

The Ryder Cup

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Kohler, Wisconsin, USA

Whistling Straits

Steve Stricker

Press Conference



JOHN DEVER: Welcome back to the 43rd Ryder Cup here at Whistling Straits where we are joined by U.S. Ryder Cup Captain Steve Stricker.

Captain, we have pairings and we have matchups, too. Let's speak just in generalities for your four pairings. How do you feel about it? You must feel pretty good, and we're on the cusp of getting this thing going.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, to your last part there, how excited we are and everybody is to get this thing going finally. It's been three years and you come in here on Sunday evening, and you know, the practice rounds are great but yet you have Friday in the back of your mind and you are just looking forward to getting out there and getting it going.

Yeah, I feel great about our pairings. You know, some teams that have played together over the years, whether in Ryder Cups or some Presidents Cups, so we wouldn't put them out there if we didn't feel good about them, let me just put it that way. So we are extremely excited about how these guys are playing, and the order of which they are going out.

Q. A few of us did some predictions for fun and almost everybody got the four pairs that the U.S. was putting out. They have been playing together and they have played together in the past, and Europe seems unpredictable and very surprising. You probably were not giving a lot of thought to them beforehand but looking at it now, what do you think about their pairings and did you anticipate any of this?

STEVE STRICKER: You know, I didn't, and I didn't even try to anticipate. You know, they are all great players. We were trying to take care of ourselves. You know, I'm paying attention to my team.

We talked occasionally about maybe who they are going to put out, but it doesn't matter, really. They are all such great players. They are all highly ranked players and we know that we are going to have to play our best to beat

them.

So we have an idea that Rory and Rahm would probably go 1 and 4, and that's pretty much all we knew, or really thought about. We didn't know who their guys were going to be that they were going to be paired with, but we kind of had that figured out for the most part.

So we tried to act accordingly, as well. But yeah, other than that, we didn't take the time to try to figure it out.

Q. You put Daniel and Brooks together when you were captain at Liberty, right?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah.

Q. What did you see in them and what do they bring out in each other?

STEVE STRICKER: They play golf at home together and they enjoy being with one another. Daniel is a wonderful foursomes player. He controls his ball really nicely. Good short game. Great putter. He's a natural fit for the foursomes.

They like playing together, bottom line, and they do well together. They are excited to go out tomorrow and try to get a point.

Q. When you were naming your six captain's picks, you mentioned how length was important, and yet the longest guy on your team is sitting in the morning. Can you explain why?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, we are trying to make sure that everybody gets a little bit of rest, too. That's in the back of our mind, and yeah, we can't play everybody every session, right. Four people have to sit, but he's going to get his turn at some point.

The real good thing is that all these guys have bought in. They know the plan for the most part. We have communicated that to them and we are up front with them, and they understand it and are willing to do anything for the betterment of the team.



Q. In your particular case, will all of your guys play today and tomorrow?

STEVE STRICKER: You'll have to wait and see, Alex.

Q. One last thing. Did anything happen this week --

STEVE STRICKER: Is that a Cubs hat on?

Q. Yes, it is.

STEVE STRICKER: I didn't know if it was a Chicago Bears hat.

Q. You almost got fileted.

STEVE STRICKER: That didn't turn out so good. I tried to explain myself as we kept going there. I still root for the Packers. Let me get that straight.

Q. Did anything happen this week influence what you have on paper today?

STEVE STRICKER: Anything that happened this week influence what these matchups are?

Q. Yeah.

STEVE STRICKER: No.

Q. I assume you have a plan for the afternoon. Is there anything that could change it, or aside from an illness or injury, but the way somebody plays or anything, do you have set pairings for the afternoon? I know you won't tell us, but will you stick with it?

STEVE STRICKER: No, we are going to stick with the afternoon plan. Its was put in front of them on Monday and we stuck with it and we are going to stick with it.

Q. Was there any disappointment from anybody about not playing early or because you set it so early they got on board?

STEVE STRICKER: Not at all. Again, these guys have been incredible. I can't stress it enough, really. Again, it's about the communication we have had, the captains and myself, and being up front with them and just letting them know what we're thinking so there's no curveballs.

We have heard it multiple times from all the players, if you want to play me once or all five, that's up to you, meaning the captains, just so we can try to win this Cup.

Q. I see Phil out there during the practice rounds, he's talking and talking and talking to you, can you give us some sense of what he's actually talking about?

STEVE STRICKER: To me? Oh, we've talked a lot about a lot of different things. We've talked about players, picks, or pairings, I should say. We've talked about golf swings. I enjoy talking with Phil, and we're lucky to have him to be a part of this team.

