

The Ryder Cup

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Kohler, Wisconsin, USA

Whistling Straits

Captain Steve Stricker

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the 43rd Ryder Cup here at Whistling Straits. We are here with United States Ryder Cup captain Steve Stricker. Captain, thank you for finding us again.

One complete day of practice in; what are you seeing out on that golf course? A little cooler temperatures, but is it just nice to get your team kind of in a groove as you start to work your way collectively as a team toward Friday and through the weekend?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very much so. We took advantage of this day of, you know, the weather forecast looks for some heavier winds the next two days, so we felt like it was an important time to get out there and play 18 holes, get these guys some holes under their belt and get them out here.

They're excited to be out here. They're enthused. They're ready to go. So it was a great day. The weather turned out great at the end, and we had a great time out there.

Q. This is just a nuts and bolts question, but can you go Monday through Thursday and let us know what the obligations are at night for the team, whether it's events they have to go to, dinners, things that are a must?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah. I mean, we have a dinner with each other every night. We were in our hotel room or our team room at the hotel, just the team. Tonight we have a dinner with just the team locally here, not too far away. Very casual.

I don't enjoy getting dressed up and getting all -- or Nicki, for that matter. She's very casual and I'm very casual, so we're trying to bring this attitude of relaxed and having a good time and being very casual, and we're hopefully rubbing off on the team that we're just here to have a good fun time.

But dinners every night, being together with each other, just building those relationships. Guys are enjoying

themselves with each other. It's been great in the team room.

Like I said, it's kind of translated out on to the golf course to tell you the truth. They had a ball today it looked like. They were goofing around and having fun with one another, and that's no different when we get back to the team room.

Q. Have you made it a priority to reduce those sort of obligations that are outside the team? Has COVID cut those out? How has that worked?

STEVE STRICKER: A little bit of both. My goal coming in there was to kind of cut some of that out, and then COVID has kind of helped us do that. We're doing the sensible things. We're doing the proper things to stay safe. Within our team zone and within that bubble.

Just trying to make sure that no one gets sick. We want to play. We don't want anything to jeopardize the health of any of our players or captains. We're cognizant of that. We're paying attention to that, and we're trying to do the right things.

Q. This is going to be a really demanding golf course when you have to post a score. I'm curious in a match play format, do you see in your players a different mindset, a different aggressiveness on how you can attack in spots here?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, I think they're developing the game plan -- last week when we were here and then obviously today they're going around -- it's situational for each player. Each guy is a little bit different. Some guys like to attack; some guys are pretty strategic and lay back, kind of whatever they feel comfortable.

For one guy, he may be comfortable with one thing and the other guy may be a little uncomfortable with the same shot. To each his own kind of thing.

So they're developing that as they're going around. I guess it's situational, too. The guys will see how they're playing, see how they're feeling. Each shot is a little bit

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different. Yeah, so it's fun to watch them. I know that. When I was going around there today, to hear that sound -- you don't hear that sound on the Champions Tour, the sound of them hitting the ball like they do, and it's pretty impressive these guys how far they hit it and how solid they hit it. They're really good.

Q. No specifics, obviously, but how set in your game plan as far as pairings were you coming into this week? And what are the chances that that might change over the next two days of practice?

STEVE STRICKER: I was pretty set in my mind. Always some questions whether it's the right thing or not. I've done a lot of homework, talked to my assistant captains a bunch, talked to the players a bunch. Everything looks really good on paper at times, but then you're like, Oh, what if something happens kind of thing. You've always got to be prepared for the what-ifs. So that's what we're doing, as well.

But yeah, we've had a pretty good game plan from a while back, and we're putting that into play. We're putting that in place.

Q. What was your first tee experience like at Valhalla, and what's the best first tee story you've heard from the guys who have experienced that?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's an unbelievable experience, and it'll be no different here. Just coming out on to the first tee today was a cool experience, and it will be 10 times more electric come Friday.

Yeah, it's just -- they're all a little bit different. Paris was unbelievable. That was like walking into a stadium. I mean, there were so many people around the first and 18 green there.

But it's just -- and it's a nerve-racking one. I remember being very nervous but really excited and amped up to get out there to play.

My suggestion to the guys and what I've been telling them is to go experience it if you're not playing that first morning, if you want, to go experience that. It's just a really cool atmosphere. Nerve-racking but one that you wait your entire life, golfing life, that is, to experience.

Q. I know that you want to get your rookies off to a good start. Have you given some thought to playing Scottie Scheffler with a guy he might know well, like a Bryson or a Jordan Spieth to get him going early since he hasn't been in this kind of atmosphere before?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, that's a great question. I guess you're going to have to tune in on Friday to watch. I'm really not going to go into pairings quite yet with anybody. Friday at the opening ceremony will be a great time to let you know.

Q. On Collin and Brooks, when it comes to kind of evaluating them coming back from those injuries, how much do you weigh what they say, how they're feeling, versus what you see and how you kind of --

STEVE STRICKER: Who is the first one you said?

Q. Morikawa and Brooks.

STEVE STRICKER: How much do I what?

