

The Ryder Cup

Tuesday, August 29, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Team USA

Captain Zach Johnson

Sam Burns

Rickie Fowler

Brooks Koepka

Collin Morikawa

Jordan Spieth

Justin Thomas

Media Conference



Lots of power, very energetic, rookie.

My boy Brian Harman: St. Simons Island, my hometown now. Won the Open by six shots. He's a Bulldog, and all pun intended there.

Patrick Cantlay: Again, another model of consistency. Played great at the end of the year. No one is surprised.

Max Homa: Two wins this year, rookie Ryder Cupper but played some high-level international golf. He's our prom king.

Xander Schauffele: Played amazing, especially as of late but the whole year, and a great team player. Loves the Cups.

Quality guys, great competitors, and probably better off the course than even on it.

[Applause.]

JULIUS MASON: The time has come, Zach, so if you're ready, can you please tell the world who will be joining these six qualifiers.

ZACH JOHNSON: I just got chills. Yes, I can, Julius.

A lot of time, a lot of energy has gone into this process. That's probably no secret. I am very confident in these six, and my confidence comes from the mere fact that I am surrounding myself with great people, specifically my vice captains, who have been absolutely amazing; our analytics team, who -- they're the "nerd herd," but we love them. They give us a lot of great information that we can chew on. Then from there, we came up with what we felt was six guys that made these other six whole.

Without further ado, our six gentlemen that will be joining our qualifiers are Mr. Sam Burns, Mr. Rickie Fowler, Mr. Brooks Koepka, Mr. Collin Morikawa, Mr. Jordan Spieth, and Mr. Justin Thomas.

[Applause.]

JULIUS MASON: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the 2023 United States Ryder Cup captain's picks news conference here at the home of the PGA of America in Frisco, Texas.

The 44th edition of the Ryder Cup will be played just 31 days from now at Marco Simone Golf and Country Club in Rome. At the head table is the gentleman who will lead a 12-member team to Italy and try to do something that hasn't been done in 30 years: Win on European soil.

Nine days ago, six players qualified for a spot on the 2023 United States Ryder Cup team based on a points system. Today, U.S. Ryder Cup captain Zach Johnson will name six additional players who will join those automatic qualifiers to complete his 12-member team.

Zach, before we get to your picks, I know you are more than thrilled about those who have already locked up a spot.

ZACH JOHNSON: That is accurate. Thank you, Julius. Very excited about our six earned berths qualifiers.

Scottie Scheffler: I don't think I need to describe him. No. 1 player in the world. Mr. Consistency. Two wins, including THE PLAYERS Championship this year.

Wyndham Clark: Two wins, U.S. Open being one of them.



To say I'm excited about these gents would be an understatement. They check all the boxes. Fierce competitors, great versatility, great flexibility when it comes to pairings, when it comes to the fit for Marco Simone, a great fit for each other, which is massive.

With that, I think, comes a lot of just awesome options, successful pairings, an opportunity to do what we want to do, and that's to win.

Got some great experience in there, too, considering we are going across the pond. No easy feat. But I'm confident that these guys, along with the other six, now we're 12, 12 strong, if you will, will be ready to go at the end of September.

These are our gents.

JULIUS MASON: Thanks, Zach, very much. What jumps off the page here is that you selected five Ryder Cup veterans and one rookie. That makes a total of four rookies on your team. While the U.S. has taken two of the last three Ryder Cups, Europe has won nine of the last 13 matches and six straight overseas.

We hear a lot about veterans versus rookies and horses for courses. Can you give us a peek behind the scenes on what your decision-making process might have been like.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I can give you a peek. It's a small one, but yeah, number one, I think the beauty and the honor of being in this position at this stage is that I'm still on the Tour with these guys, so number one, I'm able to rub shoulders with them. I don't take that lightly.

Number two, my experience in the Cups in general has put me in this position and added certainly some confidence in what I'm trying to do. Not that I really had any ideas what I was getting myself into, but whether you're a player or a vice captain, you learn a lot.

I've even written some things down, but you mentally write things down. That's kind of gotten me here, and what I think would be best, if given the opportunity to sit in this chair.

Yeah, we've got some rookies. We always do it seems. That's magnificent because you love seeing the rookies getting thrown into that sort of coliseum, if you will.

It's pretty amazing to see them and how they go about their work. I think new blood can be a good thing.

Experience is also a good thing, too. It's one of those, it's really hard to measure. We have, but it's hard to really get

down to the measuring part of that.

But having new blood is refreshing. It's energizing, all of that. I've had many talks with our rookies already, and they're excited, to say the least. That excitement is very attractive.

But when it came down to making these decisions, personalities, team room, camaraderie, and make no mistake, the golf course and the fit for Marco Simone was a big part of it, as well.

JULIUS MASON: Let's break this down a little bit more and learn why you selected each player that you did. Let's begin with Sam Burns, who will be playing in his first Ryder Cup.

