

The Ryder Cup

Saturday, 30 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

U.S. Team

Zach Johnson

Press Conference

BRIONY CARLYON: We are joined by Team U.S. Captain Zach Johnson.

Zach, another busy day for you on the golf course with day two done of the Ryder Cup just give us your assessment.

ZACH JOHNSON: My sentiment, is that what you said?

BRIONY CARLYON: Assessment.

ZACH JOHNSON: Assessment, I'm sorry. Well, my assessment is given the fact that we came out and played some pretty inspirational golf in the second session, this could have been a substantial deficit, and that deficit could have been substantial because of the quality play of our opponent in The European Team. They have been tremendous.

But I am really energised and proud of the way our last session rallied not only to put red on the board but rallied around each other, which is of no surprise to me. I've voiced it. It's starting to come to fruition.

Some inspirational golf out there. And I think momentum, certainly in sports, but specifically in golf, and even more specifically in this tournament, is a pretty lethal deal which can breed confidence and just, like I said, energize within.

So a tall task, but a task that these guys welcome and are built for. So I can't wait for tomorrow.

Q. I have to just take you to an incident that's overshadowed most of the play today, which is on the final green involving Rory McIlroy and Patrick Cantlay's caddie, Joe LaCava, Rory seemed to feel that Joe was putting him off, waving his cap and was crossing his line. And it seems to have spilled over to the car park afterwards, and there's video footage of Rory apparently confronting Joe. Can you give us your take on the incident that you saw regarding the episode in the car park, please.



MARCO SIMONE
ROME, ITALY

ZACH JOHNSON: Sure. Well, what I saw on 18 was a phenomenal putt and a celebration by some of our guys, and you know, I saw passion and all of what's great in the Ryder Cup come out. And to my knowledge, based on what I was told, that was diffused after the match, and so I'm told it's all good.

Yeah, that's really all I know.

Q. It looks like you came with a loaded boat for singles, the guys playing best first, and Europe seems to have come right back with the same exact thing. Can you tell me what your philosophy is here when you're looking to try to make a comeback?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I like every square inch of our boat; that goes without saying.

But I do feel like we've got some guys that are in a position and are willing and wanting to be in those positions that is really attractive to me. Whether you call it experience, accepting the big stage, all of that, but we've kind of got it littered all the way down, and even in certain areas, too: a good mixture of vets, a good mixture of rooks, which history has shown being a rookie isn't that big of a deal when it comes to singles. It's really not that big of a deal.

So this list really wasn't that difficult, to be honest with you, and they look really good, too.

Q. Out there on 18, before Rory putted, you went over to Joe and put your arm around him and said something to him. What was kind of the tone of that conversation? Can you share with us?

ZACH JOHNSON: I said "Congratulations" on so far getting half a point, maybe more. Just the obvious facts that were given.

Q. Given that you were there, and Joe kind of gestured several times with his hat, do you understand why they may be upset about that?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I just think you see passion and



complete emotion involved in the Ryder Cup. You know, I don't think it's anything more than that or anything less than that.

I just think it is what it is. I can tell you this: In a mundane round, I'd have to move, a lot, because I get spatially unaware of where I am relative to who I am playing with at times, so you just have to move out of the way at times. But nothing more than that. It happens periodically. You're just so involved in what you're doing and you kind of lose sight because it's emotion or sidetrack or whatever. It's probably all of that.

Q. Do you think a line was crossed by what happened on 18, what Joe LaCava did? There's some footage that shows that he was in Rory's way. And do you think what happened in the car park changes the dynamic of tomorrow?

ZACH JOHNSON: I don't know about that. I mean, to my knowledge, it was diffused. I spoke with Joe after, and he said he talked to Rory and it was all good. That's all I know.

Q. You don't know who Rory was having the row with in the car park then?

ZACH JOHNSON: I'm aware of something happening. I don't know what transpired specifically. I do know that Joe was not a part of that. That's what I was told. Is that fair? I don't know.

Q. There was a report that came out today about there being some rift within the team that has to do with getting paid in the Ryder Cup.

ZACH JOHNSON: Our team?

Q. Yeah.

ZACH JOHNSON: Huh.

Q. Is there any sort of vision or has compensation for being paid this week been a topic in the run-up to the competition?

ZACH JOHNSON: There was a report, is that what you said?

Q. Yes.

ZACH JOHNSON: That is extremely poor journalism unless I know something that's out there -- there is not a rift in this team room. This is one of the most united teams I have ever been associated with.

