

The Ryder Cup

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Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Henrik Stenson

Guy Kinnings

Media Conference



MARCO SIMONE
ROME, ITALY

STEVE TODD: Thank you everyone for joining us. Welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining us today for our special announcement. Delighted to be joined by Henrik Stenson who we announced as our European Ryder Cup Captain just over an hour ago, and with me here is Guy Kinnings, the European Ryder Cup Director.

Henrik, we'll come to you shortly for some thoughts. But to start us off, Guy, I know you wanted to say a few words to welcome Henrik into the role.

GUY KINNINGS: Thanks, Steve. It was a real honour and a pleasure to inform Henrik that he had been selected to be the European Ryder Cup Captain for 2023 at Marco Simone in Rome.

Henrik, as we all know, has a very impressive C.V. He's a major winner. He's a two-time European No. 1. He's a FedEx cup champion and he played with some distinction in five Ryder Cups holding the winning putt in 2006.

He was also vice captain at Whistling Straits, and I think that's part of the process that we have of evolving from players to move from players into vice captaincy and then into the captaincy role and we know he will have the respect of all of the players and all of us at Ryder Cup Europe.

As we know, Mr. Stenson also has a finally tuned, dry sense of humour, and we will be looking forward to the unique style he's going to bring to the role as he puts his own stamp on it. But we should also remember he's a ferocious competitor as he showed in those Ryder Cup performances and also down the stretch at Troon. And I think those qualities will be critical in his role leading the team as we look to reclaim The Ryder Cup in Rome next year.

I think there have been nine Swedish players in The Ryder Cup in history. They have all performed incredibly well. I think Henrik is rightly proud to be the first Swede to lead

the team, second Scandinavian as he was the first male Swede to win a major, and there are just -- just, I say, 564 days until The Ryder Cup in Rome next year.

I know Henrik and all of our team will be trying to make sure we use every single one of those days to be as well prepared as we could possibly be with the goal to win back The Ryder Cup against Zach Johnson's U.S. Team.

So we wish Henrik all the very best, and really look forward to working with him.

STEVE TODD: Henrik, on behalf of everyone on the call, congratulations. I'm sure you are very proud as Guy just mentioned but if you would like to give us your thoughts on accepting this prestigious position.

HENRIK STENSON: Very humbled and proud to be given the captaincy. Of course, really feels like it was one of those things that takes a while for it to sink in and has kind of done that at this point. Yeah, I'm super, super excited for the journey ahead.

And also, going back to the history of Swedish players, I feel like this is also for them, Sweden's played a big part in The Ryder Cup history, so to be able to accept this captaincy, it also goes back to the players that have been before me.

STEVE TODD: You'll be captain at Marco Simone in Italy. You played The Italian Open there last September. Give us your thoughts on leading Europe in another iconic European city.

HENRIK STENSON: I think it's got the potential, clearly, to be the best Ryder Cup ever. The City of Rome has so much to offer. I think we can make it really, really special. The European fans will travel in from near and far as we know; add to that the very passionate Italian fans, and I think we've got really the right mix.

Very excited to start thinking ahead to that. It's 564 days until that but it's still in the back of our mind how great it's going to be. So yeah, we are starting the journey today and it will finish in 18 months.

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Q. Since the Marco Simone course is a pretty new course, should be important for your players to play sometimes before The Ryder Cup, I guess. Many of the potential players on your team are based in the US. Are you going to ask them to play The Italian Open this year or next year in order to get used to the new course?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, there will be opportunities. Obviously a very good one is the Italian Open, which will be held twice at Marco Simone before The Ryder Cup Matches.

I would of course encourage the players to play to familiar with the golf course, but we have players that are spread out geographically. They have their own schedule they make up. I can encourage but they are old enough to figure out the best way to prepare for an event like this. We've got the chance to assemble the team or to come to play the golf course at other times, as well. There will be a mixed variety of opportunities.

And also, looking back historically, there are other venues that we held The Ryder Cup in Europe where some players might not have played that many times but if you're a world-class player, you'll figure out the strategy and how to play that golf course in an efficient way with the time you have at hand, also, at The Ryder Cup.

There's not a black-and-white answer there, and it's going to be a variety of options, really.

Q. The American Team looked pretty special at Whistling Straits. Does that excite you taking them on in Rome rather than being scared of that prospect?

HENRIK STENSON: Yes, it broke up a little bit there, but yeah, we're up for a challenge. I know my players are going to be up for a challenge. We saw a very strong American Team at Whistling Straits. But we also saw that coming into Paris.

Yeah, we got beaten last time around but we also managed to beat the strong opponent in the past. So we're going to spend these 564 days to prepare the best we can, and we are going to be ready for that challenge in Rome in September next year.

Q. So does this welcome appointment mean that there's no breakaway circuits on your agenda anymore?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, there's been a lot of speculations back and forth, and as I said, I am fully

committed to the captaincy and to Ryder Cup Europe and the job at hand. So we're going to keep busy with that and I'm going to do everything in my power to deliver a winning team in Rome.