ZACH JOHNSON: Sure.

Sam: Stud athlete, number one. Won the World Golf Match Play Championships this year. Tremendous putter, which is always good in a Ryder Cup. To say that he meshes well with the other guys on the team, again, would be a massive understatement. And a versatile teammate. Guys want to be around him. Guys want to play with him. It's nice locking hands with somebody, locking shoulders with somebody that you want to be around, and Sam fits that to a tee.

JULIUS MASON: Hi, Sam, and congratulations on making your first Ryder Cup team. Can you quickly say hello to make sure we can hear you okay?

SAM BURNS: Yeah. Can you guys hear me?

JULIUS MASON: You narrowly missed out on making the U.S. Ryder Cup team at Whistling Straits. How much of a goal was it for you this year to make this year's team, Zach's team?

SAM BURNS: Yeah, I mean, I'd be lying if I didn't say it was my No. 1 goal. I knew that it was something I wanted to be a part of and I didn't want to miss out on.

When Zach gave me the call, just incredibly honored. I think for me personally, there's no higher honor than to represent your country. To be a part of this Ryder Cup, to tee it up alongside these world-class players and guys, I'm extremely, extremely excited.

JULIUS MASON: Sam, the 2023 Junior Ryder Cup will be played September 26 to 28. Right before you tee it up at Marco Simone -- you played on the victorious 2014 Junior Ryder Cup team in Scotland. Now you've sort of come full circle with this. Did 18-year-old Sam Burns ever dream

this big?

SAM BURNS: I mean, I definitely dreamed it many, many times. I think as a kid, you watch every Ryder Cup and you always have this idea in the back of your head that you want to be a part of that and you want to get to experience that one day.

It's very surreal when that opportunity presents itself, but I can't wait to be there. I can't wait to see it up alongside these guys and hopefully bring the Cup home.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you, Sam. Please don't go anywhere.

Next up, Rickie Fowler, who had that emotional victory at the Rocket Mortgage in June.

ZACH JOHNSON: Well said, yes. No one was surprised by that victory.

My boy Rick: Great 2023. Obviously that win, a really good U.S. Open out in LA, pretty much a model of consistency this year through and through. Stats showed that. Also extremely flexible as far as pairings, and I would say formats. He can move around there a little bit.

Those that know him or at least been around him, he makes every team room better. That's Rick.

JULIUS MASON: Thanks, Zach.

Rickie, congratulations on making your fifth Ryder Cup team. Can you hear us okay?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I got you. Thank you.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you, by the way, for strategically placing that Ryder Cup trophy behind you in the shot. This means, Rickie, you are one of the most experienced Ryder Cuppers on this team, including three away matches, which will make you a leader in this team room. What's your take on how this team will gel over in Italy?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's already coming together. A lot of us are really close. A few of us live close to each other in South Florida.

It's just a great group of guys. I'm really excited that I've played well enough to give myself this opportunity.

I was thinking about it a little bit, and it in a way reminded me a little bit of my second Walker Cup. I went from being a rookie at my first, and then my second in '09, myself and Brian Harman were kind of the guys that had played and

the older guys on the team. A little different and odd situation to being one of the older guys, but we'll take it any way we can get it.

JULIUS MASON: After not being part of the team at Whistling Straits two years ago, can you put into words why this week is so important for you, maybe so special for you?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, after the last few years for me, not being part of teams, not really being in majors and not playing well, going through a little bit of a rebuilding last fall, ultimately this was the goal at the top. I knew it was going to be a tough one to achieve.

Yeah, this one is super special. When I got the call from Zach, luckily he told me the good news, and it was definitely emotional because it's been a great year after the last few, like I talked about, and I knew it was going to be very hard to be in this position, so to get that call and to be a part of this team is amazing.

JULIUS MASON: Rickie, thank you very much. Stick with us for a couple more minutes, please.

Captain, you also selected Brooks Koepka, who won the PGA Championship at Oak Hill in Rochester this year.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yes, what a performance at Oak Hill. Oak Hill in May, let alone.

Five-time major champion, three-time PGA champion. He's built in my mind for the biggest of stages, and there's no bigger stage than the Ryder Cup. I think his record shows that. I know his buddies want him on the team.

He's very versatile. Guys want to play with him. That's evident.

I'm excited to have him go to Marco Simone on what will be the biggest stage in golf.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you very much, Zach.

Brooks, congratulations, and welcome to your fourth Ryder Cup team. Can you hear us?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, I can hear you guys. Thanks.

JULIUS MASON: Zach mentioned a while ago that you have not lost a singles match in Ryder Cup competition. Why have you played so well on Sunday singles?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Oh, I don't know. I think you're just playing for something bigger than yourself. You don't want

to let the other guys on the team down, and it's a fun event. It's the most nervous I've ever been in a golf tournament was teeing it up at the Ryder Cup.

