

# The Ryder Cup

Wednesday, 27 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

## U.S. Team

## Rickie Fowler

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Okay, next up we're delighted to be joined in the media centre by the U.S. Team's Rickie Fowler. Rickie, back for your fifth Ryder Cup experience. Tell us how you're feeling about representing the United States again.

RICKIE FOWLER: It's great to be back on a team. Obviously the last few years have been tough for me on the golf course, so to be back in position to be over here playing is great.

Special that it's here in Rome. Unfortunately this week we don't get to spend a whole lot of time in town, but was able to take advantage of a couple of the mornings when we were here for practice to go walk around and see a little bit of history.

A great backdrop for this week.

**Q. A lot of speculation on who's going to play with whom on Friday and Saturday. In your experience maybe in the Ryder Cup and even just in general, what do you look for in a partnership? What do you think makes a great partnership?**

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, it can kind of depend because obviously alternate shot you want to be able to kind of work together, but you can kind of look at, I think, both of them. You can either have a great duo as far as guys who mesh well personality-wise and how they carry themselves or how they play, but at the same time, alternate shot you really only have to worry about that shot and then it's off to the next guy.

Yeah, you can be super close or just be two completely different players, and you just deal with the shot at hand.

Best ball you're playing your own ball.

But for me it's always been someone I feel like I can go out and enjoy myself, have fun going into battle. Myself, I feel



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like I've played better and enjoyed alternate shot more just because I feel like it demands a little bit more out of you. A little bit more pressure.

Like I say, it kind of brings out the better in me on that versus best ball sometimes -- it's definitely nice to have a partner that can bail you out. But it can be a little more relaxing, too, at times.

Kind of a long way to get to the answer for you, but I don't think there's a specific way to go about it because you can -- looking at some of the pairings that have worked, they're maybe guys that maybe aren't that close of friends, but then you've seen very close friends go out and play well and vice versa.

**Q. You were on the team back in 2010, which obviously was a while ago, and this era, this group, it seems like there's a different vibe to the team. Would you attribute that more to just growing up together, being friends, having camaraderie, or is it what Zach Johnson talked about earlier this week where he's trying to get everything out of the way so you guys just have a path to thinking about golf? Which of those would you attribute that new feel and vibe to?**

RICKIE FOWLER: A little bit of both. You're definitely seeing the team continue to get younger and younger. It's hard to think or imagine that it would get a whole lot younger than it is now. It can a little bit, but compared to 2010 and prior to that, guys in their 20s, there would be a couple to maybe a handful. Now it seems like a majority of our team is made up of kids that are 20. I'm the second oldest on the team, so kind of a flip of the script going from 2010 until now.

Yeah, a lot of it, like you mentioned, a lot of the guys grew up playing junior golf, college golf together. There's a few of the guys that I played with, but most of them being younger, it's been more spending time with them out here on Tour. Nearly half the team, we all live pretty close to each other.

Yeah, I think it's a combo of kind of freeing things up but also the kind of younger group coming in and those guys



being pretty close.

**Q. Going back 12 months ago, was the Ryder Cup on your radar, and what kind of motivating factor was it as your season progressed?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, it's always on your radar. How close it is, that's another kind of situation. It was fairly distant. It was my kind of ultimate goal, just kind of looking at the progression of things and what I wanted to do. If I accomplished a lot of things on my list, I would ultimately be here.

It's been a fun year, finally, after a few years that were kind of tough and just a grind. But to kind of go through that and to kind of see myself continue to get into a better position and get closer to having a chance of making the team -- yes, it was on my radar, but that radar had to go out pretty far to kind of capture the Ryder Cup.

**Q. I'm from Sweden, and I heard that you played golf with Mondo Duplantis, the pole vaulter. How was it, when was it?**

RICKIE FOWLER: It was a few years back. My wife, she pole vaulted and has kept up with Mondo's career. He's obviously a very impressive pole vaulter and continues to break his own world record. We actually had a pole vault pit at our house in Florida, and Mondo and his brother, Andreas, came to pick that up. We didn't need it anymore. So that's now his practice pit back in Louisiana.

It was kind of fun because we were able to make a couple-day trip out of it. They came down, played some golf, got to spend some time with him and his brother.

Mondo is an impressive athlete. I was definitely impressed by his golf game.

They're a very talented family. I know his brother plays baseball. I'm not sure if many people follow pole vaulting or anything --

**Q. His golf game is good, as well?**

RICKIE FOWLER: He's a good player. He surprised me. It's been fun to watch him the last few years. I want to say that was maybe about three years ago when he came and picked up the pit. But he continues to, like I said, break his own world records.

**Q. Your first Ryder Cup dates back to 2010, and I'm wondering -- that's a long span -- what have you learned about yourself through the years in this Ryder Cup environment that helps you deal with the**

**pressure?**

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, definitely this year versus my first one or first few, a lot more comfortable being here. Also knowing that this isn't going to go on forever. There may be -- continue to play well, there could be three, four, five more for myself, but you never know with the game.