Q. Hi, and huge congrats for your achievement.

HENRIK STENSON: Thank you. Ciao.

Q. You've been playing five times, and so you've been captain from five different people. What do you think you can bring from each of them in your personal experience in Rome?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, first of all, it's my captaincy, of course, and I'll be able to put my twist on it, if you like.

But of course the experience of playing under five captains and also working closely with Pádraig Harrington at Whistling Straits, I will take bits and pieces from all of them.

They have all had different personalities and had different ideas, and that's the great thing with that experience; that I can bring out little bits and pieces from all of them and use that in combination with what I want to do and how I want to shape my captaincy.

So I'm sure it's going to be a collaboration of a lot of experience and a lot of things.

Q. What do you consider to be your greatest strength or greatest trait as a captain?

HENRIK STENSON: I want to be a players' captain. I want to be closely with the players, and as you know, for decades, we've had a great bond within The European Team room and within the players, and I want to continue to build on that and make sure we keep that and given that I'm very much an active player, I will have the opportunity to meet up with both the experienced players and also the young and upcoming players on the European side when we are over there playing.

So really, been working closely with the players and they are the important thing and for us to work as a team to be able to come back and reclaim the Cup in Rome.

Q. What should they be expecting from you?

HENRIK STENSON: In terms of my own golf?

Q. In terms of your own -- no, as Karl (Stenson). No, let's not bring Karl into this. In terms of your own leadership style, personality, what should they expect?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, I think they are going to get Henrik. I don't see myself changing that much.

Like I said, they are the important thing. I want to make sure they are comfortable. We are going to use the experience that we have in the team with everyone that works with Ryder Cup on the European side, and we'll just bring that experience and that bond together.

I will be there. I'm there for the players. They can call me at my time and I will make sure to be in good contact with them as well throughout this journey.

So yeah, I don't know if that's a clear answer on that but I'm just going to try and be me.

Q. First of all, could you take us back to when you found out that you are getting the gig, who it was that called you, and when that conversation took place? And secondly, Zach has already shown a large part of his hand by giving away, I think at least one of his vice captains. We know he's going to have six picks. Have you had the opportunity to think about such things yet?

HENRIK STENSON: Thank you, well, it was like mentioned earlier, Guy had me on a call and wanted to see me on Friday of THE PLAYERS Championship. So we met up and I kind of knew what it was going to be about but before you get the exciting news, you don't know for certain.

So we had a great meet, and very happy to accept the captaincy and everything that comes with it. It's a huge honour as you know, and just looking back at, you know, being a junior back in Sweden, back in the day, watching Seve and Olazabal play in The Ryder Cup; and then having that dream of one day playing in The Ryder Cup and I managed to achieve that dream and do it multiple times, and then getting the question of leading Team Europe, it's beyond the dreams, really.

Very proud and humble to be given the opportunity and I will do my utmost to deliver the result we want in Rome.

Second part -- second part, you need to ask again. Obviously too much talking on my end.

Q. That's quite all right. We appreciate it. It was the point of vice captains and the number of picks that you might have. Zach has already shown his hand. Have you considered that at this point?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it's two different timelines, I'd say. The American side, if I got it right, they started the

qualification process already yesterday or at Sawgrass. Ours will start later. So we've got time to decide these things exactly how the qualification is going to look and how many wild cards we'll have and so on.

And so it's two different timelines. We've got time. He needs to be quicker out of the block due to their timeline and same goes for the vice captains. I will have time to assemble my team, and I can assure you, I will let you know in due course.

Q. Just wondering, recalling The K Club in 2006, any chance of us seeing that green wig again?

HENRIK STENSON: Maybe, we need to do a tri-colour one with a bit of red and a bit of white (Irish). How does that sound?

Q. Yeah, that sounds pretty good. On the makeup of your possible team, do you think you're going to have a very new, young team, looking at the ages of some of the players who played last time, and obviously some of the talent coming through in Europe; do you know Seamus Power, the Irishman who is now top 50 in the world? Have you gotten to know him?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it's going to be an interesting 18 months. We have time obviously, and time will tell exactly how the team will formalise. But we have got the old guard. We have got the experience, the players who played a lot of Ryder Cups.

We have the new talent on the DP World Tour that are up-and-coming and have shown some great signs and want to continue to do that. And I'm sure they are hungry as ever to get one of the spots on this team to get there in Rome and then we have some Europeans playing mainly on the PGA Tour.

Some of them, I don't know that much, and I will have the opportunity to get to know them and play with them and see where they kind of fit in in all of this as well.

Exciting times, and the door is open for anyone with a European passport.

Q. There seems to be a perception there will be a changing of the guard from the traditional guys, the Caseys, Westwoods, the Poulters, to the new blood coming through. Do you see it that way?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, looking solely at the age, our average age at Whistling Straits, I think it was near enough 35 years on average and the American side had about 26-year average. So we certainly had an older team and

at some point, there will be a shift, and I can definitely see that happening this time around.