And when it comes to the dollar sign, I don't mean to sound cliché, but the Ryder Cup is about more than any of that. It's about standing with a band of guys to represent your nation, to represent more than you in the game of golf. It's a sport for one week.

And you know what, I would say if there's anything that deals with money, there's guys that would pay to play in this. So I am not understanding that, and I think that is extremely inaccurate and arguably irresponsible.

Q. We had Luke in earlier, and he said that he had Rory's version of events about what happened on the 18th; clearly Rory thought the line had been crossed, he's trying to line up his putt, and there's a guy jumping up and down in front of him, waving his cap. Bearing that in mind, and Luke had an explanation for Rory, will you be speaking to Joe about this? And if so, what will you say?

ZACH JOHNSON: I keep team conversations within the team. So anything I speak to the caddies and/or the players, we keep within the team room.

Q. How come you weren't able to find a hat that fits Patrick Cantlay?

ZACH JOHNSON: Somebody else mentioned that to me, too. I guess it's like a social media -- is it viral thing right now that he's not wearing (one)?

I don't think he likes the fit of the hats. I know that. That's what the facts are. He doesn't like the fit of the hats. The facts are he didn't wear a hat two years ago at Whistling Straits.

And another fact, some of the stalwarts and legends of the European game that I admire and, frankly, have modelled a lot of my game after never wore hats in the Ryder Cup.

Q. What was your thinking behind not playing Rickie Fowler at all today?

ZACH JOHNSON: It was a situation where our matchups felt it was best to go this direction. Rickie is the consummate professional and team player. We had an embrace that I'll never forget and a smile afterward. And you know what, it's hard. I want to play all 12 guys every match -- every session, excuse me. That goes without saying.

So it was nothing more than that. He is a dear, dear, dear friend. And knowing him, it's probably motivational.

Q. Could you update us, please, on any illness that's in your team room still?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I need to talk to our team doctor again. Speaking of that, I'm grateful and feel very fortunate that we have an individual who I trust implicitly with these kind of matters.

It was a bug, and it was nothing more than that, nothing less than that. Medicine, antibiotics, in particular, seems to have really counteracted it. I was kind of told the team is on the mend.

I'm saying all this, and I cannot preface -- I cannot say this strongly enough: That is not an excuse. Those are just facts.

The bottom line is the score is what it is not because of that but because of the other team playing really, really, really good golf, period. That's the facts.

Q. Ben Crenshaw famously said the night before Brookline, "I got a feeling." I've got to ask, you got a feeling?

ZACH JOHNSON: We've got 12 guys; we've got 12 points. I believe every 12 -- every guy on my team can win a point. I'll just say that.

Q. One of the people who had the interaction with Joe LaCava on 18 green was Justin Rose. Justin Rose is now playing Patrick Cantlay tomorrow. Will you be speaking to Patrick or Joe about how they conduct themselves during that match?

ZACH JOHNSON: Again, I think it kind of goes, piggybacks off his question. Whatever conversations I have with my guys, if I have them, will stay within the team room entirely.

I'm not aware of that one. I'm not suggesting it didn't happen or did happen. Just the Ryder Cup is so full of emotion and passion that sometimes as humans we get ahead of ourselves, both sides. And it's the beauty and the curse of it, but I think the beauty far outweighs anything else.

Q. The cameras caught you speaking with Justin and Jordan on the tee, 16 tee.

ZACH JOHNSON: Oh, 16 tee box. I'm sorry, yes, sir. I'm with you. They were playing their match.

Q. Yes.

ZACH JOHNSON: Okay. I'm with you.

Q. Jordan went from there to his bag and maybe clubbed down. Could you share what that interaction was like and what you said to Jordan in that moment?

ZACH JOHNSON: Oh, I got you. That was a situation where we thought it was a pretty pivotal hole; so I was trying to make my way there as much as I could given the status of matches, kind of like a par three. As the individual on the team that can relay advice, I was there giving them data. Just pure data. That was it. Like, this is what we've seen; this is where it is; this is what he did in front of you; this is what he did in front of you, etc., etc.

That's it. He did change clubs. You're right. He did. I'm not telling those boys what to hit, I can assure you of that. These guys are on the United States Ryder Cup Team. I'll just put it that way.

I tried to qualify and I didn't. These guys did. I don't need to tell them what to do.

Q. Fair enough.

ZACH JOHNSON: You got it.

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