

The Presidents Cup

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Royal Montreal Golf Club

Shigeki Maruyama

Camilo Villegas

Geoff Ogilvy

Trevor Immelman

Ernie Els

Stewart Cink

Justin Leonard

Kevin Kisner

Brandt Snedeker

Press Conference



Q. For Ernie, looking back at Royal Melbourne, how close you all were to winning there, and then the previous International Cup in South Korea, what lessons do you think you can take from almost winning, and what is the next step?

ERNIE ELS: A bit of fortune here and there obviously. I think Australia was really close. We had a wonderful couple days in the four-ball format and the foursomes format.

Historically, we kind of struggled in those two formats, and we had a great start.

Then the U.S. Team played unbelievable on that Sunday and wiped out their deficit and ended up beating us.

Some of the others, Korea was very close. There was a missed putt on 18 and so forth. We regrouped, I feel like, in the last couple Presidents Cups with Captain Immelman last time in Charlotte. Mike this time, I feel we've got a new identity, and the guys have really bought into that.

We're on a path to ending our drought, hopefully this week.

Q. This is for Ernie Els and Trevor, if you could. Ernie, as a captain you tried to establish a little bit of autonomy with the International side, doing things your own way away from the TOUR. Can you talk about the genesis of that? And maybe Trevor, if you tried to build on that.

ERNIE ELS: Thank you. Well, it's a PGA TOUR event started by Tim Finchem 30 years ago. So we thoroughly love that it's a PGA TOUR event. We're all PGA TOUR members.

But as an identity, to have our own identity and have our own say in the championship, in the matches is very important to us. That's why we wanted to have kind of our own flag, so to speak, to play for and have an identity.

So I've spoken with Commissioner Monahan before I started, and all these ideas came about, and they

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. We are pleased to be joined by the captains' assistants for the International and U.S. Teams. From the International Team, please welcome Shigeki Maruyama, Camilo Villegas, Geoff Ogilvy, Trevor Immelman, Ernie Els. And from the U.S., please welcome Stewart Cink, Justin Leonard, Kevin Kisner, and Brandt Snedeker.

I'm going to go ahead and open it up to questions.

Q. Stewart, holing the winning putt here in '07, talk about that moment and the interaction with Jack Nicklaus afterwards.

STEWART CINK: It's been a little while. I don't remember the actual shot that clinched the victory that year, but I do remember Woody Austin falling in the pond on the same hole. It happened on the 14th hole, and I know for a fact that Woody Austin fell in that pond. That's a lasting memory.

That singles match, I do remember I played Nick O'Hern, and it's important to get off to a good start. Birdied the first five holes, which is something that never hurts your memories. Finished that match on the 14th hole, and that ended up being the clincher. It was certainly a good experience.



supported us fully, which is great. So the PGA TOUR supports where we're going with our team and our identity and so forth.

A lot of our players are so young that they only remember the shield. They don't really remember what happened before that. So at least we got something started there.

TREVOR IMMELMAN: Yeah, to add to that, a bunch of us, mainly guys sitting at the table, obviously Mike is still out there with the guys, just decided that it was time to put some extra work in. We don't have the luxury of the Ryder Cup in the other year, and we had a lot of ground to make up.

Ernie was willing, from the time he was named captain in 2018 or so, to really start putting in the extra time and trying to figure out ways that we could improve and take control of this team and start to understand all the people we represent, the billions of people we represent around the world, understand the cultures we represent. How can we best cater to our team, to our players, to all of our fans, and really, like I said, put in the extra time to be able to try and give these guys a run for their money at some point.

Q. This question is for Trevor. You captained the two Canadians in Taylor and Corey two years ago. Just wondering what stands out about their games, and what have you seen from them over the past two years?

TREVOR IMMELMAN: They're both fantastic players. Corey, in particular, has been one of the most consistent players on TOUR for a few years now. Taylor just started to come through. But we absolutely feel like since the last Cup in Charlotte, both of those guys have really stepped up and improved their games, taken it to another level.

In particular, Taylor qualifying for the TOUR Championship this year, getting his first win at the Byron Nelson.

So we were hoping to have a bunch of Canadians on this team to play for the Canadian golfing legend in Mike Weir, so very excited to have three of the guys here in their home country. That's pretty special for us on this team to have guys be able to play a Cup in their home country. The Americans get to do it every second year. Ernie got to do it once, and he's been a player that's been on TOUR for more than two decades.

