

The Ryder Cup

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Kohler, Wisconsin, USA

Whistling Straits

Tony Finau

Press Conference



JOHN DEVER: Good morning. Welcome back to the 43rd Ryder Cup here at Whistling Straits. We are with our good friend, Tony Finau.

Tony, welcome to your second career Ryder Cup. You played here in 2015 and had a good finish, T-10, that was played in August, temps were in the low 80s and such and here we are in crisp, fall-like conditions, a little bit more of a breeze. How different are those two golf courses, if you can take yourself back and also be here this week?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, I'm trying to think back to 2015. I remember the golf course just as a whole. I remember the holes kind of what they looked like, the shape of them. I don't really remember how it played in 2015. I don't know if that's my memory. I'm getting old. I kind of had almost a blank canvas I feel like. When we had our practice last week coming out, it was nice to be out here again and see.

There's quite a few blinds shots on this golf course. I think just seeing the lines and being confident where you're aiming over some of those holes are very important.

It's still kind of the same season I would say. We played it in August in 2015 and we're in late September, so pretty close to the same season, so I don't remember it playing crazy different. I know it's a lot cooler. I don't remember wearing a jacket when we played in 2015.

My memory wasn't great of 2015 just remembering how the golf course played but it's nice to come back to a place that I have played, have good memories from. I played really nicely in 2015 for at least three rounds, and it's just fun to be back to a golf course that I've played before and have great memories at.

Q. Is this a more tiring week than other tournaments tournament weeks because you have to be on all the team with the team obligations?

TONY FINAU: I would say in a sense yes, because you do have to be on quite often but man, it's where you want to be, though. It's kind of a mix of both. Like I wouldn't

want to be anywhere else that's for sure. I wouldn't want to be at home in the situation I was in maybe watching.

It's worth what the week brings, and that's a lot of team dinners, going out in groups, a lot of things that we're not as accustomed to on a normal week. But when you're only dealing it for one week and it's the Ryder Cup, we are all up for it and we are all up for the challenge and it ends up being a great time.

I get to know a lot of these guys better than I know them on just a normal PGA TOUR week or playing major championships, whatever it is. Just getting to know the guys, our wives getting to know each other better makes for good feelings all around, and whatever tiredness we are feeling throughout the week, I think gets trumped just by being here and participating in The Ryder Cup.

Q. This would be I guess a fourball-related question, if you end up in one of those formats: Is there a specific hole or combination of holes where you can take advantage of your length that you wouldn't do normally?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, well, I think there's a handful of holes, it just depends on the wind. Like if it's coming off the coast, a lot of the holes are going to be playing into the wind early, so those are the holes that I think someone like me can take advantage of.

If it's a tradewind, which is coming out of the south, which I think it's going to be this weekend, then you're going to have to take advantage of the holes kind of along the water starting from 6 all the way down to 13, most of those holes go the same direction. So I would say those are the holes that you have to take advantage of because you're playing into the wind. It's mostly wind dependent.

I feel like when it comes to length, I feel like my length is a good asset to have on this golf course and I think the length of our team just in general is a great thing on this golf course.

Q. Pádraig Harrington was in the other day and he traces a lot of Europe's success that they grow up

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playing on teams and different sports. You come from a background like that playing different teams. How does it translate into this week being successful?

TONY FINAU: I think camaraderie is a big thing in team sports. Having that oneness is a big thing. A lot of the mojo of the team atmosphere I think is a big deal when you're playing team sport.

They seem to have that for some reason, and maybe to Pádraig's point, I know football is a big sport. A lot of them played football growing up and a lot of team sports. But the way I look at our team is a lot of our guys have, as well, and we have a great, young hungry team. A lot of us played team sports growing up, myself included and there's definitely that oneness that comes from being in team sports at some point in your life.

Again, I think most of us have had that type of experience from playing some team sports, maybe more so than what most of you guys would think.

Q. Can you speak to what Stricks has meant to this team and what kind of a captain he is?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, Stricks has meant everything to our team, as our captain. He's such a great leader and I say that, mostly just through his example. He's got this chill confidence to him, and I think when I say that, most of you know what I'm talking about. He's not -- he doesn't talk a lot. In our team meetings he hasn't too much.

But you can tell the energy he has for The Ryder Cup, the passion he has for it, just by the way he goes about his business. He's got this quiet confidence and I think that's something that we've all learned from, and myself included.

As a player, to play under someone with that type of confidence, and just the passion that he has for The Ryder Cup, you feel it. This is a huge -- this is a big one, I feel like, for our squad, this Ryder Cup. It's a big one for our team. It's a big one for Stricks. This is a place that he loves, Wisconsin, Whistling Straits. This is his home.

We have a task in front of us that we have a chance to do something really special for our team, our country and especially for Stricks and I think we have that in the back of our minds and we want to win this not only for everything involved but especially for our captain.

Q. I don't think there are statistics for this, but I think he's cried after every time he's won. Knowing how emotional he is, how much would you like to see him bawling his eyes out on Sunday? You addressed it a little bit, but how much you guys want to win for him?

TONY FINAU: It would mean the world for all of us, I'm sure I speak for my teammates, knowing Stricks, we wouldn't mind seeing all the emotion and sensitivity that he brings to the table Sunday evening.

