

BMW PGA Championship

Tuesday, 7 September, 2021

Virginia Water, Surrey, England

Wentworth Golf Club

Padraig Harrington

Press Conference

BRIONY CARLYON: Great to have you here at the BMW PGA Championship in what I'm sure is a very busy week for you, but also a week where your team is shaping up nicely ahead of The Ryder Cup in just a few weeks' time. Just your thoughts on those guys at the moment.

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, it's an interesting week. There's obviously a number of players who are 100 per cent qualified at this stage, Jon Rahm, Rory McIlroy, obviously Paul Casey, Tommy Fleetwood and Viktor Hovland, so they are all in 100 per cent, with a few more players that are virtually there.

I'm told Tyrrell Hatton is not 100 per cent, if you if he's not in on Sunday, so many things must have happened that it won't be -- it would be something strange. So he's virtually there and Matt Fitzpatrick is virtually there and Lee is right up there, as well, would be very unusual.

But for all the changes in the hot seat, there's a number of players who can push their way into the team and a lot of points to play for this week. We wanted a bit of drama at the end and a bit of excitement, so yeah, it's going to be an interesting week. There's a lot of scenarios that probably could sit down and go through at this stage but we're going to have to wait till the tournament starts and get a bit of play underway and maybe Friday evening we start looking at that a bit more and obviously Sunday we'll have to deal with it and figure out how it's affecting what's there in front of us and who is going to be getting a pick.

Q. After the world's second-most famous accountant after Ben Affleck, do you know what is going to happen or could happen this week?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I do actually look at those numbers as I go through. The last number of weeks I've been figuring it out in my head and trying to get there before our stats guys. Our stats guys do produce them pretty quickly, too. We were looking at it this week.

There is a lot of options in play, and ultimately, you know, until they start going and we get a future of the way, there's



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just too many options in order to cover it all. It's interesting and I'm looking at like a punter at home, what could happen, what's possible. But the nitty-gritty of it as we get further into the tournament, certainly further into the weekend, myself and the vice captains, would have a better picture, understand what's going on. And then we have to prepare for the three picks.

Q. It's very unlikely that this would happen but if absolutely nothing changed in the qualifying standards this week --

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: You want my three picks.

Q. Yeah, go on there. I was going to ask a general question but go on, as you want. Do you have three in mind if absolutely nothing changes?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I think right now, yeah, I think I would have three in mind. My vice captains, we'd have to sit down and verify what they have in their mind with what we have put together. I think it would be easier now. I think there are players who could really cause a bit of a fuss this week, cause a bit of drama.

You know, there's been a great push, hasn't there, over the last couple of weeks. Guys have really, really pushed their way in and it's caused a bit of excitement to it, and certainly if you had been looking six weeks ago there wasn't a lot happening. But a lot's happened over the last six weeks certainly, and it's good that we are coming to a championship of this standard. Those guys are going to be under pressure. So anybody who plays well this week has really earned it.

It's not just they are going out to trying to win a golf tournament, but they are also trying to win a golf tournament knowing what it means in the bigger picture. It's the kind of drama that I was hoping because that's what you need when it comes to The Ryder Cup. You have to be able to handle the stress and pressure of what's going on.

Q. Related, how many people are still under consideration for a wildcard? And feel free to name them if you want.



PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I won't name them because I will always leave somebody out. There's certainly six that as it sits at the moment, there's a few that could really push their position. Maybe even more than six in terms of playing well this week that really affect it, and then obviously have a good few who could push their way into the team.

But certainly there's players who don't need to qualify fully to have a good week this week. I suppose they put themselves out there by playing well this week under pressure. I suppose a lot determines how they play this week in terms of different sorts of finishes could be a good finish, even though two players could finish fourth this week, but one of them could be a good fourth and one of them could be a bad fourth. It's lot of scenarios, not just the finishing position and not just whether they get into the team. A lot of it is to do with my picks ultimately will come down to how the picks balance up the nine players in the team.

So we have covered, myself and the vice captains, have covered very much partnerships who could play with who in foursomes and fourball, what we need in that sense, and the picks will be there, as I've always said, the picks are not about picking the 10th, 11th and 12th best players. If it were the 10th, 11th and 12th best players, we go off the World Rankings. The picks are about picking three players who complement the nine guy who is qualify, and who match up well with those guys and bring balance to the team where it's needed.

So it's a lot to do with who is in the team, and then and the golf course, determining who plays well on the golf course, who plays well under pressure, who plays well under stress, who plays well in the wind, who plays well on that style of golf course. We are not short of a bit of detail to figure out who should be our best players and picks.

I will say in a nice place for me, players who are in contention for those picks, their relative strokes gained against the field are higher than players of similar positions in past years.

Q. Have you spoken to Sergio about him not being this week?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I've spoken to Sergio quite a bit over the last couple of weeks, and look, if it was up to me, I definitely would have taken him being in THE TOUR Championship rather than here, and that's really ultimately what it came down to. He's like myself, I know he's quite a bit younger but he's been around a long time and it just would have been too much for him at his age to push on to another week. I know it's never been a huge plan of his to

play this event, he hasn't played it that much, but THE TOUR Championship was a great thing for him to get to and it was a step too far for him to come over here.

He knows where he sits with it. He could have come here and played his way into the team and taken all doubt out of anything, but you know, he's comfortable where he's at. It's a better decision for him in terms of resting up and getting ready for it if he's in the team. You know, this would have been definitely too much after the last three weeks. But it does put a bit of risk in there, doesn't it.

Q. Is this championship a good one to test people?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: It's an interesting golf course. First of all, there's plenty of pressure and stress in the week because it's a big occasion. BMW do a good job here. The golf course is fantastic. I'm interested to go out and play the golf course. I've played a few holes and the ball is running out there. It's playing short.

But in general here, you have a lot of long second shots, so you get a lot of 200-yard second shots, and Whistling Straits is the same. So you don't get a lot of wedge shots at Whistling Straits. There's more 200- to 250-yard shots at Whistling Straits, well above average, and this golf course is like that. There's a lot of holes where you have to lay back to give yourself a longer iron shots.

It is comparable, maybe not off the tee because there's more drivers at Whistling Straits, but in terms of approach shots, it is more comparable and something I would be aware of when looking at the style of player who you want as a pick.

Q. I know the events are completely separate, but there are a lot of similarities as regards the teams being on their own, The European Team from the Solheim Cup; is there anything you can take from Catriona's team and the success they had?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Momentum. Inspiration. What's not to take? You know, I was watching it and I was thrilled the way they went about it, how they did it, the win. It definitely helps us. You want all the momentum you can get for us as The Ryder Cup Team. Them going out winning and style they won, and they dominated. Let's be honest, they won fair and square. There was no luck involved. Sometimes you might think, oh, did they get lucky to win? It wasn't the case, and that's the sort of momentum what we would be looking to.

Yeah, there was a few things that you looked at in the practical sense. Obviously there was a dominant U.S. crowd compared to our side. Yeah, things like that maybe

there's a few things that we will talk about and adjust and certainly learn from. Yeah, I tried to learn as much as I could, even copying a few things from the speech (laughter).

Q. I think I'm right in saying you've played under six Ryder Cup captains. I appreciate this could be asking for a really long answer but can you give me a quick summary of the good and the bad, best and worst things you've learnt?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Certainly I've played under a number of different styles. Bernhard Langer being the closest to maybe my personality, very straight in terms of there was practical help offered if you wanted it. You know, get out there and do it.

You've got your Sams and Woosie for me personally were brilliant in terms of they made me believe in myself, very much, encouraging, brought great confidence.

I thought Monty did a brilliant job doing that, too. I think Monty was the first time he made his team believe they were better than the U.S. Team, especially when it came to playing everybody the same day. He came in and made it look, we decided that. It's our decision. We are going to do this because we are better than them, 12 against 12. That was impressive. Monty took all of the good of the past, put it together and left nothing. Got rid of whatever wasn't working. I think that was really a very important one. So that would be certainly one to mirror.

Obviously as a vice captain with Paul and Thomas, you've got to say Paul changed the game at that stage and really committed four or five years, four years of his life to it, and Thomas followed suit, incredibly detailed. Being a Ryder Cup Captain after their legacy is nothing like being a Ryder Cup Captain before. I'm sure some of my Ryder Cup Captains literally turned up the week before to be Ryder Cup Captain, whereas that's not the case now. It is a full-time job. It is interesting.

And you know, it's interesting going forward when it comes to captains. Are you better going for a captain the likes of Paul and Thomas who essentially retired from the game and are full captains, or do you want somebody like me who is still playing and is not -- I won't say I'm not fully committed but half and half, let's say. Like it was definitely Paul's life. It was definitely Thomas's life. That's something I'm going to have to decide as part of the party who picks the captain and that's something you have to think about going forward, would you rather have a captain who is retired or is in touch in some way. Nothing to do with me now as a captain, but in my sense, I certainly wouldn't be anywhere near as involved as Thomas or Paul.

I hope the players know that I really believe in them and I don't want to be hold are their hands to be honest; that they are good enough as they are. There's not much -- I certainly believe in the players and they know what they are doing. I'm happy with all of the players in the position they are and the decisions they have made to be ready to get their games in the best possible place for The Ryder Cup. I'm comfortable as a captain where we're at.