You know, it was unknown for a while whether he was going to be a part of this team as a player or (vice) captain, and I had reached out to him quite a long time ago about being a part of this team, actually last year, and then we keep touching base and then he wins the PGA Championship. So we talk again. It's been an ongoing process with Phil but I knew I wanted him here. He's great for the team and he's great in the room.

Yeah, so he talks all the time. He talks, you know, about -- and we have talked about a lot of different things. So it's wonderful to have him around.

Q. Is Bryson sort of his -- does he mind Bryson in a way?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, they get along great. Phil finds Bryson very interesting and he's trying to learn things from Bryson I think, too. I think Bryson feels like he's trying to help Phil in some ways, too. So they have this rapport with one another, and they enjoy being with one another.

Yeah, so I see those two guys being in each other's pocket for the rest of the week.

Q. At the outset you mentioned it's a three-year run-up to plan for the week. Now that you're ready to hit balls on Friday, has that worked the way you had hoped, when you see the guys get together and the way they are loose, the things they have said, up to now, do you feel like the goal has been accomplished in your mind?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, very much so. Obviously the most important part is coming up, right. The playing, them trying to win a point, just trying to put them in a position to play great golf. So far, I think we've done that.

The guys are playing great. Like I said, they are all on board.

Q. How important was continuity when making those pairings, in either improving pairings from previous Ryder Cups or Presidents Cups, or partnerships with similar or same golf balls they use?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, all that is taken into effect. Xander and Patrick have had success in foursomes in The Presidents Cup, so we thought it was a natural fit for them to do foursomes here tomorrow morning.

Yeah, we look at the golf balls. Sometimes it's just very difficult. We had some guys trying other guys' balls and it's a challenge at times. That determines sometimes the pairings and what you can do going forward.

So it is, it's a big puzzle trying to get all the pieces put together and you rely on feedback from the players. You rely on feedback from the captains, and.

Yeah, it's a challenge but one that we're excited to be a part of.

Q. How do you think now -- look, we had some rain earlier obviously, but how do you think the course will play? Are the greens as firm as you would like them?

STEVE STRICKER: I don't know, the rules are that we get it into the condition all the way up to the Sunday before, and then that condition is kind of maintained throughout. So that's the goal is that that condition will be kind of maintained, and it has been.

You know, we can't -- we don't have any say on what Mother Nature does and provides as far as rain goes or wind, and today they were getting a little bit, not really that firm, but just faster with all that wind and borderline almost too fast for that kind of wind.

But the good news is, the wind looks like it's going to lay down a little bit. Still breezy but not as much as the last couple days, but the course is in great shape. The guys think it's a good setup, and everyone I've heard from both sides have enjoyed it so far.

Q. You've been here before in Presidents Cups, and you're at the point where you've had total control and now you have to relinquish it and basically sit back and watch. What does that feel like and how does it change your own nerves?

STEVE STRICKER: I'm going to enjoy it. To this point, it's been a lot of work, and there's still more work to be done for sure. We still have to watch some golf. We still have to gain some more information, the way I've been talking to the assistant captains. You know, you want to look forward to Saturday and you want to try to get a plan, and we do have somewhat of a plan, but it's more about watching these guys play now, getting some feedback from them and the caddies and the assistants and then making the plan for Saturday.

But yeah, it's in their hands now. They are playing great and they are excited to get going. I mean, I can't tell you how excited they are to get going and get that first tee ball in the air tomorrow.

Q. It was the captain's call, right, to start with either format, and I'm curious why you chose foursomes? Was it the fast start at Hazeltine?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, stats have shown over the years that that's a better format for us. Yeah, so we wanted to kind of stay with that plan and that's what we're doing.

JOHN DEVER: Four rookies going out for you tomorrow, Ryder Cup rookies, what's that night's sleep going out into Friday morning? You were in those shoes in 2008.

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, it's a week where you don't get a lot of sleep. You try to make sure you do that. I've tried to give that to the guys and I'll do that same thing tonight. We'll have a quick dinner and tell them to get to bed. It's a big day tomorrow, but it is, it occupies your mind and it's tough to get some sleep.

It's an exciting time. We're all excited. I'm sure you guys are all excited as well. We are definitely looking forward to it.

Q. Pat Hurst at the Solheim Cup said she wouldn't play anybody five; she thought it was too much. Do you feel the same way?

STEVE STRICKER: We kind of do at times, and that could morph into something different when we start watching these guys, and if you need to lean on some players more than others.

Yeah, we are trying, that's our focus is to make sure that guys get rest. It's a big golf course and when you have conditions like we've had the last couple days, it can kind of really beat you up.

Yeah, we are conscious of that, and trying to look at that going forward, as well. It's definitely on our plate to try to make sure that guys are getting their rest.

JOHN DEVER: Captain, you've made it to Ryder Cup Friday almost. Enjoy your evening.

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