

# The Ryder Cup Media Conference

Wednesday, 23 June, 2021

**Padraig Harrington**

**Martin Kaymer**

**Graeme McDowell**

Media Conference



BRIONY CARLYON: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome today. Delighted to be joined this afternoon by our European Tour Ryder Cup Captain, Padraig Harrington, and our newly announced vice captains in Martin Kaymer and Graeme McDowell.

Padraig, I know we've already put out the press release this morning and you've seen a lot of comments already on social media but just your thoughts on welcoming these two gentlemen into your Ryder Cup Team as vice captain.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, firstly I'd like to thank both of them for accepting the job. It is an interesting job because it can be quite stressful behind the scenes and what we've seen now is the vice captains actually play an incredibly important role. They have to do quite a bit of work. They actually do all the heavy lifting during the week and get a lot of things ready and prepared and then the captain who is generally quite busy from what I've seen comes in and makes the final decision based on the information he's receiving from his vice captains.

You know, I chose both Graeme and Martin. Graeme, first of all, based on the 2018 Ryder Cup, he was a vice captain like I was, and his opinion really counted, what he said was spot on when he said it. I think he carries a certain amount of authority both in the vice captains team room and the actual players team room. The players do look up to him. He's a solid opinion. Again, just there's a certain authority.

You know, it's nice that he has had a great Ryder Cup career and he has holed the winning putt in The Ryder Cup, but it's more based on what I would have seen when he was a vice captain and I just felt in that room when he said something, he was spot on and didn't say too much. Didn't waffle on but what he said was spot on and perfect. Very important to have somebody there with that sort of authority who has been there and knows it.

Obviously with Martin, Martin actually brings a nice balance to my vice captains. I think he's known for having a very cool head under pressure and it is a pressure situation, The Ryder Cup. So emotionally, he brings a nice level-headedness to what we're doing. I think also when it comes to the team, he adds a very nice balance, too. He's well-respected amongst the players and he brings that sort of coolness emotionally to the team itself, and you need that very much when it comes to everything in golf but especially The Ryder Cup.

You need to have people who are comfortable and relaxed, are not carrying stress themselves that can rub off on the players, and I think Martin definitely -- especially it does help that he has had a win around Whistling Straits. It does help that he's hold the winning putt in The Ryder Cup, but I think the players do also look up to Martin and respect what he's done in the game of golf, will respect what he says. But I also think the way Martin carries himself will bring a nice atmosphere to the team.

You know, it's very important as I said that the vice captains and anybody in and amongst the team is not adding to stress, not adding any stress to the situation, and I think Martin is going to bring the perfect balance to my vice captains in the sense of he will be a very cool hand in what can be quite a turbulent emotional scene when it comes to picking teams and everything that's going on in the locker room of a Ryder Cup.

BRIONY CARLYON: G-Mac, you've obviously experienced The Ryder Cup in a vice-captaincy role previously. Just your thoughts on joining Padraig and the team at Whistling Straits.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Firstly, apologies I can't be with you guys in Germany and Munich this week at the BMW. Next best thing, I'm sitting in my BMW, so I hope that works okay.

But you know, it's a huge honour to be vice captain again. You know, Captain Harrington is going to do a fantastic job and it's a huge honour to be in the team room with him bringing some experience and joining the huge amount of respect and experience that we already have in the

captaincy and captaincy roles.

It goes without saying, we have a huge amount of talent in the room, and I learned a huge amount in 2018 about what it takes to be behind the scenes. Like Padraig mentioned, the captain is under a huge amount of pressure and the vice captains really have to try and pick up the pieces for him a little bit around the team room.

It's a huge pressure week. There's a lot of stuff going on, and like I say, I felt I learned a huge amount in 2018 about how to communicate with the players, what everybody needs, what the captain needs to help them do his job. There's so much to it. It goes without saying that we'd love to be playing but if we can't, this is the next best thing, helping Team Europe achieve its goals, watching these great young players come up and achieve their dreams, and I'm really, really excited to kind of get going and hopefully win The Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits.

