

# Walker Cup

Saturday, May 8, 2021

Juno Beach, Florida, USA

Seminole Golf Club

**Nathaniel Crosby**

**Cole Hammer**

United States Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us. We're joined by captain Nathaniel Crosby and Cole Hammer. The U.S. is holding a 7-5 lead after the first day of the 48th Walker Cup here at Seminole Golf Club. Captain Crosby, if you could comment on your assessment of how the day went in the morning and in the afternoon.

NATHANIEL CROSBY: I was a nervous parent all day is what it felt like to me. A lot of ebbs and flows in the matches, and I feel that the U.S. is very fortunate to have a narrow lead going into tomorrow. So very happy about the whole turn of events, especially at the end with Cole hanging on to his match and Austin winning his match.

**Q. Cole, tell me about winning your match in the end.**

COLE HAMMER: Yeah, it was great. Made it a little too interesting. Had a nice little lead after nine holes and kind of gave a couple away, and then he made a great birdie on 13, but luckily I was able to get it done, and I'm glad we kind of finished it off the way we did.

**Q. Cole, as a player how do you prepare for greens as diabolical and quick as these?**

COLE HAMMER: It's almost impossible to completely prepare yourself. Luckily we played a college event down in Naples at Calusa Pines like about a month ago, and the greens were flying fast. Maybe not quite this fast, but it definitely prepared us to play tournament golf on fast greens. It's one thing to go out and play with your buddies on greens that are this speed, but when you get in a tournament setting and you have to worry about speed, it becomes a whole different ballgame. I think by the end of today, everyone kind of figured it out.

**Q. Are these the quickest greens you've ever played on in a tournament?**

COLE HAMMER: I would say so, 100 percent. They're just getting crusty, too, with the heat and the wind picking

up in the afternoon. But yeah, the ball rolls incredibly true, but you have to be really careful or else you'll have six-, seven-, eight-foot comebacks.

**Q. Nathaniel, can you take me through your emotions from this morning through the afternoon in terms of just what it was like to go through everything today, given obviously all the circumstances that have gone on with the bug and whatnot and whether your lineup would be able to stay the way you thought it would? What was it like for you to watch this whole thing play out?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: There were a lot of violent mood swings today. It was amazing because we kind of altered -- the R&A and the USGA were really ahead of the curve identifying the situation. I think out of 24 players, including the alternates, 18 got sick on both sides. That's a lot of people getting sick, and we were really sick. Both captains, so I've experienced it. Took a dive for the team.

But really they allowed the alternates to come in and go out, so when the alternate came in, you didn't have to throw out the player who was sick for the rest of the match, and that was a huge alteration at the last minute. They also extended the deadline of when you had to put the lineups in.

I originally had planned like I did at Liverpool to let everybody know who was playing on both days, Saturday and Sunday, and who was going to be sitting when and who was going to be playing all four, but due to the circumstances you just didn't know who was going to show up.

I was worried Cole and Ricky Castillo and Stew Hagestad and Quade Cummins are the only players that didn't get sick, so I was expecting to wake up this morning finding out those four had been sick. Of course Tyler didn't get to play today because he got sick or didn't feel up to it, almost fainted there on the back of the range after resting this morning.

We're hoping to get two rounds out of Tyler tomorrow, but we have to take his temperature in the morning. I feel very



privileged not only to have a narrow lead but the idea that the USGA and specifically Robby Zalzneck, he fought really hard to have this event happen at all, and then to have this curveball thrown at us at the end, but at the end of the day we're lucky we had two alternates here, due to unrelated -- different virus, right?

It's great that the matches are being played and it's great that we have a narrow lead.

**Q. Was there ever a moment where things felt normal today, where you were finally not worried about people's health and were focused on golf?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Well, not really because I was checking on Tyler to make sure that Tyler was okay this afternoon and then he showed up back at the golf course to root everybody on. But I think it was normal to watch Cole win. I've been watching him win for four years.

I think what was unusual today is Johnny Pak fought back down from three down to all square, which was nothing new, but then for him to not win the match was totally a fluke. I've seen him down two, three in a lot of matches and he always seems to come back and win, so that was unusual.

I wasn't expecting Davis to lose twice today. I thought Davis was -- our horse.

COLE HAMMER: Davis won this morning.

NATHANIEL CROSBY: He did, thank you. Correction. In real-time correction, thank you. But at any rate, Davis didn't have his best game, but he got a hot player today, so at any rate -- it'll be great fun tomorrow, and we'll see how it all turns out.