I've enjoyed it, and every time I've played, I've just tried to go get a point for the team.

JULIUS MASON: Brooks, how proud or surprised are you to be sitting here today as the 2023 PGA champion and a Ryder Cup team member after what you had to overcome, injuries, for example, over the last two years?

BROOKS KOEPKA: Yeah, last years have been a lot, but at the same time, that's what I've been grinding for. That's what I've been trying to get back into shape, and 100 percent feel good, just for this moment and get out and go play with the team.

Super excited, looking forward to it, and we've got a great group of guys, great captain, great assistants. It's going to be a fun week.

JULIUS MASON: Zach, next is Collin Morikawa, who had a very strong debut as a rookie at Whistling Straits in 2021, going 3-0-1.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yes, a Ryder Cup rookie at Whistling Straits with two majors already under his belt. Not normal.

Great young talent, great guy on and off the golf course, ball-striking machine. Consistent would be the word that comes to my mind, year after year, and he is a very strong fit for Marco Simone and what we feel the course will demand.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you very much, Zach.

Collin, welcome to your second United States Ryder Cup team. With that smile on your face, I'm guessing you can hear us okay.

COLLIN MORIKAWA: I can hear you, thank you.

JULIUS MASON: You clinched the winning half point in singles and had three wins in four matches at Whistling Straits, so I'm guessing your memories from your first Ryder Cup are pretty positive. Can you tell us what some of your takeaways were from Wisconsin?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: Yeah, I've got to thank Brooks for not making a hole-in-one on 17. I think he would have clinched it right before me.

But a lot of positive memories. I think going back, being with the team, spending as much time, like Brooks said,

there's nothing like it when you're playing for someone else or something else and you're playing for your country, you've got the red, white and blue on, it really pulls something out of you to just really be able to do anything and clinch every point possible to get the win for sure.

JULIUS MASON: That win, of course, was on home soil. Any anxiety about going to an away match? Anything you've heard that might leave you a little uncomfortable?

COLLIN MORIKAWA: No, you know what, I think we're all excited. Knowing the history, knowing the past, these are obviously 12 guys. We've got our captains, our vice captains. We all want to win.

We know the history. That's all the past. We want to create new memories. We want to create new history for us on the U.S. side, and I think we've got the people to do that.

I'm excited. Everyone else is. To be honest, it's really another match out there, another golf tournament, and we're going to do our best for sure there.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you, Collin. Please don't go anywhere.

Next, Zach, you selected Jordan Spieth, who like Rickie will make his fifth Ryder Cup team.

ZACH JOHNSON: Jordan Spieth, thanks for being here. Great putter, great short game. Seems he's never out of the hole. I've been on the bad end of that myself.

Great match play player, very consistent year, and we've seen that in the last so many odd years. Just seems to bring his best out in the hardest of situations. All the intangibles you want as a teammate and as a player, a lot of heart, a lot of spirit, a lot of experience, as you mentioned, as well, Julius, and one of our -- I would say one of our stalwarts on Team USA.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you very much, Zach, and congratulations, Jordan, and welcome to your fifth consecutive Ryder Cup team, the longest stretch among anyone on your team.

You have a solid 71 percent win rate in Ryder Cup four-ball play. What is it about that format that brings out the best in you and the best in your teammates?

JORDAN SPIETH: I have great teammates in four-ball. I've had to lean on them a few times over the years. But just some freedom. I like to play aggressively, and typically when you have a partner beside you and you get that



opportunity more often, you can not only just hit shots more aggressively, hit putts more aggressively, you always know someone is going to get it in the hole, and it's going out there trying to make as many birdies as possible. It's just more fun, just have more fun playing that format.

I'm not sure why win percentage is that high necessarily, but I'd love more opportunities. It's my favorite format for sure.

JULIUS MASON: Jordan, Zach has surrounded himself with five vice captains, whom you know very well having played for four of them as your captain on International Team events. From your perspective as a veteran Ryder Cupper, how do you think Team USA has benefitted from this leadership?

JORDAN SPIETH: Well, as you mentioned, it's been similar guys in the room, whether leading or being vice captains, and it's nice to see familiar faces. You start to adapt year after year. These captains rely on each other for the experiences they had, what they could possibly do better, whether even in wins -- wins and losses, where it went well, whether there was room for improvement, and I think the players' input has been something that's been massive over the last, call it, three or four years now, and it's certainly led to success in team events and really just off the course just a different balance in the team room.

It's a great group of vice captains. I don't think anybody here is surprised by who's gotten picked. The addition of Stewart I think was a really cool addition that we're excited about, as well, given that he's been competing against us in the last few years, and he actually won twice a couple seasons ago.

Very relatable to everything that's going on on Tour.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you very much, Jordan.