So we don't get that luxury every now and then, so really hoping that those guys and Mike enjoy every single second this week.

Q. Question for Trevor. I'm wondering during the last

Presidents Cup, there was so much discussion in the leadup to that Cup about the loss of young talent on the International side. I was just wondering two years later how you feel about where young talent stands.

TREVOR IMMELMAN: Look, we had a bunch of rookies. I want to say seven last time. This time around we still have an extremely young team but only two rookies.

So from that aspect, we've still got the youth, but we've got some experience there as well. Like Ernie said, we're proud of the fact that this is a PGA TOUR event. We're all sitting up here, love the PGA TOUR and love this event, the way it's structured right now.

From this side of the table, it's extremely important that we create these pipelines of talent from around the world to continue to come to the PGA TOUR and play against the best week in and week out.

So it's something that we're absolutely focused on, and we realize the importance of us performing well at this event to continue to encourage future generations of stars from all over the world to want to play here and want to play in this event.

Q. Just a quick follow-up for Kevin. There's chatter online earlier that there might have been some side bets being placed on some of the matches happening today. I was just curious who you were interested in.

KEVIN KISNER: Mostly beating my fellow captain here, Mr. Snedeker. So, yeah, good way to get the guys going and see if we can talk enough trash to them to be ready to face the International squad.

Q. Do you think that that actually does help?

KEVIN KISNER: Putting guys in pressure situations always helps. The more you do it, the better you are when the time comes.

Q. Question for Ernie. Ernie, Mike and Jim were asked yesterday their most intense moment in Presidents Cup history, and both of them answered your match against Tiger Woods in 2003. I'm wondering can you reflect on this match 20 years ago and maybe share your most intense moment in this contest?

ERNIE ELS: It's a long time ago now, 20 years. Yeah, there were many intense moments, but that's definitely on top of the list. I was happy to hear that was one of Tiger's more intense moments in his career also. Shows you how much these team events mean to us.



We ultimately want to win major championships and so forth, but when you have your team watching you and you want to perform for your team and try and get the best out of it, get your name on the Cup, yeah.

Obviously in South Africa, home nation. We only had the one Presidents Cup down there. That was a big deal. I was close to my prime back in those days. Played at a high quality of golf. It was a lot of fun, but it was pretty intense.

Every now and again, I watch those putts that we made. For once, I thought Tiger might miss or maybe -- you know, it was dark. He had at least a two- or three-cup swing left to right down the hill. I was like, eh, this might just be mine for once.

He made his, and fortunately I made mine up the hill, and that was that. It was quite a historic moment. I remember Mike Weir and some of the guys on the panel here were there. I don't know if Justin was there?

JUSTIN LEONARD: Yes.

ERNIE ELS: Stewy?

STEWART CINK: No.

ERNIE ELS: Too young?

STEWART CINK: No, I just didn't make the team.

ERNIE ELS: It was a great celebration afterwards.

Q. Can anyone on stage maybe reflect on Ernie's match or maybe their most intense memory in the history?

TREVOR IMMELMAN: I wasn't there playing, but being South African in my early 20s at the time, seeing a tournament of this magnitude going to my home country with one of my golfing idols leading the team in Ernie, Gary being captain, I was taking it all in and just enjoying the spectacle of it. That finish absolutely is something everybody remembers.

ERNIE ELS: There's not many of you that were there. You were there. Bob might have been there. Dougie? You were there, Dougie.

Q. Question for Mr. Els. You've know Adam Scott for a long time now. What kind of impact does he have on this team?

ERNIE ELS: He's kind of the team captain. He's played in

the most matches of any International player. I think this is No. 11. He really bleeds International Team. He loves it.

He's come up against some really tough competition, on my left here, but he's in on it. He wants to play every match. So he's definitely the stalwart of our team.

Actually, '03 was -- he was a rookie. I took him under my wing, and we played, and we had a good time. We've remained friends ever since. That's what happens in team golf.

So, yeah, he's a great guy, and he's been great for the PGA TOUR. He's been great for world golf. It just shows you the international flavor that flows in the PGA TOUR. So many players have come from so far, and their dream was to play the PGA TOUR, and that's where we are. We've got a team event here that means a lot to us. We're trying to figure it out. I think we're getting there.

But the Presidents Cup benefits from international players, and so do the PGA TOUR. So we're going to keep bringing in international flavor onto the TOUR and onto our team.

