

Walker Cup

Friday, May 7, 2021
Juno Beach, Florida, USA
Seminole Golf Club

John Bodenhamer

USGA

Martin Slumbers

R&A

Press Conference

Q. What's this been like, John? This is kind of unprecedented in a way. I mean, just how have you guys handled these two days get ready for the weekend?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Well, just to put it out there at the beginning, health and safety, like we said all last year, we're saying all this year, health and safety is number one priority, the well-being of everybody here, the well-being of our kids.

You know, so much so that we agreed between us this week, as I think you know, we have two alternates here. That is unprecedented. Thank goodness. It was a COVID protocol, but thanks to that thinking, we're kind of set up for this unexpected sort of predicament. But we're improving, and I think that's been a good thing.

The other good thing that I'd say we made a decision about just out of safety and precaution has been that we're testing players every day, and so we knew early on that this was not COVID, and we tested them multiple times. We had a good medical doctor in place.

The USGA and the R&A are as close as close can get, and so we were prepared for this. It was for COVID, but it's kind of worked out in a funny way that it's been -- all those health and safety protocols and those priorities have put us in a good place.

Q. What is the current situation in terms of the number of players who have been impacted by the stomach bug and what it might mean for the format over the course of the next two days?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Well, I'll speak for the U.S. side and Martin can speak a little bit for the GB&I side, but right now we really feel like there's really one player that won't be here tomorrow, and we've had -- let me think here now.



We've had up to six players that have expressed some discomfort, some more than others, and right now we have one that is still quite a bit under the weather. The others are improving. So we're grateful for that, and nobody else has gotten sick. As you know, the captain is under the weather, but hopefully he'll be here. In fact I think we understand both captains will be here tomorrow, so fingers crossed and hoping for the best.

MARTIN SLUMBERS: On GB&I, all the team will be here tonight, and the captain is -- it's very symmetrical to the U.S. Team. The captain is still recovering but he really wants to be here. We've got one player who is still feeling really badly. He will be here tonight, and we've had seven out of the 12 have gone through this.

Q. John, I just want to ask you with regard to the reserves, has there been any discussion on how they will be used? Are they going to be accessible regardless? Are they all eligible? Maybe speak to how they'll be used for the matches.

JOHN BODENHAMER: Well, as we do, as is our tradition with the R&A, we have very specific terms for the match. They're confidential from the standpoint of they're usually done well ahead of time. Well, we're a little flexible this time. We have to be. But we have a 10-man team. We've stuck with that. And we've got two alternates. So we will use that as needed based on health, not anything else.

You know, for example, we have one of our alternates who would substitute for a player that's ill, a player comes out but we can reinsert later. I think that's what you were getting to.

Q. That's how they would be used throughout the matches?

JOHN BODENHAMER: The ultimate flexibility. We're in agreement with the R&A. I'll let Martin speak to that, but that's our plan.

MARTIN SLUMBERS: The key thing to remember is it is the original 10 that will be the core, and the two can only come in if we have a problem.



Q. So currently there's no change in the format, it'll be four matches in the morning, eight in the afternoon.

JOHN BODENHAMER: Fingers crossed, we believe we're going to be able to do that, yes.

Q. Do you have any times in terms of when pairings will be announced or when the pairings are due because normally both sessions are due ahead of time.

MARTIN SLUMBERS: 7:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Q. And that'll be just foursomes and then you'll have --

MARTIN SLUMBERS: We'll be publishing at 7:00 a.m. tomorrow morning so we have enough time to react if something happens overnight.

Q. Also this question is for either of you guys, but how important is it on Sunday for those 10 singles to have those original 10 players? I mean, just in terms of the meaning of this match. It's 101 years now and --

MARTIN SLUMBERS: Do you know, I'm not sure it's that relevant question for John and I. It's a question for the players. You know, and I think after this dreadful year that we've all had, I think one of the glories of this week is actually we've sort of stripped back to seeing, this is a match between the 10 best amateurs of the United States and the 10 best amateurs in GB&I, and they know it, and they just want to play.

You know, we will help them. We will protect them. We'll make sure they're not ill. But these guys want to go and play. I don't see any problem with Sunday.

Q. Is illness the only reason you would be able to substitute, not injury?

JOHN BODENHAMER: No, it would be illness. I'd have to go back and look at the terms, and I will do that, but I believe that's correct.

Q. When did the players first begin to report they weren't feeling well? What's the timeline of when this all began and became something that you guys --

JOHN BODENHAMER: As I understand it, it was about 48 hours ago. I could double check that. Is that your understanding, Martin?

MARTIN SLUMBERS: Yeah.

Q. And when that began to happen, was there anything that was either put in place or was there anything that you began to do differently as you were beginning to understand what it was?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Well, we had a lot of things in place, as I described. But some of it we do anyway with medical doctors, whether it's on whichever side of the pond, just in case the unexpected happens. So we were pretty well prepared. I think when it started to happen, certainly our first thought was, well, let's make sure whether we know it's COVID or it's not. Our priority has been to play the match. We ruled that out right away, and then we got down the road of whether it was things like a food-borne sort of thing, which has been really bad. It's a stomach virus, and it's going around town apparently, so wash. I certainly am.

But I think we really just -- that was priority one, as I said, health and safety, rule that out, because what happens if -- and when we did, and thankfully we tested every day and multiple times daily when needed, so we had that in place, so grateful for that.

So I think that's how it kicked in. It was with multiple testing, it was making sure that was the case. Making sure our doctor who is -- I think Robby was talking to him at 2:00 in the morning. Jason Gore has a big part of this. He's the one that's been taking the players to the hospital when they had to go and making sure they're not dehydrated and some of this stuff. Those are things we've done.

Q. How many have needed to go to the hospital?

JOHN BODENHAMER: That would be -- I couldn't give you that number. I think it's probably less than a handful. I couldn't give you the specifics.

Q. Who's the doctor?

JOHN BODENHAMER: I don't know his name. I could get it if you want it, but I don't know. But let me know if you want it. I'll get it for you.

Q. When you say go to the hospital, it's more about getting fluids?

JOHN BODENHAMER: Yeah. In fact, we give them a choice, do you guys want to go and just get hydrated, and then that's really it. That's on the recommendation by the doctors, not us.

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