BRIONY CARLYON: Martin, we just touched on that as well Padraig mentioning fond memories for you at Whistling Straits, but being part of the team in a vice captaincy role, you took time to think about it and what that would mean to you. Your thoughts, as well, on being part of Team Europe.

MARTIN KAYMER: When Padraig approached me at the PGA Championship, I was a little surprised at that stage. Because you know, it's such a huge honour that I really didn't know how to take it.

So then we took a little bit of time at the Champion's Dinner. We spoke a little bit about it, only a few minutes and I went back to my room. I must admit, I struggled a little bit to sleep because once I decide to do something, I would like to do it properly and in the right way. I wasn't really sure if I would be up for that task because I don't really know what it is about.

Obviously I've played a few Ryder Cups and I only focused on my own game to contribute as much as possible to the team. So the vice captain is a very special role. As Graeme said, it's the closest thing if you don't play, and just having the honour of helping the team if you don't play yourself, it's such a big pleasure to be asked in the first places, and really looking forward to the challenge, but it will be a challenge, a very positive challenge that I've never experienced before. And hopefully it will tell me something, also, about myself if I can -- if I would be up for the task one day to be the captain myself.

But first and foremost, the most important thing is to help Padraig, to help the team in whatever way possible and hopefully with my character, with my experience and my

knowledge about golf and also the way you approach the game of golf, your attitude before you play, hopefully I can help that way, just communicating with players who maybe have not that much experience.

So it will be a really interesting role, and as I said, one of the biggest honours that I received in golf just to be asked, because it's a very important and cool role to have.

**Q. Question to pretty much all of you. How are the next three months leading up to The Ryder Cup going to look like? Is there going to be a WhatsApp group between the three of you? Do you just chat around? Is there going to be a scheduled programme?**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Well, we already have the WhatsApp groups. There's about, I probably have three or four different WhatsApp groups when it comes to the administration, one with the vice captain and one with some certain stats, things like that, and a couple others. So we'll be busy.

As regards to players, I've tended to let the players do their thing up to now. I want them to get through the majors of the year. We're coming on that last major. We are now going to start rolling out a few team dinners and things like that and then the WhatsApp group from the players themselves.

Yeah, so plenty of chatting. Most, in fairness, pretty much everything is well set at this stage. The administration is done. Most of the team is formed at this stage. It's actually, the difficulty now, you know, there's not going to be a lot of spots changing hands in the automatic places. So it really will be a lot of talk between the vice captains, the stats guys and a few others, the picks. So a bit of work for us, actually, over the next couple of months.

And it's strange. As Graeme will tell you, we've been involved in this picking process in the past, and it changes quickly. You know, two months, three months out, you think you've got guys set for the picks and then all of a sudden it changes and it changes and it keeps changing. Myself and Graeme would have seen that in the past and we'll enjoy the talking and discussing about who getting picked, but it will come right down to the wire when it comes to that.

But there will be plenty of conversations and detail. We love a lot of detail before we have to make those picks and plenty of WhatsApps and a few meetings, I'm sure, as well.

I know it's tough with COVID but we are getting a little bit better. Certainly there hasn't been a team dinner yet, but there will be over the next period of time. Socially distanced team dinner, but there will be something going

on.

**Q. You touched upon the fact that you're a little bit reticent when you were first asked by Padraig; is that partly the fact that you're 36, you're only moving up in the World Rankings again and you have a special record at Whistling Straits. Were you considering that you could have qualified for this Ryder Cup or at least be considered a captain's pick?**

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, I think it all depends on your performance. I would never give up on The Ryder Cup. Since I played on the 2012 Ryder Cup and I have that gift that I received on the 18th green, my emotions and my attitude toward The Ryder Cup has changed even more. So that hope will never go away until the last day of qualification.

But I was just surprised because I have not seen myself as a vice captain at all because I was just playing golf and trying to make the team. And then I got asked if I would consider being the vice captain a couple of months before in interviews, and I was very surprised about that.

When actually Padraig approached me, as well, you know, I don't know what I was thinking over the last few months. That's why it took me a little bit of time to give it 100 percent and if I could do this, and that's why it took me a little bit of time to make the decision, even though I don't think it should be much of a decision because it's just what you do.