We have a tall task in front of us we know that. We have a great European Team that we're up against but we have got a great -- I've got a great group of 11 guys that I'm going to go to battle with these next few days. And we've had some great practice sessions, gotten to know each other really well. Got a great group of young guys. As one of the older guys, crazy to say it, in 2018, I was one of the younger guys and now just a short three years later, I'm the third oldest on the team. I think it tells you where American golf is headed. We have so much great young talent and we have a handful of that young talent on our team already this year.

Really exciting that that's the case, and our goal is not only to change the mold this year, but the history of The Ryder Cup for us I think means a lot to us young guys and to our younger guys, and hopefully we change the mold here moving forward, not just this Ryder Cup but many Ryder Cups to come.

Q. A lot has been made of the crowd this week are predominately an American crowd, if any Europeans. Does that work as a positive for you? And from a European perspective, can that be a negative having pretty much the whole crowd against you? Will that alter their mindset?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, it goes both ways. I definitely love having the opportunity to play in front of our home crowd. That's something I personally haven't had. Both Cups I've been a part of, international teams, Ryder Cup in Paris and the Presidents Cup which was in Melbourne, Australia, so I personally haven't had the opportunity to play in front of our crowds. That's something I'm really excited about.

I felt the love already this week in the practice rounds, but to get out there in competition, I know it's going to be a whole different type of energy from our fans and that's something that I really look forward to. That's something that's going to play into our favor as Americans, just to have that energy. And momentum is a big thing in sports, that's something I know about in teams sports, for sure. Momentum is a big thing. The team that has the momentum early is going to fare well and I think it's always an advantage to play at home.

I think hopefully that plays well into our hands if we are behind early, I think it still plays into our advantage because the crowd can cheer louder or whatever the case

is for us as we play.

Q. You said something interesting about, this is a big one for us and you mentioned Stricks -- and about 15 other things, monologue there, well done. Why does this stand out, aside from Strick and Wisconsin where we are, why is this so big? What makes it big in your minds, and kind of as a reversal to that question, what would happen if you guys lost and why would that be so crushing?

TONY FINAU: Well, for me the change of culture. We have a whole new team. We have a team with no scar tissue. There's only a handful of us that has even played in a Ryder Cup, and the few of those, we have winning records. So we actually don't have guys on our team that have lost a lot in Ryder Cups.

So what I mean by this is a big one is we've got a whole new team. We've got a whole different group of young guys that are hungry. I see -- you guys see six rookies. Man, in this team room, I don't see any rookies. I see six -- I see 12 guys that are confident and none of us are wide-eyed. We want to win. At the end of the day that's what I see. When I'm in the locker room, I see guys beaming with confidence and really hungry to win.

That's refreshing. And I'm not saying that I didn't see that in Paris, but there's a certain feel, I feel like, and the only reason I see this is a big one is because I think the culture of American golf is changing in that you guys are seeing, hey, we are so much younger. This is the youngest team we have ever had by a long shot.

I think the culture of what we want to bring, again, not only at this Ryder Cup but many Ryder Cups to come, we have had I think some publicity about Americans not having the camaraderie maybe that the Europeans have, or not have the interest in playing in The Ryder Cup. That's not the case. I don't think that's the case.

They have outplayed us in quite a few Ryder Cups and that's the mold we want to change going forward and that's why I say that's a big one.

And the five guys that are on this team that were in Paris, it's hard to watch another team celebrate in front of you. That's something that I had to do in Paris in 2018. Jordan was there, DJ, J.T. and Bryson. So I think five of the 12 of us, this is a big one because we don't want to experience that again.

To experience that on their home turf, I think that was a tough one. If we were to experience that here on our home turf, where we are watching them celebrate on our home

turf, I think that's going to be a hard pill to swallow.

With that being said, there's that extra motivation I think or extra drive to change the culture of American golf and we have that opportunity this week.

Q. Would it be a huge setback if you have this new culture and this young team, and still don't get it done?

TONY FINAU: You can look at it as a setback. Brooks said it earlier -- I was just standing there watching his last few remarks, there's going to be a winner, there's going to be a loser at the end of the week. There's always going to be positives to draw from losing, if that were the case for Americans later this week. That's something I've dealt with a lot in my career, overcoming adversity. That's something huge. We're going to be able to deal with that if that time comes. But I see a change in culture, I see a change in American teams. Hopefully this week the culture of us not getting the job done in The Ryder Cup in the last handful changes this week.

Q. Similar sort of thing, has the captain used any motivational techniques or anything you think would work this week, are you anticipating anything tonight to bring the team together?

TONY FINAU: Yeah, he hasn't really done anything like that. I think, again, he's got that quiet confidence to him, Stricks has, and I think we are all just excited for the opportunity we have in front of us. It's such a special week on so many different levels. We get to represent our country. So many great people in the game of golf. The PGA of America, there's so many great things and people we are representing this week. Just to have that opportunity I think is really exciting for all of us.

I don't anticipate any motivational speeches or anything like that. I think we are motivated enough as a team and come tomorrow morning, we'll be ready to play.

JOHN DEVER: Thank you for being with us.

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