I can also see a few hungry veterans want to keep their jerseys. I know from my own experience; that when you play in a Ryder Cup, you don't want to hand that jersey to someone else. You are going to fight dearly to keep it another time. And that's exciting for me as a captain to follow all these players and how they are going to want to qualify and how hard they will work to make sure they are.

Yeah, everything is a possibility, of course, and we will see for certain but of course you're kind of heading in that direction with the shift in the generations for sure.

Q. Guy referenced your sense of humour when he was introducing you. I just wonder if you feel able to bring that to such a pressurised event as a Ryder Cup and if you've actually been able to do that in the past as a player? And the other is a little bit more serious question, I suppose. What about the Saudi question? Was that asked at your interview, and did you have to give reassurances that you were committed fully to The European Tour going forward?

HENRIK STENSON: So in terms of the humour side of things, I think that's just me. That's in my nature. I have been able to bring that side. I don't know if a green wig at The K Club is evidence enough, but yeah, that's my personality. It's never too far away to laughter, and yeah, we want to have a good atmosphere, and a few weeks is not going to hurt anyone. So we try and plan on keeping that side of things.

On the other side, yes, the captain do sign a contract. He's the only one that does that. Players and vice captains don't. But the captain has an agreement and those agreements are between Ryder Cup Europe and the captain, so I'm fully committed to my role as a captain and working hard towards the result we want in Rome.

Q. I know you were vice captain last time out. I just wondered when the last time was you were captain of anything?

HENRIK STENSON: Well, when we've been playing, we've been Captain Chaos a few times. There's a first for everything. This is really, like I said, I've been five times as a player. I was invited to be a vice captain last time around on Pádraig's team, and now we're sitting here as a captain.

So no, it's a new position. Something I certainly don't take lightly, and I will do my utmost to live up to the expectations and ultimately the result that we are all looking for. So it's a challenge but we like a challenge, so I'm very excited.

Q. Did you captain any junior teams or any other sports or anything like that?

HENRIK STENSON: Always left back in the locker room.

Q. Here's your big chance then.

HENRIK STENSON: This is the chance.

Q. Will you be playing The Italian Open at Marco Simone next September?

HENRIK STENSON: I've been one day on the job here. Give me a little bit of time to plan, right. But that is a fair chance that we will be there. Like I said, scheduling has not been done yet. But you will see me in Italy a few times, I can assure you that.

Q. I'll met you there then. Good luck.

HENRIK STENSON: Thank you. Grazi.

Q. Can you talk about your relationship with Zach? How well do you know him and how do you stand up against him besides your height?

HENRIK STENSON: I think if you want to dig into Ryder Cup Matches and what we played over the years, I think it will be a fairly tight result there. I know he got the better of me and Pádraig in a better-ball at The K Club, and then I think I got him back somewhere, and we played in the World Match Play, Accenture World Match Play back in the day.

So we have been out, and of course played a lot together and against each other over the years. I respect him tons as a person. As a competitor, he's a fierce competitor and he's done extremely well and been a big force in golf and on the American side for decades. I'm delighted to see him as the opposition.

Him and Kim, I consider him a good friend, and of course. On the golf course, it will be fierce competition and business as usual. But Zach is great to be around and I'm looking forward to his company throughout this journey that both are doing now.

Q. You is single out one of your favourite memories of why The Ryder Cup means so much to you? Something better than the green wig if you can do that.

HENRIK STENSON: It's hard to explain the feeling in a team room with the guys. We are all getting together to play for our countries, for the continent, for the fans and

each other. The bonds you create, the atmosphere on the first tee, on the 18th green, when a match is coming up to the final, is just a sporting event like no other, and that's what makes it so interesting for the fans, for the golf fans, for the sports fans and for people in general that zoom in that might not watch golf on a regular basis, but they certainly zone in when they -- zoom in when it's the Ryder Cup.

I mean, standing there when Darren finished his match at The K Club and we all -- just the raw emotion that goes with victories, with losses, happiness and disappointment and other circumstances, yeah, I got some of my greatest memories and some of my strongest connections with other players, or certainly from The Ryder Cup. So it's experiences of a lifetime.

Q. What was your analysis of what happened at Whistling Straits and that defeat? What do you think was the reason for such a lopsided result?

HENRIK STENSON: Yeah, it is pretty clearly, if you look at the stats, the American side played a lot better golf than we did, or if we didn't come up to standard, no matter how you look at the numbers, we got outplayed by a better team and there's no shame in that.

We are just going to go back home and recoup and see what we can do better and come back even stronger and play better at Marco Simone in '23. We've done a big debrief with players, caddies and everyone around, and I think that will help us for sure, and I'm going to get the strongest team possible assembled and we'll be ready for the competition.

Q. What was the big salient point from that debrief? What was the abiding thought from the team and the caddies?

HENRIK STENSON: Can you guarantee that Zach and PGA of America is not listening in? Otherwise, I think I'll keep that up my sleeve.

STEVE TODD: Henrik, we will congratulate you once more and thank you for joining us, and thank you to everyone on the call.

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