Q. This question is for Kevin. If Max Homa hoops one, will you follow through on your tweet to take your shirt off?

KEVIN KISNER: I'm really hoping that later in the week -- I hope it's later in the week because, if I had to take my shirt off today, it would be pretty brutal out there. But, yeah, I'm all in for that.

Q. Ernie, Trevor, Geoff, I'll go with you three. It's well-known that the Internationals win the party even if they don't win the Cup. What would a winning party look like?

GEOFF OGILVY: The 1998 party, how was that? I think it's fair to say it would be quite a decent party.

ERNIE ELS: We went from the blackjack table we were playing to the plane, and they let us on the plane.

Q. For Shigeki, I was just curious if you've gotten to share stories from your dominant 1998 and/or if any of the other leadership have leaned on you to talk about what it's like to beat the Americans down.

SHIGEKI MARUYAMA: I haven't had a good chance to talk to all these guys all that much about that experience just because my English isn't as fluent, so it's hard to communicate.

I learned a lot of things that week, and I learned that my game could translate in the world, around the world too, not just in Japan. If some of these guys want to have a talk about it or anything, I'm always open to it, and we can discuss it more in depth. I'd like to help the team in any way I can.

Q. This is for any of the U.S. assistants. It's kind of known that different players gravitate towards different assistants. How does that actually happen? Is it just a natural process of who gets along with who, or is it decided amongst you guys?

JUSTIN LEONARD: There's certain players on our team that have history or close friendships with one of us. There's also a little bit of just, you know, some personalities and things like that. Certain guys on our team like to -- they need the whip, and other ones need the hug.

So we've kind of been through that process and figured out who should be with whom. Ultimately the goal is just to get these guys in the right frame of mind, understand kind of their language and how they like to hear information, things like that.

This is a different group of assistants from what the norm has been the last few years. It's also some different players as well. So a little bit of turnover, but I think in talking with past assistants and picking their brains, things like that, we've got a good handle on who needs what.

Q. Any surprising relationships, unlikely friendships or characters that are getting along with each other?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I guess I could probably fall into that one. I know Xander pretty well. I love him a lot more after this week. I'm a lot richer because of him this week (laughter). I've had a lot of fun to get to know him a little bit.

I love his wife Maya. She's been awesome. He's now called Alex by myself and a few guys on the team. We've had some fun forging that relationship.

As these guys said, I tried to explain to guys on the team, you never get to spend this much time with other friends on TOUR, so you really get to know these guys really well because we're together 24 hours a day, all day long. Having those dinners and those team room meetings and getting to know the wives and the players, their significant others, has been really fun. So you get to learn a lot about them and connect with players on a different level than you would on TOUR.

We love these guys. We've got a great team of guys.

They're all super close friends. That's one thing I've been shocked about is how close these guys are. So we as captains are just trying to let them go out and play the kind of golf we know they're capable of and have some fun along the way while they're doing it.

Q. How many side bets are there really happening out there?

BRANDT SNEDEKER: I've lost count for the week. That's daily -- I think Kevin and I will post our text messages at some point after the event to find out how degenerate me and him are when it comes to this kind of stuff. But it's been fun for the guys to make fun of us in the meantime.

Q. For Stewart or any of the Americans, with Scottie you've got the No. 1 player in the world and potentially a huge weapon, but in Rome and Charlotte, he didn't have a lot of success in the pairs sessions. I'm just curious, from a strategic, tactical side, were a lot of discussions had about how do we make sure we can put him in a position to win? Did you chalk it up to small sample size, bad luck? What was kind of the theory there?

STEWART CINK: Not being a part of that team, I wasn't there to experience it, but I mean, Scottie is -- he's the No. 1 player in the world for a reason, and he plays good golf. I think the main thing for Scottie and the rest of our team, they're pretty well aware there's a good chunk of the world population that's kind of not rooting for our team.

So that's a pretty good motivator for someone like Scottie. He's quiet on the outside, but on the inside, there's quite a lot of noise going on. I don't know if you can really go back and analyze the team events from the recent past where he's paired up with somebody or played singles or whatever and kind of get anything out of that. I think it's more important to go and get stuff out of his play in between those team events, and the record he's put up has been pretty spectacular. I think we'd all agree with that.

Q. This is tangential, and I know it's not the same situation, but just from your playing days, do you have a theory why somebody like Tiger who's No. 1 for a long time never really had a good pairs record in the Ryder Cup? It was a pretty big sample size for him. Curious what you thought of that.