Definitely enjoy it. Like I mentioned earlier, it's cool to be in a place like Rome where there's so much history and was fortunate, like I said, during the practice session to go and see some of that.

But I think for me the biggest is understanding how special they are. They're the most fun weeks that we get to be a part of. And then for me, it's just continuing to feel more comfortable being a part of them versus definitely the first one or the first couple where you're amped up or nervous. There will still be nerves out there, but it's not a new situation.

**Q. You talk about history a few minutes ago. I think you are the first one, and it's strange for me because there is a lot of history here in Rome, so I'm wondering if you know anything about the history of the Roman Empire and if there is any lesson you can learn from it and, if yes, how it can be useful during this week.**

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, it probably would have -- I probably would have had more knowledge on it back in probably middle school when I was taking history classes and it was a bit more fresh. It was special to walk around because when we left here and went back, I was in New York for two days, and you see the things that are older for our home country, and we're over here, and then you think of the timeline of Rome and walking around and seeing all the ruins and what an old building really is. You think of an old building in the U.S., and it's pretty darned new.

I think one of the things probably to take from the Roman Empire or kind of the history over here is patience, understanding what it took for them to build things back then. It's hard to wrap your head around it when you look at really anything, but walking by the Pantheon and seeing how small the bricks are that ultimately make up that structure, it's not like those bricks were being printed out at a factory down the street. Everything is handmade.

I think a big thing with that is kind of seeing the big picture and having the patience to understand what it takes to get from start to finish.

**Q. Did you ever try pole vaulting in your backyard?**

RICKIE FOWLER: No, I stuck to just carrying the poles



and getting them from the garage to the pit. Or filming or giving any maybe insight to what I saw. But I stayed away from taking a run down the runway and trying to pole vault.

**Q. Too scary for you?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Not too scary, but I think one thing, it's not something that you just pick up and go run and try and plant the pole and make a jump. There's a few months of work that go into getting to that point.

One, I don't necessarily have that time, and two, I don't think it's worth the risk with what else I have going on.

**Q. So no second career, then?**

RICKIE FOWLER: No, no. If I'm going to go in the air, it's going to be on a bike. We try and stay away from that for now, as well.

**Q. Can you describe what it's like, the unique experience in golf with having people cheer against you, an entire crowd, which is obviously not normal on an ordinary week? How can that affect a team?**

RICKIE FOWLER: I enjoy it. I think a lot of the guys on the team this year do, as well. All of them have been -- even if they're a Ryder Cup rookie, they've been a part of other teams along the way.

The reason I enjoy it is you're the underdog. It's fun to go try and prove them wrong. Our cheers are -- yeah, we will have some fans, but kind of the quietness becomes our cheers.

But I enjoy it. I feel like the fans have always been great over here. Yeah, they're going to give us a hard time. You'll hear some one-liners here and there, but it's part of it. We're on foreign soil. We're not the favourites. But the more that you can accept that and enjoy it and kind of play with the fans a bit and feed off of, I feel like there's a lot of mutual respect.

**Q. Would you describe yourself as a floater at the Ryder Cup, able to plug holes wherever they are? Curious how you approach that role. It seems to be a little unsettling and uneasy not knowing when you're going to play and with whom.**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yes and no. I think some of it -- the first two days, either have a good idea or will have more of a good idea coming up in the next day or two exactly how things will pan out. Even when you do have a plan, things can change.

I feel like I'm someone that's able to help out if there is something that happens and someone needs to be plugged in.

But I feel like we do have a pretty good idea of -- Friday especially. I think Saturday is kind of coming along.

But like I said, even if you do have a plan, you never know about the what-ifs, and things can change pretty quickly.

**Q. Back on the subject of partnerships, how much campaigning do you think happens where guys go up to the captain and say, listen, you've got to put me with so-and-so because he's playing so well, and I know we can do well? How much of that happens do you think, and is it always just because everybody wants to be paired with the hot guy, or is it for other reasons?**

RICKIE FOWLER: You know, I feel like there's a little bit, and sometimes -- whether it's Zach or assistant captains asking and getting an idea of who do you feel like you would enjoy playing with and maybe who are the guys that you don't necessarily see yourself matching up with, getting an idea with that. There's obviously some pairings that we have that have had success or guys that are close and you know that it's going to put them in a position to play well.

Then also with kind of how our team matches up and all the guys having those plans, but to the point over here of being able to mix and match if things get -- someone ends up hurt or sick or whatever it may be. You can't be dead set and rely on those certain pairings.

Sometimes being able to have -- call an audible or go to option two, three, whatever it may be. Yeah, that's about it.

I do think, like I said, going back to the start of it, there's plenty of times where guys are going to step up and say, I want to go with so-and-so or whether you're talking about Xander and Cantlay or Jordan and JT, those are pretty self-explanatory.

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