Q. How much do you weigh what they're telling you how they're feeling versus what you see?

STEVE STRICKER: Oh, no, I've talked to them both and they've assured me that they're 100 percent and ready to go, and they'll do whatever it takes to play as many matches that we ask of them. No issues from either one of those guys.

Q. You mentioned about trying to keep things light, especially at night and maybe more casual, more relaxed, less pressure. Is that something that you've maybe thought of in the past, that maybe guys were a little wound too tight or maybe putting too much pressure on themselves?

STEVE STRICKER: Well, you know, we're here. Some guys got in Sunday, some guys got in Monday. We all want to play right now. It's about trying to temper that excitement and energy, and we still have three more days of getting ready.

So it's about giving them their space, too. I mean, they all prepare a little bit differently. I prepare differently than anybody else on that team, and everybody -- again, to each their own. They have a way. They're in a routine on a weekly basis. They're used to doing it one way, so I want to give them that opportunity to do it whatever which way they need to do it hopefully to bring out their best golf.

Q. When you talk to Pádraig, it's a torrent of words that you get from him. You get a lot of words from Pádraig when you ask him something. You've known him a long time; I'm wondering if you can remember anything really memorable he's ever said to you?

STEVE STRICKER: I don't know if it's a specific time, but I've had the pleasure of playing with him a number of times

over the course of my career. I had a chipping contest I remember him one year at Congressional, just a wonderful man. He's a friend. Got to know him somewhat through the course of my career. But just a true gentleman, a true champion, a guy that I think has got an unbelievable amount of talent, and he's changed his swing and does some different things to improve his game. He's not afraid to do that.

So just a really wonderful guy and neat guy to know.

Q. If I could follow up on that, the world is in a very topsy-turvy place right now. Did you think it was important for you two guys to come in here as the captains and do it with a certain level of grace and gentlemenliness?

STEVE STRICKER: I don't think we're doing it any different than who we really are. Yeah, I think you're just seeing us. We're polite to one another. We try to conduct ourselves in the proper manner and all that kind of stuff.

Yeah, we're excited to be playing here in front of fans. I mean, let's be real. If we would have had this last year with no fans, it would have been a shame. But we have this opportunity, unbelievable opportunity to play this in front of the fans of Wisconsin and around the world and around our country.

So yeah, it's going to provide a lot of relief and get people away from thinking about COVID for a while and think about watching some great golf.

Q. With all the talk about fan behavior this year, what are your concerns out there, and also what do you think the vibe is going to be specific to Wisconsin? And secondly, what defines people from Wisconsin? What do you think and how would you like to see that defined in this Ryder Cup?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and we can go on past history here with the other PGA Championships here, the U.S. Open at Erin Hills down the road, the sports fans of Wisconsin turn out in droves. They're very -- they'll be loud. They'll be pro-U.S., right, which we're hoping for.

But we're also hoping they don't cross the line, which we've seen at some other Ryder Cups throughout the years.

Yeah, I expect good rowdy fans. It's going to be rowdy. It's going to be loud, especially the first tee, and pro-USA, obviously. So we're looking forward to that. We need that. We need that backing. It is our home turf.

What defines -- what was the question? What defines

Wisconsin fans?

I think a lot of blue-collar, hardworking people, salt-of-the-earth people. Midwest people always seem to be very nice and courteous. I'm partial to that. I don't mean anything negative against any other part of the country, but it's just great Midwestern folks.

Q. Do you think this would feel differently a little bit from some other Ryder Cups?

STEVE STRICKER: Well, we were up in Hazeltine not too long ago, and that got loud and somewhat crossed the line at times, which we don't want to see. So yeah, I think it's going to -- it's a Ryder Cup. These fans have been pent up for a long time, and they're going to come out and get behind their team. It's going to be loud, and we expect it to be loud, but again, we ask for people not to cross that line and be respectful of both sides.

Q. I understand you're getting texts out there from your oldest daughter who was watching your youngest daughter win her first significant high school championship. What does it mean to you that Izzi was able to do something so special for her in a week that is so special for you as a family?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very cool. It's a golf family. We're excited. We root each other on. We're a part of each other's lives when it comes to golf. Pretty cool.

Q. You mentioned the wind the next few days. You've been monitoring that. Is this golf course a local knowledge golf course? And if so, what are you doing to feed information to players either regarding wind directions and things like that or just general little bits and pieces of local knowledge?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, I think it's just -- I can't really provide them too much of anything. I think it's just experiencing that for themselves. We were able to come here, like I said last week, and we saw different wind conditions, different directions than we saw today.

We've been -- we've seen three different days of wind direction. I think sometimes all you can do is get out there and experience it and see those different conditions for yourself and develop your game plan and be prepared in case that wind switches around, which it's supposed to. We know where it's supposed to come out of during the tournament, and it's not going to be that way the next couple of days.

These guys are probably doing a lot of homework at night with themselves, thinking about the course and that

different wind direction. They talk with their partners, potential partners on game plans. It'll be a challenge for guys that have not seen a particular wind that all of a sudden it's going to switch around.

But they'll do their homework. They're smart. They do this for a living, and they'll be ready and prepared.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks again for your time. Congratulations again on your daughter's achievement, and have a good night.

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