

The Ryder Cup

Thursday, September 23, 2021

Kohler, Wisconsin, USA

Whistling Straits

Padraig Harrington

Opening Ceremony Quotes

PÁDRAIG HARRINGTON: Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of everyone involved at Ryder Cup Europe, I want to thank you for such a warm and genuine Wisconsin welcome. It's something we have enjoyed every time we've travelled here and it is very much appreciated.

There is no question, The Ryder Cup is a special occasion but all things considered, has there ever been the prospect of a Ryder Cup quite as special as this one. After all the world has been through these past two years, it is such a joy and a relief to be standing here in front of you today and in front of so many of you. I admit there were times where I figured this might not happen. We all lived through this postponement 12 months ago, but even after the match was rescheduled there was talk about whether there would be any fans at all.

As we can see, this is definitely not the case. Steve and I are here, our teams are here, our caddies are here, but more importantly, you are here. You, the fans, make this Ryder Cup what it is, so together, let's make this the best Ryder Cup there ever has been. We wouldn't be here, of course, without the effort of so many people, too numerous to thank individually but all who have played a significant part. I do, however, want to take a moment to pay tribute to just a few.

To the Kohler family, particularly to Herb, Natalie, David and Nina, thank you for inviting us into your home. It goes without saying that none of us would be standing here in this wonderful venue if it wasn't for your pioneering spirit and endeavor. On behalf of everyone at Ryder Cup Europe, thank you for your hospitality.

To Dirk Willis, Chris Zugel, Michael O'Reilly -- he will surely be on our side with a name like that, and the entire golf operations team here at Whistling Straits, thank you for producing a course in such wonderful condition. It has literally set the stage for what I know will be a spectacular match.

To Seth Waugh and all the officials at The PGA of



America, thank you for the work you've put in over these past three years since Paris. Everyone at Ryder Cup Europe special Yates the partnership we have with you in this great event.

Last but not least, I want to pay tribute to the tens of thousands of key workers in so many areas who have gone above and beyond every single day to tackle this pandemic and allow the world to return to some sort of normality.

I'm sure there are many key workers in the crowd here today and I know many more will be watching on television here in the United States and back in Europe across the world. To each and every single one of you, thank you. You are the true heroes of these past two years, and therefore, in your honor, I would like to ask everyone to stand and applaud you for your extraordinary efforts.

I said at the beginning that the Ryder Cup is a very special occasion but what makes it so special? There are so many reasons for the players, but to stand out, one comes from being part of a team. You're no longer playing for yourself as you do week-in, week-out. Instead, you're playing for your teammates, for your country and for us in particular, playing for Europe.

I've been fortunate enough to compete in this great contest on numerous occasions and the pride I felt each time is hard to describe. Each and every time the European Team has had a wonderful array of people helping behind the scenes, and it is the same this year. I would like to take a moment now to recognize them. Speaking personally, to my wife, Caroline and our boys, Paddy and Ciarán, it goes without saying that I could not do this without your support.

To our caddies who play such a vital role, you carry so much more than our golf clubs, and we are definitely stronger with you by our sides. On behalf of all the players, we are truly thankful.

To our backroom staff, much of the work you do for the cause is unheralded but all of it is absolutely vital. Thank you for your unwavering support.



Finally, talking of support I now want to take a moment to recognize my five vice captains who have helped me immensely in the buildup, and I would ask now to stand and accept your applause.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor now to introduce to you, the 2020 European Ryder Cup Team.

As I said, the reception we have received from everyone has been fantastic. We have seen firsthand that the people of Wisconsin are warm, friendly and welcoming. You also love your sport, and we saw that yesterday with the reception you gave our practice day uniform. I hope you appreciate our recognition of the Green Bay Packers, and who knows, maybe we can all become honorary cheese heads this week.

In all seriousness, we know the majority of fans here this week will be pulling for Steve's side. That's the way it should be and we wouldn't want it any other way. We expect fans from both sides to be loud and vocal, creating the type of atmosphere that makes The Ryder Cup unlike any other golfing event on the planet, even though the Solheim Cup might have something to say about that, and speaking of Solheim Cup, I would like to recognize Catriona Matthew, who is in the audience today, captain of the winning Solheim Cup team.

Just as it was for Catriona's team, we know the number of European fans able to be here this week has been reduced by the pandemic. To those who have made it, we greatly appreciate your efforts. To the many watching and cheering us on at home, we feel for you not being here, but we know you are behind us, and we greatly value your support.

To Steve and Nikki, Caroline and I have enjoyed sharing this captaincy with you, and we wish you and Team USA all the very best this week.

Steve, perhaps no one better sums up everything that is good about the state of Wisconsin than you. I have known you for many years and you're definitely one of the true gentlemen of the game and at the same time a gritty opponent on the course. Of course, it takes one to know one.

I spoke earlier about the pride I felt when I played for Europe in The Ryder Cup. I can honestly say that is nothing compared to the pride I'm feeling right now standing here as captain of this wonderful group of players.

They might come from many different countries, but they stand together on this stage proudly and strongly as one. I know they will play with commitment, with courage and with skill. I know they will do their families, their friends and the entire continent of Europe proud, and I know for a fact that they will make it count.