STEWART CINK: When you deal with Tiger and his relationship with the rest of our population of the TOUR and Americans on the PGA TOUR and you compare that to Scottie and his relationship with the rest of the Americans on the PGA TOUR, it's just like a lot different dynamic.

Tiger, you're talking about one of the most, I don't know, formidable type personalities in sports for quite a long time at the time, and Scottie is just really an open, welcoming, kind person. He's just easy to just sort of pal around with.

So it's just a little bit different dynamic, and like Scottie's team record is still like at the very beginning and unfolding. The two situations are very different although Scottie has separated himself from the rest of world golf with the last year and a half, two years of play.

Q. Two questions, one for each of the International assistants we haven't heard from yet. Camilo, we have no South American players on the team this year. My question is South America is the only place the Presidents Cup hasn't gone to yet. Is it overlooked? How does that happen? Do you need someone to emerge player-wise for that to make sense?

CAMILO VILLEGAS: Yeah, it is a shame this year we don't have any players from South America. I think Emiliano Grillo got off to a bad start to the year. He was our best chance.

Obviously a couple years ago we had Mito and Sebastian Muñoz. That was a nice representation. There could have been maybe one or two more guys a couple years ago, and we all know what happened.

It was very tough for Trevor two years ago for our team to lose so many talented players, but it was what it was, and here we are. I think the game, South American golf is in a good spot. Even though we don't have a player here this week, who knows what the world of golf is going to look like here in the next year or two.

But I truly believe with those guys from South America, you still have stars that motivate players and push those kids to just accomplish their dreams. This week, they just played the Presidents Cup Junior. There was a Colombian kid in there. He walked into our team room with a big smile, looks at my face, and he says, I want to be here one day.

So those are the little things that are required to just kind of keep pushing these younger generations to grow the game and to just kind of pave the way. As Trevor said, it's very important to continue to have a pathway to the PGA TOUR and to give these guys opportunities. I think it's going to be there.

PGA TOUR Americas is something big. Joining with the PGA of Canada and the PGA TOUR of South America, that tour keeps getting stronger.

Again, I have no problem when on TOUR there's ways to go in and ways to go out. I think the PGA TOUR has done a great job with their pathways to provide opportunities, and South American golfers will be playing this event in the future.

Q. What country do you think is best suited to host the Presidents Cup? And leave Colombia out so I don't get you in trouble.

CAMILO VILLEGAS: No, it's a great question. I will be very honest with you, I've been thinking about this for a couple years, since Trevor called me to be part of this great team. It's been an honor for me.

It would be interesting. I think Argentina has hosted big events like the World Cup. I've had a chance to play many times in Argentina. I think it's the most golf knowledgeable country in South America. And not to get political, but I think Argentina has some good stuff coming here in the next few years with what's going on down there.

So who knows? Who knows where this tournament will go in the future, but it would obviously be an honor as a South American to take this event down there one year. Hopefully that's the case. And show a little bit of our side of the world. I'm biased, but it's a good place. South America is fun.

Q. For Geoff and actually anyone else who wants to weigh in, I think it was Paul Casey who many, many years ago in a newspaper article referred to properly hating the Americans when you played the Ryder Cup. By that, it's the sporting hate, rallying against them. Is that easy or difficult to do when you come from such a broad collection of countries outside of one continent?

GEOFF OGILVY: Easy or difficult to do what?

Q. To properly hate the other team, in a sporting sense of course.

GEOFF OGILVY: We don't hate the other team. We want to -- it looks fun to win this tournament. (Laughter).

It's the best week of every two years for us to come and play this tournament. It's so good. The long bonds you get formed with friendships, it's just an incredible thing.

We want to win because they're the hardest team to beat in the world. It's the pinnacle of sport. To beat the U.S. Team in an event like this is the pinnacle of the sport.

As you said, they've got the top two players in the world. They're basically all in the top 20 in the World Rankings.



It's the who's-who of golf.

If we can bring a group of guys from around the world and come and beat them, I can't imagine anything better than that. So it's more of a we want to win because of the respect we have for the other team, rather than a hate. We love -- we're always begging them to come into the party on Sunday, whatever the result, because we all want to sort of party together, mainly because let's celebrate how much fun that just was and how great an opponent you were.

It's more of a we want to win because of the respect we have for their side.

THE MODERATOR: That concludes our press conference. To our captains' assistants, thank you for your time.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports