

The Ryder Cup

Tuesday, 26 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Team Europe

Tommy Fleetwood

Press Conference

STEVE TODD: Welcome back, everyone, I'm very pleased to be joined by Tommy Fleetwood of Team Europe.

Tommy, five years now since that incredible experience in Paris. How much are you looking forward to playing back on European soil again in the Ryder Cup?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, it's a very cool atmosphere and a very cool vibe playing at home. I was very fortunate that my first-ever Ryder Cup experience was Paris, you know, with the team that we had, the home fans, the captain. Everything about it was very, very special.

So, you know, equally, an away one is an amazing experience as well, just in a very different way. Coming back home and seeing all the blue and yellow is very, very cool.

Q. How much do you find yourself humming the Tommy Fleetwood chants?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Not very often, no. I'll leave that to other people. I'll encourage it as much as possible. Hopefully my golf brings it out. But, yeah, it's not something that I play along in my head very much.

Q. Not doing the dishes or anything? You don't hum it?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I don't do the dishes (laughter). We have a dishwasher.

Q. This is your first Ryder Cup without the old guard, Westwoods, Poulters, Stenson. Who has stepped up? I know Rose is here, but apart from him, you're all pretty young.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, of course. It's different. And I spoke about it just the other week when I sort of got into the team in Paris, and it was still the same at the last one at Whistling Straits. You sort of walk into what has



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been a legacy of -- definitely my Ryder Cup, my generation of Ryder Cups has been those guys that were such huge presence on the course and off the course. It was honestly the most amazing experience seeing those guys in that team atmosphere and that team environment.

Yeah, this is very different. I think there's been a natural progression for a few of the guys. You look at the likes of -- there's a core group of us that have played two or three Ryder Cups now, and that's not the experience of what those guys had in terms of numbers. But I think we've all grown as Ryder Cup players together, and I think that is something that's really cool and we are all comfortable in the roles.

I think it's a natural progression for everybody. I don't think anybody really has to step up in particular or talk about it or take it upon themselves to do anything different. I think it's just a natural cycle of what happens in those teams and The Ryder Cups.

And we still have a couple of current legends in the Ryder Cup in Justin and Rory, and a few of us that are hoping to follow in their footsteps and make our own legacy over the next era of Ryder Cups. Yeah, it's different but nice to see sort of the progression of what happens to guys.

Q. We saw you stop during the middle of your round at one point to watch highlights of yourself in 2018 --

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: It was in my face.

Q. What was going through your mind and what do the memories mean to you?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, nicer than watching bad memories or times when you've chopped it around.

Yeah, Paris owns a special place in a lot of our hearts and it's the last Ryder Cup that we won. And it's been five years, so it's actually been quite a long time.

I think Ryder Cup memories and general and moments on the golf course that everyone has had, they don't take much to come back to the front of your mind, and I think it's



just very cool sort of being able to watch those back. It's a very special occasion, and for us to have the chance to have played and I think any time it's sort of around, it's a nice thing to turn your attention to.

Q. I was watching a few holes, and it was quite interesting, the rough, Rory hit his tee shot and took a few minutes to find, and Sepp was just practising on the second to get the ball out on the rough near the second green. How would you describe the rough, and might it be an advantage to the Europeans?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: It's thick for sure. I always find it difficult to say courses have a certain advantage for either team. You look at the strength of both teams, it's obviously very difficult to find advantages here and there.

But of course, the home side will always look for those things in particular that will help them. The rough's thick. It's pretty penal, and I think particularly on a few holes like dogleg holes, there's a lot of doglegs on the golf course, and I think it's easy to try and be very aggressive or find yourself being aggressive, and I don't think, you know, you're not going to get away with it every shot.

So I don't think the course lends itself to that very much. It's not going to give you many favours and it's not going to give you much luck. But it's just a demanding tee-to-green course, it really is. I think we all enjoy the setup. I think it's very fair. I just think you have to manage your way around a lot.

Q. Zach Johnson has talked about player input and how important it is as far as criteria for selecting the picks and during the week. How much player input is there between the players and the captain of The European Team?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I think, of course, captains are going to want to know how players are feeling, what they are thinking. The captains and the vice captains are in constant communication with us all. But at the same time, Luke is our captain, and he's the one that calls the shots.

We put our absolute faith in him to make all the decisions that he has, from whether that's player input on how they are feeling, whether that's stats, or whether that's his gut instinct, and then he, you know, is going to turn it over and put his faith in us on the golf course.

I think Luke's been unbelievable. And I think watching him speak through this whole process and having him around, I think everybody just has loved his captaincy, the way he's gone about things. I think we are all looking forward to playing for him and under him in the Ryder Cup.

Q. Following up on the rough and the conditions of the course, so much was made of the tight setup in Paris playing to the strengths of the Europeans. What are your thoughts on Marco Simone, the graduated rough where you can miss it close to the fairway?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, I think it's a very fair setup and, yeah, Paris was -- I think overall I feel like the crowd was a bit further away in Paris. The rough was thick straight off the bat once you miss the fairway and it just continued at the same level for a very long time.