But as I said, if I do it, I want to do it properly. We chatted a little bit on the phone. Also when I played the tournament in Munich, what my role would look like. I love the position that I'm in. I love the way Padraig is handling the team so far. I think it's a really good setup, and that's why it took me a little bit of time, a few reasons.

**Q. I'm sure you're probably going to tell me that all you can really do is focus on your own job and focus on Team Europe, but looking at the in-fighting, I suppose that's going on in the American Team already, how much satisfaction is that giving you? How much do you not envy the position that Steve Stricker is in?**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I think, yes, you're correct, I can only look after my own team. Is there a certain amount of -- it's like people watching, isn't it, when you hear the stories and things going on, you're going -- it's of interest. But doesn't really make a difference to how the players play the week of The Ryder Cup. You know, I certainly wouldn't be relying on that.

I'd be relying more on getting the most out of my team. I

think that's what we do in The Ryder Cup now. You're not there to rely on the opposition playing badly. You're trying to make sure that your team plays as well as it can, believes that if all they have to do is play their own game, play as well as they can, and that's good enough. You're not looking to, you know, anybody who has ever played match play, the worst possible thought you can have going out in match play is hoping that your opposition isn't at their best.

The best way you can go is let's hope they play well and we play better, and that will be what I'll be trying to instill into my team. We are not going to focus on them. Because you just don't know. You don't know how much of it is real. You don't know how much they come together in the actual matches. You don't know how much -- like we've seen over the years, Paddy Reed has been their best player, most motivated player out there. So you just don't realise any individual's personal motivation when they get out there. So yeah, we are not relying on them. We are relying on ourselves to do our job.

**Q. Off-topic here, but I don't suppose you're going to the Allianz this evening for the match? There's a very good chance it could be England v. Germany at Wembley next Tuesday night. How do you feel about that?**

MARTIN KAYMER: We all know how that will go. We just need to look back at history and know what the result will be. That's all I have to say. (Laughter).

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Perfect vice captain.

**Q. G-Mac, I've got to ask you, where are you at the moment and where are you parked?**

GRAEME McDOWELL: I'm in Orlando and I'm parked at a random car park here in the west side of Orlando. I'm running around just doing a few errands before I jump on a plane and fly to The Irish Open on Friday. Just getting a few things done before I get back on the road again.

**Q. Talking about Irish, you've played under a few captains and also as we know in Versailles, you were a vice captain under Thomas but how special is it to be under the captaincy of a fellow Irishman, and especially a guy like Padraig, you've played so many practice rounds with and gone out to dinner with, how special will that be at Whistling Straits?**

GRAEME McDOWELL: Listen, it goes without saying, being a vice captain under any European Captain is very special. But when you're talking about one of the most decorated players in Europe, also an Irish player like

Padraig, who my relationship with him goes back nearly 20 years, so we've had a lot of shared experiences together. A huge amount of respect for what he brings to the table and what he's done in the game of golf. You know, he is obviously a hugely intelligent and analytical and process-driven captain, and I can't wait.

You always learn so much in a week like The Ryder Cup being around the best players in the world, the most experienced players in the world. You know, to me, it's one part. I want to do everything I can to help Team Europe but it's another part learning and being inspired and kind of pouring that back into what's left of my golf career and the things that I want to achieve.

So there's so many layers to it. Obviously the No. 1 thing is to win The Ryder Cup, but there's so much experience and so much to learn on a week like that, and especially being surrounded by guys like Padraig Harrington.

**Q. I see this week in Munich for the first two round you're played with Viktor Hovland? I know you want to go to Whistling Straits with your golf clubs and be a member but do you see your role as a vice captain and talking with Viktor if you get the opportunity in these rounds to talk about The Ryder Cup, what it's about and that sort of stuff? Can you see that role going ahead into other tournaments in the countdown to Whistling Straits?**

MARTIN KAYMER: Well I think from a player's perspective, if a vice captain would have talked to me in the past, I would have thought, why is he talking to me now. I think it depends on during the week when we are at The Ryder Cup, then it's time to talk and to give advice if needed.

But I'm here to play my own game. Of course, you always look at the way they play because you that's very natural. If you play with somebody, you just somehow judge it, maybe even subconscious you do, and hopefully those two rounds, if needed, I will give my advice and my opinion about it.