Zach, you also selected two-time PGA champion Justin Thomas.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yes, Justin Thomas, one of the most talented players on the PGA TOUR in my opinion. He has without question been the heart and soul of Team USA, Ryder Cups, our emotional leader I would say, and I don't think he would argue with that. He just leads by example.

Overall a fantastic Ryder Cup record. His passion for the Ryder Cup is very evident. He would say it himself. He has said it himself.

In my mind, he was born for this, and there is -- you just don't leave JT at home.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you very much, Zach. Justin, congratulations on making your third United States Ryder Cup team. In your rookie year in Paris you contributed the most points to the team with four wins and one loss. What would you tell a rookie teammate on what to expect or how to prepare for an away Ryder Cup?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, first off, thank you. I'm very, very happy to be here.

I mean, it's exciting. It's a type of nerves that I don't think you can really put into words, and us that have experienced it, especially over there, can understand. It's butterflies but it's good butterflies. It's all the nerves that we are playing for. It's why we play professional golf is to be in these kind of atmospheres.

I mean, it doesn't matter how many Cups we've played in, whether it's our first one or our fifth one or our third one. We're all going to be nervous, but it's a great opportunity, and I think all of us are very excited, and I know the rookies are, as well.

JULIUS MASON: Justin, you're 6-2-1 in the last two Ryder Cups. Throw in a Presidents Cup, and you're 16-5-3 in your career. What is it about team golf specifically that brings out the best in you?

JUSTIN THOMAS: I think Jordan touched on it a little bit. Good partners definitely help with that. A lot of it -- as much as you want to bring good golf yourself to the table, I think a part of it is bringing the best out of your partner.

I've been very fortunate to play with some good friends of mine that I feel like I know well that I'm not only comfortable around but I feel like I can do my best to try to bring the best out of them.

We have a couple of them on this call with me in Jordan and Rick, and it's a very, very exciting thing, and it's hard to really think about anything other than exactly what you're doing. You don't really get out -- it's hard to get ahead of yourself or think about anything behind you because it's not a stroke-play event where you're looking at leaderboards or thinking about holes you're going to birdie. The only thing you're worried about is just beating the person or team that you're playing against, and that's a challenge that I've enjoyed.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you very much, JT.

Let's go ahead and open the floor and Zoom calls for questions now.



Q. First question for Zach. Congrats on making your picks. Always I'm sure one of the toughest parts as a captain is communicating with the people who didn't make the team. I wanted to ask you about Cam Young, and in particular I hope this isn't too awkward to bring up, but one of your vice captains at one point in public did say that Cam Young was fundamentally going to make the team. I'm curious if that made that particular call maybe a little bit harder than it would otherwise be.

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I appreciate the question. All of my phone calls were difficult. That goes without saying. It's part of what I was warned about when it came to those and my vice captains that have sat in this seat before.

I say that; it did keep me up at night having to make those phone calls, specifically Cam. Phenomenal player, better person. He was nothing but class.

Yeah, I know what was said, but I think that was a while back. It was kind of in jest. It is what it is.

All of those phone calls were extremely difficult. Fortunately the ones receiving them were beyond classy.

Q. Zach, I know this is a difficult question. Brooks' playing record speaks for itself, but did his involvement in the LIV Golf Tour figure in your decision making at all?

ZACH JOHNSON: What figured in my decision making was trying to formulate, pick six gentlemen that make the six guys that earned their way whole, meaning they're all one-twelfth of the team. These guys are not ranked. They're all a part of the team equally.

When it came to BK, his experience, his temperament, the way he goes about his work, his passion for the Ryder Cup all spoke volumes. He would say, and I'm confident in saying, he and I have been communicating a lot, I would say, over the last couple, maybe few months. We've had great discussions, very candid discussions.

When he started to really make his way on to this team, the way I kind of see it, he basically earned his way on the team, if you're going to get down to the pennies and dollars of it. It was a pretty easy pick.

Brooks is great in the team room and great inside the ropes. That goes without saying.

These guys wanted him. I wanted him. A very natural fit.

Q. Zach, my question for you is did you call any of the

other LIV players who were in consideration? And I'm curious secondly, how much did Justin Thomas's play leading up to the FedExCup impact your decision to choose him?

ZACH JOHNSON: Okay, I'm going to start with the first one first. Can you say that one one more time? That's hard to answer two separate questions that are totally different. Can you say the first one again?

Q. Yeah, did Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau, did they merit a phone call from you?

ZACH JOHNSON: I called the gentlemen that really were kind of in the fold of making the team on points. You'd have to go down the list. I don't remember my last phone call as far as the ranking went, but it was probably in the top 25 range, top 22 range, something in there, on guys that earned points.

What was the second question?

Q. How much did Justin Thomas's play from the British Open to not making the Playoffs impact your feelings that he deserved to be on the team?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I mean, obviously form is a part of our decision-making process. There's a number of elements in that process. That is one of them.