The crowds are a bit closer this time, so there's always going to be the sort of chance of it being trampled down. It's a bit more graded but at the same time very, very penal.

I think it just goes back to that, as soon as you make the decision to be aggressive, you're going to just have to live with a good shot or a bad shot. And I think any time sort of you might get lucky, once, but yeah, I think wide shots or shots that are just a little bit errant are always going to be punished in a potentially pretty harsh way.

Q. Given the way you've played with Francesco and he's still on the team, is there a part of you that wants to give him a win in Italy?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, I think it would be great for Fran and Edoardo. What a special time for their country to have the two brothers that have kind of been the face of Italian golf for a long time now.

Yeah, I know both of them would always rather be playing, that's just how we feel as players. But I think having them involved, it's special for them as well.

On a personal level, I'm still so, so close to Fran and Valentina and the family, and always being around him or at dinners during the day and chatting to him during the day is very, very cool for me. Again, he might not have been there in Whistling Straits, but I've been very close to him in my Ryder Cup journey, if you like. He's played a huge part in that so far.

Q. How big do you think a Ryder Cup in Italy is for the golf landscape here?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, hopefully it will do great. I'm always a big supporter in golf in all of the European countries, and Italy, you know, I have great memories of Italy playing in junior golf and amateur golf, and the European Tour, The Italian Open has always been such a cool event for us.

Being able to bring the Ryder Cup here, have it showcase the game and the country and the city for this one week, hopefully will play a huge part in the game continuing to grow for Italy.

Q. Every couple of years, we ask you guys about the difference of mentality coming into to a team event, and how different it is from the singular focus you have for a normal tournament?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I think the first thing, I think it's a much more emotional week than what we are used to. You are all just very zoned in in what you're doing and you have your particular team of a few people around you.

And I think this week, it's a week that people dream of in their careers and I think that -- I can only speak on the European side obviously but there are times when I've been around The European Team room, you get the players together, the vice captains, the captain, the backroom staff, the families, and it is from the get-go, like from the Monday, everybody being together, you have such a great time. It's a very emotional time. You're all playing for each other and we all feel very, very strongly about the Ryder Cup and the tournament.

You know, we feel it's a massive privilege to be, to, have the responsibility of carrying the legacy on of European golf and European players in the Ryder Cup and I think we are all very aware of that and anybody that's been involved in the European Ryder Cups over the years make sure that's always at the front of our minds when we get here.

I think it's just a very, very special time and it does have an extremely unique feeling from Monday all the way through to Sunday. And still, you know, as an individual, I win nowhere near as much as I would like. But winning as a team has definitely been the highlight of my career.

Q. How difficult a balancing act is it for someone like Phil Kenyon this week with a foot in both camps?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Well, that's what the Americans think (smiling).

You know, like Phil is somebody that's very close to me from Southport. I've known him for a long time and always very supportive of, you know, his career as well as my career.

Yeah, nobody really makes it very difficult. He's doing his best for his players, of course he is, and then when we're out there on the golf course, Phil is there, supporting them in their careers.

Playing a team event this week, I would never wish poorly on anybody, and I'm glad that Phil has the opportunity to work with someone like Scottie and help him along in his career.

Yeah, hopefully his putting takes another week to really get hot but you know, still, it would be great, and I think we all love playing against the best players in the world, and we would like to play them on their best form. You know, it's just great, and I think it's an amazing experience for coaches as well as players.

Q. Given your experience playing, contending on big stages, what is it about the home crowd at a Ryder Cup that can bring out extraordinary shots, if it can, and if it can't, please make something up.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: I think they just play such a huge part in the moment. I hit some great shots at Whistling Straits. Just nobody really cheered them.

But they are, like the crowds, from like, if you look at the week, I think the crowds are there to lift you at all times, and I think when it's going well, you absolutely ride the wave of a home crowd and the momentum that they are creating: The cheers, the sound, the noise, that's amazing, and you know that they are there to lift you up if it's not going so well.

It is definitely an advantage to have the home crowd around. You look at Ryder Cup moments, putts holed or shots hit, the crowd is part of that. The reaction you get, the roars that you get, they play a huge part in your memory. I think they bring that as well. So far in my career, there's nothing like playing in front of a home crowd and I know this one will be the same.

Q. (No microphone.)

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Like Cirque du Soleil? It's our crowd. It's our job as well as as home players to make sure the crowd are as involved as possible and they have something to cheer about.

So absolutely. I remember for example in the afternoon of the Friday in Paris, we had had a rough start to the Ryder Cup. We lost our first three games and then me and Fran turned our match around but the afternoon felt like we were breezing through the day because the first three matches were playing so well, we just rode the wave of what they brought and the crowd brought and all we were -- we were at the back and we were like, well, everybody is just carrying us forward, and that actually made a huge difference.

You're playing -- there's 60,000 people that are on your side and that are pushing you along. I do remember that day in particular after a griped in the morning. The afternoon felt like we were just playing with the crowd and they were lifting us and we were breezing through. But that is also because of the way that the guys were playing as well. You know, everybody plays a part in that.

STEVE TODD: Thank you, Tommy, we wish you well this week.

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