But I think Viktor is doing a great job so far since he's on Tour. I think sometimes you can only disturb someone instead of just letting them go because there's a reason why he's playing good golf. I think you always need to respect that we all play every week, try to win a golf tournament, and I should not bother him with any questions that could affect his golf game or his way of thinking.

And The Ryder Cup, being on The Ryder Cup Team is something very special that has only positive memories for me, and if Viktor would make the team or will make the

team, you know, I think he will be good because he's a very young, fiery guy who is laughing a lot. He brings joy to the team. And sometimes the joy is being missed in golf, and I think it's very important to keep this, and again, not my role to talk about it during a golf tournament.

**Q. Obviously given how well Martin played last week, especially the second and third round, it wouldn't be a massive surprise if he went and won this week in Munich and suddenly he's more of a contender for a place. Presumably have you got some sort of contingency plan in place if things like that happen?**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: To be honest, it may be harder picking vice captains than picking players at this stage. I needed a vice captain -- Graeme was obviously lined up for this for the last three years if he didn't make the team but I needed another vice captain. I needed somebody to talk to. We have got two, Graeme three, and now Martin, four. I needed to get going on this. I'm very aware Martin could still make the team. It's a possibility. Graeme, you, too, you could make the team. Not leaving you out.

GRAEME McDOWELL: Thanks, Captain.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I'd be thrilled. Of course you want experienced players playing great and playing their way on to the team. And if Martin plays like he did for most of the U.S. Open, he can do it and I'd be delighted to see them there having won at Whistling Straits. But at the moment, selfishly, I need vice captains. I needed to have that, to start that conversation behind the scenes and start working on that and cover certain areas. Selfishly, that's what I wanted and needed, and the best thing for the team.

Some of this I realise when it comes to the vice captain, I was a vice captain for Paul McGinley, and I said it; it's the best seat in the house. There's no stress on you. You're the vice captain. Nobody really knows you there and you're in and actually involved in The Ryder Cup.

But I think 2016 with Darren, it was a different story because things didn't go -- you know, things didn't go right. We were behind the 8-ball straightaway. We were struggling. There was a lot of scrambling and I realise there, and I think myself and Thomas Björn particularly, we were both there, we realise the vice captains have an incredibly important job to do. There is a lot to be done behind the scenes. There's a lot of help to be given if things don't go like plain sailing, which they didn't in 2016, which was a tough week, away golf course, U.S., they started well. It was a scramble to keep up that week, and I would have seen a lot as a vice captain.

And I realise, and you know, this is part of it, the vice



captains is not a jolly. There's important work to be done. I think Graeme will tell you this. Thomas knew that from 2016 and he let the vice captains, he gave us good -- I suppose he gave us room and good authority to get things done, get things ready for Thomas to make the hard decisions, and that's what we did in 2018. We put things together. We put options together. Thomas then came in and made sure.

Obviously the buck stops with the captain. The captain has to make the decisions. Has to make the hard decisions but, you know, you've got to be prepared, and the vice captains are the only ones who can do that preparation during the week. And I realise that. I wanted to get my vice captains team together early so that we can be all on the same page when we get there and we're working together and we know where we're going.

So selfishly, I'm sure Graeme and Martin would love to make the team, and they still can. There's nothing stopping them. There's nothing stopping Luke Donald playing well. These things can be changed. But at the moment, I need my vice captains.

**Q. Assuming you are having a fifth vice captain, do you have a sort of time scale in mind for when you would like to do that?**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I think my fifth vice captain is going to be very, very close, very close to last minute, pretty much like the last pick would be close to the last minute. Just purely because there's obviously -- unfortunately there's only one more spot and there's probably a few people in contention but they are also in contention for the team.

So, yeah, the last one will be much, much tighter and much later. The vice captains themselves should have an idea it might be happening but it won't be until much closer to the team.

**Q. You talk earlier about the wild cards are going to give you a bit of a headache over the next few weeks, couple of months. What sort of advice or what are you looking for from the likes of, I'm going to say Bob MacIntyre obviously, but what are you looking from them over the next few weeks?**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Exactly what Martin said there about playing with Viktor. I know Viktor is almost guaranteed on the team, we are not talking wild cards here.