But so is fit for golf course, fit for the team room, experience, and in my mind when you're talking about that individual specifically, passion and full confidence that that's where he belongs, it came down to being a pretty easy pick, especially when the top six guys took some ownership in the team, as well.

Q. For Zach and I'd like to follow it up with the players, you're a sports guy, not just a golf guy. The fact that -- I realize this team is 0-0 as a team, but the fact that USA has gone over there with so much talent for three decades and not won, is that a pretty alarming stat in the world of sports?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I mean, if you're just going to look at the numbers, yeah. It probably is.

At the same time, I think it's extremely easy to explain. Bottom line is it's very difficult to win in hostile environments. It's very difficult to win over there.

But all of that, as you said, is in the past, the way I see it. We have an opportunity in front of us that we're all going to relish and embrace. What has happened in the past, we'll learn from, but it's a new team. This is a new year on a

new golf course.

The only constants are I would think most of the fans will be against us, and our opponent is going to be very good. Other than that, I'm not going to dwell too much on what's happened prior because I don't think the relevance should have any bearing on what we're doing as a team in 2023.

Q. For the players, how much does that add to the mission, just maybe the opportunity to make history in Italy?

JORDAN SPIETH: Sure, I think at Whistling Straits there was a question that was asked. It was such a great performance, but I don't know how it was questioned, but it was something along the lines of a new wave, a new shaping of the history of the Ryder Cup, and I was very quick to point out that Rickie had been on two away losing teams over there that you can't really talk about anything like that until you go over there and win one, and the majority of the crowd is against you.

It's an unusual position as golfers. Typically those that are following us are rooting for us, and if they don't want to root for us, they go follow somebody else.

So it's kind of that one time where it's just different. Some people are built for the different side and really, really enjoy that, and some people don't really love it, and I would say this team and this kind of younger group over the last few years, they go over almost more excited.

I feel very confident just in the mentality. I don't think there's any hesitation by any player over there that wouldn't say that they'd almost embraced going into that environment more so than on home turf.

(Inaudible) for our team. I know most of them very well, and I would say that's probably a pretty collective way of thinking for us.

Q. Justin, I wonder, the amount of pressure and focus on you specifically for the last couple months, will he be on the team, will they leave him off, whatever, did that manifest itself in your play at all, or was it a particularly difficult season to go through just with that kind of constant chatter?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, I think I definitely learned you're always going to hear more, the more an opportunity kind of presents itself. Whether I'm thinking about it or not, it's kind of one of those things that -- like I just remember at The Open when I get done on Friday and the media wanted to ask some questions, and it's almost like everybody is looking around, who wants to be the first one

to ask, and I know everybody is thinking it and they know I'm thinking it and I voiced that. Yeah, I did put a lot of pressure on myself to make this team because it does mean so much to me.

But that being said, I feel like it was a valuable learning experience for me and something that I will use and learn going forward.

It's very -- I would say these other guys can attest, you can want something too bad, and I'm sure all of us have tried to win golf tournaments too much or tried to force the issue, and there was potentially times this season I did. But yeah, I'm very, very fortunate to be here, and Zach has been very vocal and made it sound great that we are all equal on this team.

He said there's 12 of us, and I'm sure as important as everybody else, and my teammates have voiced that the same way. I'm very, very excited.

Q. Zach, you mentioned calling guys 22 through 25 on the points list. Dustin Johnson, I believe, is down there at 40. I wonder how you weighed a guy who has a Hall-of-Fame resume, 5-0 at Whistling Straits, his candidacy for this team.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I probably called somewhere in the top, whatever it was, top 20, top 25 guys. I'd have to go down the list. No offense to Will Zalatoris. He's been hurt. I didn't call Will.

I mean, did the topic of some of those guys come up? Sure. At the same time, I think that was quite a while back. There's something to be said about playing consistently together, and they had opportunity. We have a guy on the team that had opportunity and seized it, when you're talking about the four majors last year and the four majors this year in Brooks Koepka. So there was opportunity there.

That's kind of how we looked at it.

Q. Question for JT. Just curious what the last couple of weeks have been like for you. I don't know when you got the call or if you care to divulge that, but there might have been a little bit of tension or apprehension for you being in this new spot where you're not competing in the FedExCup Playoffs and it's really not in your hands. Was it agonizing, or did you get away from it? Can you say what it's been like here the last month or so while this has gone on?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's been wild to say the least. Zach called yesterday morning. I had a lot of emotions that

came through me, I would say, as wild it is, like relief was one of the first things of just -- I could relax.

Obviously it's kind of like playing well in a golf tournament. It just hits you at different points.

I didn't touch a club for two weeks after the Wyndham. My clubs just stayed in my garage. I'm very much on a different timetable as everybody else probably on our team and on this call where none of them even want to look at a golf course, and I've been practicing for a week and I'm very excited to play golf every day.