I really enjoyed Mark James. Really enjoyed Mark James. I know there was colossal issues in terms of Mark took one for the team in not playing rookies and that will never happen again and I think learned more from Bernhard Langer was picked, that was the classic one. If Bernhard had been picked in the team, he would have started Friday morning. So sometimes when you're looking at that pick, it was the same with Sergio with Thomas's team in 2018. You're talking about a pick and then you go, what if we pick this guy, we're definitely leading with him and Bernhard would have been that character in 1999, where sometimes you might get lost in a pick thinking who is the better player, who is playing better at the moment. You have to think, who is going to partner up and who is going to lead.

As good as Mark was, those two issues were great for the rest of the captains because no captain in the game who doesn't go, right, everybody has to play before the singles. Somebody has to make that mistake for the next people not to follow on.

Q. As one of Ireland's greatest golfers, could I get your take on Leona Maguire's performance, first rookie in Ryder or Solheim history to get 4 1/2 points out of 5, and what do you think the reaction will be back in Ireland?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: It is phenomenal. She's so young but she is now one of Ireland's greatest golfers. She's right up there. What she's done is fantastic. It's inspirational. It's inspirational for us The Ryder Cup Team, what she went out there and done.

But I can't tell you how important it is in Ireland for golf, for all sport in Ireland, for all people in Ireland. We love our sport and we love people being successful in Ireland but I think we are a better country than any for celebrating our successes. We are having a particularly great run in women's sport at the moment. Phenomenal run in women's sport, how successful our women are.

But I really think that Leona's golf, yes, it will motivate young girls to get into the game and be a bit more competitive and carry it through, but I think it will motivate all golfers and all people in Ireland, all sports people, what

we can achieve on the world stage, and that's what she's done.

For us in Ireland, we're a small country and we do need to believe at times that we can do it on a world stage and sometimes we get lost or we get out of that bigger stage, and having people like Leona go out there and deliver on the biggest stage there is; that so many people get behind in all sorts of sports, and not just young girls but the young boys, as well, will go, hey, I can be one of the world's best, rather than thinking they can be the best in Ireland, but thinking I can go on and be one of the world's best. We've seen people do it before. It is incredibly important all the way through the game, especially for the ladies game, but would I say for golf in general and sport.

Q. As a Norwegian, what's your current view of Viktor Hovland's position on The European Tour, and what role do you see him playing at Whistling Straits?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Look, clearly he's 100 per cent in. I think 100 per cent time of the players when asked want to play with Viktor Hovland. Everybody wants to be like Viktor. I know he's a young guy but the way he carries himself and the way he plays is fantastic, but just his attitude, he seems to be -- he is a fabulous guy to be around. I think he will be a big part of our team and very much the sole of our team in the team room. Really that enthusiasm, that smile he has just walks around loving the game of golf. How good is that? You know, you get a little older and you look back at that; I was like that once. That's very important for the team.

I have leaders in the team and plenty of guys who are experienced in the team. I'm really looking forward to having that enthusiasm that Viktor brings. Clearly he's a great player and you can't see him not being an essential part of our team on the golf course but clearly he's bringing a lot more to the team on top of that.

Q. Not sure if you or Spain is in the hot seat this week, but would you refer to rely on your head and the stats or your heart if you have to make a tough decision on Sunday. And on another matter, Europe winning with four rookies in the Solheim, does that encourage you more to pick a rookie and how would you like to have a rookie play like Leona Maguire played in America?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Our rookies have done well over the years and there's no doubt you want rookies on the team. At the moment as the team sits, you have Victor and Shane being in the hot spot as also a rookie. Strange to call them both rookies but I do believe that if they were both on that team, they would bring that necessary atmosphere to the team, that fun that you need, the

enthusiasm you need in the team room. So I'm happy to see them there and I'm happy to see other rookies if they do play their way in this week. It's essential when it comes to The Ryder Cup.

Yeah, our rookies have done well. We've used them very well over the years and that's important. Leona didn't just do well; that was incredible. It was so special. She became a leader in her team even though she was a rookie. Could you see that and is an inspiration not just to her own team but she will be an inspiration to my team going forward. It was quite incredible. I know there was another question in there.

Q. Your head or your heart?

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: I'm definitely -- I'm sure you can't get away from your subconscious and your heart but I would definitely hope myself and the vice captains would use our head. You know, stats are important. We will look at stats, no doubt about it, but balancing up the team, that's incredibly important as well. There's a number of factors that will come into it. But the least of them will be my heart.

BRIONY CARLYON: Thanks, Pádraig, we wish you all the best for your they have this week playing here at the BMW PGA and a busy week. Thanks for your time again.

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