We are not here to judge their golf. Their scores judge their golf. Go out and play golf. Doesn't matter how

somebody gets the job done. It the score they shoot at the end of the day that's what's important. It's not important -- it's important for us as vice captains and as the captain to build bonds with players. But we are not there to judge how they get their job done. We have seen that over the years.

You know, the score you shoot is who you are as a player, not how you do it. It's the actual physical score at the end of the day. Bob MacIntyre and all the other guys, just go play golf. Just go out and be themselves, play their game. Go out and perform on the golf course. And that's what impresses. We will see the scores and their finishes, and as I said, with double points, there is the option for maybe two spots.

But certainly, you know, the last spot seems to be up for grabs in the sense that there's always will be going to come out at the end of the year, like Guido last week would have jumped quite a bit somewhat into contention. That's going to happen over the next couple of months with double-counting points.

So there is going to be a bit of movement. Everybody just has to go play, try to get in there automatically, and anybody who gets in there close, any experienced player who gets reasonably close will be in with a shout for those three picks.

But I will say, it is tight for the three picks because you've got maybe half a dozen kind of rookies vying for those positions and you've got five or six experienced players also vying to get in as a pick. It's pretty tight for those three picks, no doubt about it.

**Q. Can you talk a little about Viktor Hovland and what he can bring to the team? I heard you spoke a little bit about him before, but can you repeat and if Martin could like to add something, that would be great.**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah, again, as Martin said, I hate to tell Viktor we might be relying on him for a lot of things when it comes to the Ryder Cup, not just his golfing ability. I think one of the things that's been crucial to European Team over the years has been the atmosphere that the rookies bring to the team: The enthusiasm, the excitement, the fun, the enjoyment, the new fresh face to a lot of players. Like some of the players on the team are going to be older, experienced and they have been there, done that.

Having the rookies on the team, I can't tell you how good Tyrrell Hatton was in the team room last time. I just can't tell you what a breath of fresh air he was in the team room, how much we enjoyed his company in the team room.

That's what really lifts a team when you get to, especially a young rookie, you get to see a different personality, a different side of them. The enthusiasm, the excitement, the bit of banter you have, the winding up sometimes of the rookies and a few pranks are played on them and things like that. Just it really -- it would be a terrible team, if I went interest with 12 experienced guys, you know, you'd think that's a great thing but it wouldn't be. You've got to have those young, fresh, innocent guys in there who are just there to enjoy themselves and it adds so much. I'm hoping that Viktor is that guy.

There will be a couple of rookies on the team for sure, but I hope Viktor brings the enthusiasm he will see on the golf course and he brings it to the team room and lights a spark among the more senior players and the more experienced players.

**Q. Can you talk about his golf the last year? The rise of him has been pretty exceptional.**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: His golf has been brilliant, sublime, his performance, consistency. I nearly have a general text I can send to him every Sunday night saying, "Well done." It's fantastic. I think -- and again, Martin said this -- I'm just stealing everything Martin said. But actually we're jealous of his enthusiasm on the golf course. We'd love to have -- like his attitude is just perfect. He hits it, smiles, finds it and that's the perfect way to play golf. This is very much part of who he is.

The longer he can keep that enthusiasm, at least through The Ryder Cup 2021, if selfishly, if I have to say that. But the longer he keeps that enthusiasm, the better a golfer he will be and the longer he will be one of the greats of the game.

**Q. Martin, something to add? What can we and he can if he will play?**

MARTIN KAYMER: Well, expectations are always high, obviously and I think you shouldn't put too much expectations on somebody like Viktor because he deserves to be seen as a rookie who plays his first rookie. And the way I got to know him, he's very authentic. I always like to be around with people who are authentic, who can laugh about themselves, who don't really play a role, who don't always say what people want to hear. It's very refreshing. As Padraig already mentioned, you know, he's smiling a lot on the golf course. Doesn't matter, really, if he had a poor day. I think he understands the big picture and he's still -- you know, he has been in college a few years ago and now he's playing one of the biggest or probably the biggest tournament in golf and the biggest sporting events in the world.

But I always enjoyed his company and I'm looking forward to play with him the next couple days here in Munich. Yeah, I think he's a person you want to be around with because of his attitude and his demeanor on the golf course and his demeanor off the golf course. I always really enjoy his company.

**Q. How far back did Martin come into the reckoning into your thinking as a possible captain, and was it something you thought about before the postponement last year or did the extra year help his case to get him entered into the mix?**

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I don't know if you mean help his case. I would have been thinking Martin as definitely one of the experienced players who would get picked for this team based on the fact he had won around Whistling Straits; based on the fact that he has holed the winning putt in The Ryder Cup. So I would have been thinking about Martin quite a bit over that period of time. I think maybe because I was thinking about him as a player, that he was strong in my mind.

When I was thinking about, you know, the vice captains and definitely he's a guy you want to have in the team room. You know, unfortunately -- it looks like it's going to be as a vice captain, but he's somebody, as I said, he brings a lovely level headedness to the team room. You want that sort of coolness, that calmness in there. You don't want to be bringing more stress than you need into a Ryder Cup, and Martin does that. So as a player or as a vice captain, I definitely had him in mind all the time.

For me, it been a pretty simple decision. It might have been slightly out of the blue for Martin but I think there is always a shock. I know I had a shock and I'm sure Graeme will tell you this, when you go from player to vice captain, it is a little bit of a shock because you want to always be a player. You want to always be known as a player.

But as I said, the reasoning behind it is I think Martin will do a great job in the team room and selfishly, that's what's important to me and The Ryder Cup at the moment is that we have the best possible backroom team to get the best out of our team.

**Q. Earlier in your opening statement, you mentioned you talked with Padraig about what your role could be this week at the BMW International Open as a vice captain. Can you give us some details about what that would be?**

MARTIN KAYMER: For this week? What my role will be

this week? Padraig said to me, he sent me a text, actually, last weekend after my second or third round, I don't remember which day it was, and just said, "Well done."

So that tells me that I feel like I can still make the team. You know, somehow, I don't know how, but I have hope. And my main goal is, I don't know if it's his goal for me, but it's my goal, to win the golf tournament. You know, he's obviously trying the same thing this week.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yeah.

MARTIN KAYMER: But if I can beat the captain on Sunday afternoon, it would be my pleasure. That would be lovely.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: I tell you what, we'll happily go down 18 tied for the lead on Sunday. We'll take our chances.

MARTIN KAYMER: But if I don't win, I will be your vice captain. If I win, I might be a team member.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: Yes, that's true.

MARTIN KAYMER: That is the thing that's the most important to me and I don't think it's much to do with being a vice captain. You know, just winning as many tournaments as possible until September.

PADRAIG HARRINGTON: As well as Martin plays well and wins, even if he doesn't make it into the team, it still makes him a very relevant vice captain. You know, anybody, it takes a great deal of respect from the other players to be good in this position as vice captain. Martin already has that. He doesn't need to play well. He doesn't need to prove himself anymore than he has in the past.

But there's no harm in playing good golf. I keep telling my players, I tell everybody, the best thing you can do for my Ryder Cup is just play good golf. Go out like Jon Rahm, win a major last week. Be individuals at the moment and perform to the best of your ability. Bring your own personal confidence into the tournament. That's what you can do at the moment.

Martin has to focus on his golf this week, what he's doing. The fact that he is paired with Viktor and Sergio, those help build bonds and things, but there's nothing formal about it. There's nothing about going out there -- he's not reporting back to me on how anybody played because it's not important how they played this week.

I see the scores and we'll see that when it comes to it, but

it's just about building bonds at the moment but being yourself, playing your own game. And I wouldn't -- I'd think less of Martin if he didn't try and win this tournament, if he wasn't focused on himself and doing what he needs to do this week as a player, because I know when I get in the golf course, I'm focused on playing my golf. When I come off the golf course, it's Ryder Cup stuff. But on the golf course, it's actually quite a nice -- it's quite a nice release to get out on the course.

BRIONY CARLYON: Thank you, gentlemen, that's all the time that we have today. So thank you, again, for your time.

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