Because of my season ending sooner, I'm in a little different place in that regard.

It's funny, I joked with my wife this morning that I have had a lot, a lot of sleepless nights of just thinking about what could happen and wanting to be on the team and wondering if I was, if I wasn't.

Then I just kind of came to the realization that obviously it was out of my hands and I couldn't do anything about it, and then after getting the call yesterday from Zach, I couldn't sleep last night because I was so excited. It was kind of ironic.

Like I said earlier, I'm very excited, and it's cool to be a part of this team with these other 11 guys and vice captains. I wouldn't want to go to battle with any other crew.

Q. Justin, you're playing next week. Was that with the Ryder Cup in mind possibly, or was that going to happen anyway?

JUSTIN THOMAS: It wasn't. I committed a while ago. Just due to the position I'm in, kind of put myself for the FedExCup, I wanted to try to see if I could play an event or two this fall. Also, making the Ryder Cup or not, I didn't really want to go months without competition, and I was starting to see some pretty good signs of things there at the end of the season and I wanted to try to capitalize.

So after taking a little bit of time off, like I said, I got back into it, and I've been practicing pretty hard for a week, so I'm actually excited to play in a golf tournament, and then with playing the Ryder Cup, it works out really well to get a little competition under me so I'm not going into that event with a month and a half or so away from it.

Q. Zach, you talk about horses for courses, and Marco Simone, you mentioned it again as a large part of your selection. Can you tell me what parts of Marco Simone you're looking at and saying, this is what I want from our guys?

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, that's a good question. Yeah, I guess the fit for the golf course, horses for courses, however you want to coin it, is certainly an element when we're trying to formulate our team. It's not the only one, but it is a part of it.

It's really difficult to explain how we go about doing that. Frankly I'm not even -- I don't know if I can understand the algorithms and all that that these guys kind of go through. I'm not saying stats are the only thing.

But my point in saying that is we have the ability -- it's not just saying we have these one or two stats that fit this golf course. It's basically putting -- we have the ability to put these guys on that golf course and essentially the way their games are and see if they fit. That's a whole lot of technology right there and whatnot.

That's when we entrust our analytics team, and that's also when we -- when modeling the golf course, we kind of know what the tendencies are as far as what they've done over there tee to green in the setup, so all of those factors are kind of molded into one when it comes to the modeling, the fit for Marco Simone.

Q. Did that modeling make a difference in a selection one way or the other?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, not directly because all the other factors were a part of that, too. It's not exactly an exact science. It certainly was an element, and at times a pretty heavy one.

But to say that it was the overwhelming factor would be inaccurate.

Q. One thing for JT, I don't think I've ever heard anybody say, "You just don't leave JT home." How does that add to the pressure not of getting on the team but actually now having to perform for a guy that thinks that much of you?

JUSTIN THOMAS: Yeah, it's nice to hear Zach say that. I mean, look, Zach and I have had conversations over the last months. I mean, you could say year or so, whether it was stuff of being a part of the team or things that could make the team better, and then all of a sudden due to the position I was in, it just was communication, and I think Zach was great with all of us in terms of he wanted transparency, he wanted communication.

It was one thing that I told him, and I still firmly believe it, is it doesn't matter what any person, what any stats guy, any vice captain, any media, anybody says; if the guys on the

team don't feel that there is other fits, that there are other people that are better for the team or better for whatever it is, then that is what's most important.

I've been in that room. We've had dinners and discussions. The overwhelming, I would say, decision that is made is who do the guys want on the team because we're the one that plays with each other week in and week out, and we understand our games, our mentality, our sportsmanship, just whatever you want to call it, competitiveness.

I also told Zach in that same note, and it's no offense to being a pick, but I think everybody else on this call that is also a captain's pick can attest that playing in the Ryder Cup is enough pressure in itself. I don't necessarily look at it as I have to play well because I'm a pick. I look at it as I want to play well because it's the Ryder Cup and I'm representing my teammates and my country and my captains.

That's enough pressure in itself to me. I understand I haven't been in this position before, so who knows, maybe I'll feel differently. In the team events and Ryder Cups I've played in before, my nerves have been plenty high just trying to do the best that I can and trying to get a point for me team, so I'm sure I'll still feel the same way.

Q. Zach, I'm curious if you can kind of characterize the input of the six qualifiers, what they had on the six picks, and did anything in the last two weeks change your thinking?

ZACH JOHNSON: Great questions. The first part, did the top six influence, was that what it was?

Q. How much input did the six qualifiers have on the six picks? How would you characterize that?

ZACH JOHNSON: Sure. Well, in my experience, certainly as a vice captain, having gentlemen in the room that obviously have earned their way on that team, that are invested -- man, I was so, just, I guess confident in their feelings and opinions because of how much they've been talking themselves. But having unity in that team room -- I know Stewart is sitting here in the room with me and some other guys at some points, some other vice captains, as well. Seeing the unity, seeing the fact that they're taking this very serious, they've been talking, and they had great opinions, feelings, specifics even on how they felt they could make those six whole, as I mentioned.

