

# The Ryder Cup

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Kohler, Wisconsin, USA

Whistling Straits

## Matt Fitzpatrick

Press Conference



**JOHN DEVER:** Welcome back to the 43rd Ryder Cup at Whistling Straits. We are here with Matt Fitzpatrick.

Welcome to your second Ryder Cup, second on the road. Curious about your comfort level. Is there a greater, more elaborate sense of comfort this year as opposed to when you were a rookie in 2016? They are both on the road, so that's a twist, too.

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** Yeah, definitely. I think a few things, my game, I didn't feel like was as good as it is now, then. I feel like it's much better nowadays and my game has definitely changed a lot, hitting it further and various other things.

I also think just knowing the guys in the European Team better. I had only had my card in 2015 and 2016, so I only got to spend a little bit of time with the guys on the team and other players during regular weeks on Tour.

This is my eighth year I think on Tour, so I know everyone really well now. I think that makes a big difference, being able to feel comfortable, just talking about anything with them, really.

**Q. Not looking for a specific name but curious, do you have a sense right now of who you're going to play with, whatever you're going to play? And if the answer is yes, when did you know that by?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** Yeah, you know, we get a feel of who we're going to play with by who we're playing with within the groups and stuff I guess.

But the communication has been great all week. I've had plenty of conversations with the vices and Paddy. I think the early doors that he told us all that he wanted to make sure that we knew where we stood going into the week, and I think that's been really valuable for everyone, really.

**Q. You do know, whatever your first match is going to be, you know that and who your partner will be?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** Yeah.

**Q. You can tell us if you like.**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** I'm not going to be the one to throw Paddy under the bus.

**Q. From inside the ropes, how different is this test from the one you faced five years ago at Hazeltine?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** Massively. I tried to forget Hazeltine pretty quickly, that's how much I remember it. It is very, very different. There wasn't much penalty for very wide shots in 2016 whereas here there is a penalty. You've got the lake down most holes and you've got random bushes in bunkers and bunkers that you didn't even know existed.

It's definitely a different test, and obviously you've got the added wind, as well. The golf course is much better than I thought it was going to be, for myself. So yeah, I was really pleased to see that it wasn't similar to 2016.

**Q. Going off that, Stricker and his explanation for his captain's picks talked a lot about driving distance, how the stats said that that was really important on this golf course. Are you getting the sense that it's a bomber's course?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** I think there's a handful of holes where it would be nice to carry it 340 through the air. I wouldn't say it's massive. It's not sort of glaringly obvious, in my opinion. I think it's a second-shot golf course personally. I think you've got to get it in position off the tee and then that gives you a chance on the green to use the slopes to move it closer to the pin or to give yourself chances.

I think you obviously do have to put it in position off the tee but I definitely think it's a second-shot golf course.

**Q. Could you describe what Poults means to this European side?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** Yeah, everyone knows what Ian



Poulter is about. He wasn't on the team that I played in in 2016. He was a vice captain. I've already noticed that there's kind of a different feeling having him play on the team. I think he kind of just almost -- I don't know how to -- I don't know what the word is, he just kind of gives you confidence. You sort of see how he interacts with the crowd. You see how he goes about his days. He's very switched on. He knows what to do. He's done plenty of these now.

I think for me, being around him has helped me feel a bit more confident going into the week as well, so that's always a positive.

**Q. Can you place yourself on the other side and imagine being an opponent when he gets on those rolls where he's going nuts and the bug eyes and the whole thing, and what kind of an effect that has if you're an opponent of his when he's on that roll.**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** Yeah, when he's holing putts from everywhere, you just want to throw him in the lake, I'm sure.

Yeah, you just don't want to face that. When he's on, he's a man on a mission. He's pretty much unstoppable when he's doing that to you.

You know, from my side, long may it continue this week.

**Q. Sorry to take you back to 2016. Was the plan for you to play more if Europe had not lost the first session so heavily?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** I honestly couldn't tell you. Couldn't tell you. No idea.

**Q. To piggyback off that, one of the hardest things a captain has to do is tell one of the world's best players he is not going to be teeing it up in a session. How was that news broke to you in 2016 and how did you take it?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** I was a rookie and I didn't expect to be playing five matches. Obviously of course I want to play five matches regardless of how I'm playing. I wanted to be part of it and experience it. At the time, disappointed, frustrated. But I look back and the way I was hitting it at the time compared to, I look at myself now, it was very different.

I've just accepted that. It was my first-ever one. It was in America. It was around a golf course that did not suit me one bit. Kind of just adds up.

**Q. You mentioned hitting it farther making you a better player. How does that help you tackle a golf course like this versus a shorter-hitting version of yourself would have?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** Short version, I can hit driver everywhere. So that's good. Now I'm hitting a few 3-woods, so that's progress.

Yeah, there's just obviously a few holes that maybe they might move tees up. They are drivable. All of the sudden it's, I wouldn't say comfortable, but I can drive it up by the green and that makes a difference rather than I don't have to really get after it. I can hit a normal one and it's going to be up there and make it easier for myself or my partner or whatever.

Obviously in the past, holes like that, it's like I'm hitting a great drive and it's 30, 40 yards short rather than up by the green. There's a bit of that. And also just being confident in how straight I can hit it. Sort of as added speed, anyway, the more confident I can become, I can get after it more and hit more fairways and hitting it longer.

**Q. Just to reference, how much ball speed do you think you've gained?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** I couldn't tell you. I honestly couldn't tell you. We didn't really sort of measure from the start. Last week in Florida, I was pretty close to Bryson at 175 (laughter). I was about that last week in Florida, but that wasn't for that many. Yeah, it's not quite reaching those levels yet.

**Q. As much as you say you want to forget your week at Hazeltine --**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** You keep bringing it up.

**Q. Curious if there was one experience or one lesson from there that you could apply to this week.**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** I mean, it's not something that I can apply, but it's something that I definitely learnt. I would have liked to have played a four-ball match before my singles just to play my own ball, to see what it is like in competition.

Obviously then I played one foursomes on the Saturday morning. It's like the equivalent of playing nine holes, really, and there's no flow or rhythm to it, so you never really get what it's like. That was the big thing I took away was that I made sure that if I ever played again and I speak to the captain, I say, listen, I'm not saying you have to play me in the four-ball, I'm just saying from experience, I feel

like it would benefit me to play a four-ball to have that experience of what it's going to be like Sunday with the crowds and the pressure and get that experience.

**Q. Talking about playing five matches, it looks like this golf course has a big physical test, physical requirement. Do you think for some players or even for some caddies it might be too much to have them to play five rounds in three days?**

**MATT FITZPATRICK:** I mean, yeah, it's a good point. I think if it's blowing a gale all week, that's obviously an added extra, too. I know some of the climbs up to the tees and down to the greens and stuff, it's a lot particularly for the caddies.

But yeah, I think in terms of players nowadays, most guys are great athletes. I'd like to think you can do 36 a day for two days and then play 18 on Friday. I know there's obviously so many added stresses with the crowd and emotions and everything else that comes with it. But you know, I'd like to think that everyone really can kind of get through that pretty kind of easily.

**JOHN DEVER:** Matt, thanks for your time today. Enjoy your week at Whistling Straits.

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