

The Ryder Cup

Friday, September 24, 2021

Kohler, Wisconsin, USA

Whistling Straits

Steve Stricker

Press Conference



Friday Afternoon Fourballs

JOHN DEVER: Good evening from the 43rd Ryder Cup here at Whistling Straits. We are joined by United States Captain Steve Stricker.

Steve, have to think you're pleased with the day. Maybe you could give us a little bit of a progression. What time did you get here this morning, who were you with and when did you believe and begin to understand that things were going to flow America's way today?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I got here probably about 5:30 this morning. It was an early wake-up call. Yeah, an exciting day, right, the start of all this after such a long wait.

Yeah, you're always thinking it can change momentum and change direction rather quickly. You're just taking literally one match at a time and hoping and wishing that these guys continue to play well.

Fortunately our guys had a good day today and we're looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. You have to go back to 1975 for a U.S. Team to have such a big first-day lead. Would you call it a dream start, and how do you get your team to keep that pedal down?

STEVE STRICKER: It's a great start. We are very happy with the start. But my message to the guys before I left is tomorrow is a new day. You know, let's just go out tomorrow and try to win that first session again in the morning and pretend today never happened, and let's keep our foot down and continue to play the golf that we know we can play.

Yeah, and that's what we're trying to do and not try to get complacent with anything. You know, we've had some things that came up and bit us in the rear in other Ryder Cups, so these guys know that, and they are focused on tomorrow and coming out strong again tomorrow.

Q. Was putting the same morning group out always part of the plan?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, pretty much it was. We had one other group that we were thinking about putting out, but it went so well this morning that I figured why mess things up and change things up at all.

We changed the order a little bit is all, but we kept the same pairings.

Q. I know you'd like a full point, but how important were those last two matches; that you at least came away with a halve and didn't give anything back that you had already earned in the afternoon sessions?

STEVE STRICKER: Very much. So I think that's a good momentum boost for our side, as well. We finished strong. J.T. hit some great shots coming in. Bryson and Scheffler halved the match when it looked like they could have won it, but Tyrrell Hatton hit a great shot in there.

But to win both sessions 3-1 was a great day for us.

JOHN DEVER: Quickly I would like to announce that the postings are now on the media hub. For the U.S. Team tomorrow, match one will be Brooks Koepka with Daniel Berger; match two will be Dustin Johnson paired with Collin Morikawa; match three will be Justin Thomas, and he will again be paired with Jordan Spieth; and for match four, Xander Schauffele and Patrick Cantlay.

So again, as Steve said, this is the same pairings that he had this morning. There is a little bit of a different order.

Q. We've been hearing about your delivery of Tiger's text message. Can you give us a little bit of insight into what his over-reaching message to the team was?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and I wasn't able to read it to the team last night just because -- I sent it out to the team, and that's between us, really. But the overall picture was just wishing the guys good luck and congratulations for making the team, and a few personal things from Tiger himself.



But yeah, I mean, he's a friend of a lot of these guys and these guys look up to him, and I lean on him a lot throughout this whole process. So it was great to hear from him and provide some words of encouragement to these guys.

Q. How do you make sure that your team isn't complacent at this moment?

STEVE STRICKER: We had a small conversation right when we finished, and I think I made it pretty clear on what we should be thinking about going into tomorrow.

I think just past history, these guys realize what's happened in the past and not to take anything for granted, and this was just the first day. You know, eight points, there's still a lot of points to go, and they realize that.

So it's just putting your head down again and going to work and trying to get your point and trying to play the best you can straightaway tomorrow morning.

Q. What went into the thinking of breaking up Jordan and J.T.?

STEVE STRICKER: We were trying to just give everybody a little bit of rest along the way. That was part of it. It just worked out that way in our minds that rest the first day, and I know he's playing tomorrow morning for sure. We don't know about tomorrow afternoon's times yet. But just making sure guys get their rest. It's a big course. Tough conditions this afternoon. Guys from both sides looked whipped after playing 36 holes.

A big key is to make sure these guys are rested and ready for Sunday, as well. You have 12 points on Sunday. Sunday is a big day.

Q. I know you had a set plan, but how difficult was it, seeing how well Xander and Patrick played well together, to not second-guess yourself?

STEVE STRICKER: I didn't second-guess myself at all. We were committed to this plan. We were all-in on this plan. The guys were all-in and committed to this plan. It really wasn't a difficult decision at all to just stick with what we had.

Q. I understand some of the players that sat in the afternoon and were not out supporting the team and went back to the hotel for at least some portion of the day. Is that something that you signed off on, and is there anything we can read into that?

STEVE STRICKER: Who are you talking about?

Q. Some of the players, I think Collin Morikawa --

STEVE STRICKER: He was out there. Yeah, he was out there. Who is the other guy you were talking about?

Q. Daniel Berger.

STEVE STRICKER: No, he was sitting right next to me on 18 green.

Q. Is that just about getting rest?

STEVE STRICKER: No one went back to the hotel as far as I know. Somebody may have gone back early, but my whole deal this whole week has been about getting rest, making sure they are ready to go. I gave a small little talk when we were finished just to make sure that they heard my side of the story and what we need to be thinking about going into tomorrow.

And then I said, you know, get back, go get something to eat and go to bed and get ready for tomorrow. I mean, like I said, it's just a long day today. Yeah, I want to make sure they are rested and getting as much sleep and being prepared as much as possible.

Q. Just a quick one. How were your own nerves today, this thing you prepared for for three years, while you were sitting and watching in the morning and afternoon?

STEVE STRICKER: It was good. It was actually a lot of fun. I had a good time. We had today planned out so I could actually relax and enjoy the day and take a little bit of golf in. I didn't see a lot of golf just because I went to a lot of the par 3s and tried to help guys if they needed help.

But it was a relaxing day, really. It was fun. Nerve-racking to start with to make sure that we get off to the start that we want to get off to.

But I felt like our guys are in a good peace of mind and good frame of mind and excited to be out there with each other and excited to get out there and play. I felt comfortable and at ease with them all out there today.

Q. If you have a similar result in the morning matches, would rest be more important for you in the fourball versus trying to be as competitive as you were today?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, and that's what we are contemplating right now. We are not set on tomorrow afternoon. We have got some really good scenarios going.

But we are not fully committed to anything tomorrow afternoon. We are going to think about some things, talk some more when we get back to the hotel. Just to keep bouncing ideas off of one another.

And we know rest is important, let me put it that way. But also riding guys that are playing well to me has always been something that's important as well.

We'll try to find that right balance, and we'll go from there.

Q. When the wind whipped up this afternoon, you must have been delighted with the performance considering it would be, I suppose, technically suiting the Europeans a bit. The two points that you won were exceptional, and even the two halve-points that the Europeans picked up, they had to really work hard for it. Is it a case, as well, then for tomorrow, if it's not broken, don't fix it for your pairings in the foursomes?

STEVE STRICKER: Yeah, I mean, from the very start of this, we identified some groups that would be very good in foursomes. And we feel really comfortable with them. They enjoy playing foursomes. They played great today. So we won that session 3-1. So in our mind, it's like, you know what, let's just send those four groups right back out there again.

Tomorrow is another day, and they are going to have to play well to get those points again. But we feel comfortable and confident in those four groups.

JOHN DEVER: All right, Captain, thank you. Rest up, and see you tomorrow.

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