So yeah, absolutely. They have taken full ownership of this team, which is exactly what you want.

Their opinions weighed heavy on what we did. But at the same time, and they would say the same thing, they know that when it came to constructing the remainder of the team, that onus goes completely on my shoulders.

What was the second part?

Q. Did anything performance-wise in the last two weeks alter what you had in your mind?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, I mean, the meeting with the top six was actually TOUR Championship week, so that was certainly a big part of -- I don't know if it altered anything, but it may have either -- we didn't have anything confirmed I would say the last two weeks, so yes, I would say what has transpired the last two weeks, whether it was off the golf course with discussions of the guys that earned their way or on the golf course, you could throw all that in there.

All that being said, I think the elements in which I've mentioned before, team room, camaraderie, guys getting along, wanting to be with each other, course fit, experience, all of those factors and what the top six are leaning on, those factors weighed heavier than I would say the last two weeks of competition.

Q. Zach, my question is about the team room. We all know how vital it is. I suspect even more so when you're the visiting side. Can you describe the environment and atmosphere that you think is vital to create to have a successful team room?

ZACH JOHNSON: Sure. Again, I've learned a lot in my time. Every team room that I've been associated with is extremely special, an area, an environment that I think just really adds to the overall experience.

The beauty of the team room is that we are such individuals week in, week out, so when we can legitimately band together, compete together, fight together, lean on each other, it's really hard to find the words, the adjectives to describe that. It's the best.

I'm a team guy. I love team sports. Golf can be a team sport, but when it comes down to it, the competition part of it, most if not all of the ownership goes on your own shoulders.

In this case, that team room just becomes that much better. You combine that with the caddies, those 12 guys, they take ownership in it, too, and we want that. They're great resources. You take that and combine it with the wives, the bosses, it becomes even that much more special.

I mean, they're very much a part of what we do day in, day out, week in, week out. In this instance it's almost like -- I mean, we're rewarded with playing and playing for our country. They're rewarded with having a great fun week to support their man in a different manner, too, and the other men, too.

It's really hard to summarize, but it is the best thing -- the team room is one of the best features of any Cup that I've ever been associated with.

When you get down to it, the actual team, those 12 guys, the intangible part of our game and the intangible part of the Cup almost becomes tangible. Like you actually see and feel all of what I just said, individual to individual, as a group. They're going to pick them up. They're going to encourage them. They're literally going to put courage into them.

It's just the best.

Q. Jordan Spieth, can you talk to that same sort of thought process; what creates the team room magic for you?

JORDAN SPIETH: It's been a lightness over the last few versus my first couple team events. Just kind of like the weight of the golf tournament just comes off when you walk into it and you just feel like you're just hanging with your friends, and as Zach mentioned, you're hanging with their wives and girlfriends, too. You're hanging with your caddies and their wives and girlfriends. It's like you're just going back and having fun.

I think in the past couple Cups, the difference in weight room accessibility, recovery methods, stuff that collectively guys are used to doing, especially at major championships as they prepare, we have every ability to go do what we need to on our own to recover and prepare the mornings of and whatnot while stepping into the other room and feeling like you're just totally out of a golf tournament and just hanging out.

So that balance is seen to breed success. And more so, guys just have a lot more fun the entire week. These are really special events that don't come around often, and I think for those of us who plan on playing on them, we want to look back and say I had a great time that week, not I was stressed the whole week.

That balance has been really fun because we love what we do. We love preparing. We love recovering. But we also like the difference in being able to hang out with guys that -- we have our own teams on the road, and it's nice to collectively combine them all.

Q. Zach, just wondering, you mentioned analytics, and then obviously Julius mentioned it had been 30 years since the Americans won over there. What about these six guys makes you feel like they're the ones to break the 30-year streak this year?

ZACH JOHNSON: Well, right off the bat, they're talented. They're fierce competitors. They want to be there. They want to be in the position -- I think what I see with these 12 guys and specifically the six guys on the screen here is that it's -- hear me out. It's great playing over here in front of our fans. Some of those memories are the ones I'm going to cherish the most.

At the same time, I think certain individuals are kind of wired, kind of built for the difficulty. They're kind of built for walking into the lion's den, walking into a stadium, into a hostile environment, and I'm confident in all 12 of these guys but specifically these six guys to do just that. We have experience in that, and we have some new blood in that, too.

We've got enough experience that I think we can help the rookies along when it comes to that notion. I just love going over there and playing. I love when it's difficult. I love knowing that it's going to be uncomfortable. That's what motivates me. That's why I work.