**Q. What will you say to the team tonight to try to get them ready for tomorrow?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Just be healthy I think more than anything else. No extracurricular activities. It's just going to be a get to bed early, eat in your room. Cole knows that I have no Knute Rockne. It's just go out there and win, grab everybody by the ears and tell them to win. That's my big speech. When you get 4-up, get 5-up. When you get 5-up, get 6-up, okay?

But golf is never always that way or that simple. These guys are really talented. They should all have 62-degree wedges, but I'm going to get my message across at some point in their careers, but they're a great group of talented players on both sides, and we feel very fortunate to have a narrow lead.

**Q. You know Pierceson better than we do. What do you make of the way he battled to play today and knock off Alex Fitzpatrick?**

COLE HAMMER: I am not surprised in the least. He's a fighter. He's one of the most competitive guys I've ever been around, and he can golf his ball. He's been playing some great golf. You can see the confidence that he has when he's walking around, and for him to be sick -- even yesterday he was in bed all day, and to come out today and really buckle down and do what he did was extremely impressive, but I'm not surprised at all. He's done stuff like this for a long time. Our freshman year he got mono and was out for the count for a month or two and came back out and played some great golf. He's just doing it again.

**Q. I'm not great with math, but do you anticipate anybody having to sit two sessions besides Ty?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: You know, we'll just see how everybody feels in the morning. I think that this is a fluid arrangement. I don't know exactly what the momentary deadline is to showcase the lineups for tomorrow, but I'm going to run back to the trailer and see what the momentary deadline is and then have the sequential backups ready based on who can be -- who might be ready to go as the substitute should somebody be ill tomorrow morning.

But that virus really flew through the conference rooms or our team rooms at the hotel. It's still a little bit of a concern.

**Q. Talk about the surprise or -- William Mouw came over from the West Coast so a lot of these guys haven't played much golf against him or may not have known him as well as some of the other guys. What do you make of his addition and what's his personality been like?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: He's an awkward personality, really.

COLE HAMMER: (Laughing.)

NATHANIEL CROSBY: He's right back there. I'm going to give up my seat for him in just a minute. William, take my seat. He'll tell you himself. But he's all upbeat, all positive, California cool, Malibu's most wanted. He's going to have his own cartoon in about a year. This guy is fantastic. Let me bring him up.

**Q. When did you know that Tyler couldn't go, and how much time did you have to make a decision?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: You know, he was all set because he slept in, didn't get to the course until about 11:30, was fine in the trailer, and I think when he got out in the heat it was pretty hot. I think it was about 2:00, 2:30, and started hitting balls, and I guess it started to hit him on the practice green, but I wasn't there when I saw it, and then I immediately was notified, and he didn't look well at all on the practice tee.

They got the EMT guys over there and checked him out, and he did the right thing. It's very easy to be bravado and you get out there on the third or fourth hole and then you have to come in and you cost your team a point. It's not a good thing. So he did the right thing. He's really the understated hero pulling himself out and giving William the chance to win the USA a point.

**Q. You've had this so you've experienced it. How hard is it for somebody to come out of having it yesterday and turning around and playing today?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: It seems to be very -- going through, it's a 24- to 36-hour bug. So Davis and Austin got it first on Tuesday, and they were pretty much well healed by Thursday. But it lingered a little -- John Pak took it a little bit harder, but he looked pretty spry this morning. It's obviously hit Tyler pretty hard. It hit me really hard yesterday. But I think it probably varies from person to person.

You know, we just hope that everybody is going to be healthy tomorrow on both sides.

**Q. The USGA or R&A don't usually have alternates come to these events. They did because of COVID. Going forward, as a captain, would you recommend they have alternates always here?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: It's a whole philosophical question, and I think it's really -- it would be out of bounds for me to really comment on it because I probably have my opinions, but --

**Q. That's why we're asking you.**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: You know, I think the Walker Cup is incredibly traditional. It's an incredible event. I'd love to see it go to 12 players, a couple alternates and three days. The guys fight so hard to get here. It takes two years. But that's my opinion, and I'm sure that there's a dogfight back in some conference room that I'm not invited to on that.

But this has been the thrill of a lifetime. When I say something out of bounds like that, it's certainly not a

reflection of the USGA's opinion or the R&A's opinion, and they've earned their right to continue the tradition as is. For me to say anything to have a subtle variation of the format would be out of bounds for me.

I officially take that off the record. Thank you.

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