q. Can you kind of rewind to the start of the year and end of last year, winning South Beach, you played really well at Jones Cup and that probably helped solidify your spot on this team. And maybe you can shed some light on the desire to get to do this again and if there was ever a point where you thought, I'm not sure I've played my way in, I need to push a little bit.

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, no question about it. Obviously two years ago was the best experience of my life on the golf course, and I wanted with everything in my body to get back here. Obviously it's a great feeling to be able to have done it, but I will say back in October, November of last year I was really stressing out. I was behind the 8-ball on the outside looking in, and I knew it, and I knew I just needed to go out and play a bunch of good golf.

I usually don't play in the winter to take some time off from the college schedule. It's pretty rigorous; we play a lot of golf, but I decided I needed to. So I played in the Maridoe Am, did not play well, so I pretty much knew that I had to play well at the South Beach. Honestly it was probably the biggest win I've ever had in terms of confidence and in terms of showing myself that I can do it when it matters.

So I think that win probably -- I wouldn't say secured my spot on the team but helped a lot, and to be here -- to be sitting here right now is pretty special considering where I was six months ago.

Q. I don't know if you have any preference; did you want to be somewhere in the lineup? Do you want to go early? Do you like to go late? And is there anybody who you ideally pair with?

COLE HAMMER: I'll say this: I have a lot of respect for Captain Crosby. We obviously got it done in Liverpool last time and I went out first in singles and I really kind of liked that role. I haven't asked to do anything this go-around, but I do like going out early, kind of setting the tone. But obviously I'm up for anything. I'll do whatever he tells me to do, and I know he's got the best interests of the team in mind and I do, too, so whatever happens happens.

As far as pairings go, every one of the 10 guys on this team is really good at golf, so it doesn't -- in my mind it doesn't really matter who we play with, it's just about personalities. So I've known some of the guys on the team, obviously like Pierceson and John Pak and a bunch of the other guys; known them for a long time. So it would be easy to pair up with guys like that, but I'm open to playing with anybody.

Q. What has changed with your game over the course of the last two years, and was there something specific that's developed that was able -- you were able to kind of muster back up in the last six months or so to get back to the position where you were able to make the team? How had your game evolved?

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, so even starting in 2019, after the NAAs, I started to hit the ball not as well as I wanted to. I wasn't hitting it well the last Walker Cup. I can remember that vividly. I lost my first singles match and lost my first alternate-shot match, and then won the singles match but I didn't like the way I was hitting it, and I went into the college season that fall and really didn't play great leading into the spring, and then COVID hit. So I needed to work pretty hard. I knew there was some things that were just not right.

So I actually made a switch of coaches, started working



with Bruce Davidson, who kind of taught me the game when I was growing up at River Oaks Country Club. I just needed a fresh start to get back to the basic, and there were a couple things in my swing that needed to be addressed. I was kind of shut and laid off at the top and couldn't hit the draw I wanted to hit.

It was really just about seeing a shot, not being able to hit it and being really frustrated about it, and then now I've kind of gotten to the point where I feel comfortable enough that I can do it, and that's been the biggest change for me and it's helped me scoring, like I said, I can now trust what I'm doing.

So it's been a good process to kind of see myself go through it and come out the other side and have some success this spring.

You know, if you had told me six months ago that I would be happy that I went through the process, I would have told you you're crazy, but sitting here now I'm glad I did it.

Q. This week what has the atmosphere been like with everyone kind of realizing things are going on, that this bug seems to be going through the team? Has it created a nervousness amongst you guys? What has the team camaraderie been like over the last few days obviously given the fear of spreading it further amongst the guys?

COLE HAMMER: We've just been kind of sitting back on our heels not knowing what the next step is going to be. You know, it's all been happening so fast that one guy goes down, the next guy goes down. But we're all trying to rally around each other, and it's kind of been -- I wouldn't say it's made us any more nervous about the match just because both teams have so many great players and obviously no one wants to get sick. But we'll be just fine. I promise we'll be ready to go tomorrow no matter what the deal is.

Q. Are you the type of guy who -- I know you've got a lot on your mind, but do you soak in all of the history involved here, not only playing in the Walker Cup but a golf course where Ben Hogan played, for crying out loud, and then your coach of course has a really great history here, as well.

COLE HAMMER: I really do. I have a lot of respect for the game of golf, and I do like golf history and golf course history. So obviously this has played a big part of the game for a long, long time. I mean, No. 6 I think Ben Hogan said is one of his favorite par-4s he's ever played and he came out here and grinded. So it's cool to be a part of a club's history and be a part of a Walker Cup team

that's played here.

Yeah, and Captain Crosby obviously did some great things in the game of golf, and his family is iconic, so like me and the guys are lucky to be a part of it.

THE MODERATOR: Cole, thank you for joining us. Good luck this week.

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