With these six in particular, I have the utmost confidence that's exactly why they work. They want to push themselves. They are, for lack of a better phrase, comfortable in the uncomfortable.

What's happened in the past is the past. This is a great new opportunity, and these are the 12 guys that are going to push to achieve that, the main goal, which is strictly to keep the Cup here in the United States.

Q. Zach, a guy like Lucas Glover catches fire late out of nowhere almost. Had he won in the last couple of weeks, would that have changed anything if a guy is that red hot, even if he hadn't been before that? And for Brooks, when you're on the outside hoping to get picked and you see a guy like Lucas Glover catching fire, are you pulling for him? Are you excited like golf fans are or are you kind of hoping he shanks one into the water?

ZACH JOHNSON: First and foremost, Lucas and I are very good friends. We've basically worked our way up through the PGA TOUR together, played on Cup teams together. We've been teammates. My respect, admiration is thick when it comes to Lucas and his family. I adore him.

To answer the second part of that question, I was rooting for him as hard as anybody I've ever rooted for because he's my buddy. You want to see your good friends play well. That goes without saying, especially given he's kind of my generation. You love seeing some of the -- well, I don't want to say old, but the more seasoned veteran guys play well because it's hard against these young guys.

When it comes to the first part of your question as far as winning more golf tournaments, I don't know. It's a hypothetical. I don't particularly -- especially when it comes to formulating those and the process which we implemented, speaking in hypotheticals I don't think is very fair.

I just know that Lucas was a part of our discussions but so were a number of other guys, and when it came down to the filtering, with all the elements that I've talked about, these are the six guys that are the best fit for the golf course, for the six guys that already earned their way on the team, and the six guys that I think can do what we need to do.

Q. Zach, question about the golf course and how the course sets up for match play and how you think the course fits the 12 players you pick. I know that was one of the criteria you mentioned in your selection.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yeah, sure, thank you. The golf course, Marco Simone, it's quite the undertaking. It's a very, very, very hilly golf course. I'd be willing to bet and say in a pretty confident manner that the hills are that of maybe only one or two courses we play year in, year out.

Man, it's very trying. It's built on a hill. There's a lot of change in elevation shot to shot, down and up, so the course has a ton of character.

It's going to be a trying walk, especially when you throw in four sessions on Friday and Saturday. That's going to be very difficult. Obviously it's the singles on Sunday, too.

I think when it comes to pairings and things of that nature, we've got to be really careful on what we do with our men and their caddies. That's an element.

The golf course I think is slightly redone over the last so many odd years. It was basically built for a championship. It's held three Italian Opens to date, but it was built for something of this magnitude. It will showcase that.

Lo and behold, there's a castle right in the middle of it. I'm not so sure we have any of those over here, which is pretty special, so you're getting certainly a massive dose of

Europe, Italy, Rome, right there. Pretty cool.

As far as course fit and the guys, again, I can't come up with one or two or three stats that would just fall off the page there. It's really taking those individuals, kind of throwing them into the golf course and seeing how they will perform. That's probably the best way I can explain it.

In talking to all of the individuals that we confer with on this process, these are the six guys that we feel we need to go over there to complement the six guys that earned their way and make this 12 team complete.

JULIUS MASON: Zach, back in February 2022 when you were named captain, you said you liked the idea of leading a team overseas. Why was that?

ZACH JOHNSON: I've probably mentioned, I think these six guys are built for competing over there. I very much feel like I'm built that way, too.

Of the five Ryder Cups I've played, I've played in three over there, and I have enjoyed every second of it. I didn't really enjoy the scoreboard at the end of them, but I enjoy what it takes out of me to go fight, whether I'm playing a singles match or whether I'm playing in tandems with a buddy.

It's what I feel like I'm designed to do, and I wouldn't have it any other way. It is my favorite thing in sports is to be on a Ryder Cup team representing this nation.

I would be thrilled, the honor of doing it in the United States, because this is my country, but I am equally as thrilled to do it over there.

JULIUS MASON: Can you believe that you and Kim are going to be packing your bags in less than a month from now?

ZACH JOHNSON: No, I'm packing just one. She's packing for four. I'll be done really quick.

No, I cannot. I know we'll be ready. I know what's ahead. It seems like months upon months away, and I've been saying that for months. Now it's right around the corner, which is crazy to really think. This journey has been amazing. The process of it has been amazing.

I've had former captains, specifically some vice captains of me but even other captains that have said, just enjoy the process, enjoy the journey, write things down. But just try to find the joy in it.

Yes, there's been a lot of work and a lot of things that you

can't really plan for, but that's also part of the joy in it.

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Just really excited. Really excited about having my 12 guys complete. Really excited that these are the guys that all of us, corporately, feel like we can go on a mission with only one goal. But we're going to do it together. We're going to do it with character. We're going to do it with high class. We're going to do it with the integrity that the Ryder Cup deserves.

Partnering with Luke and Diane through this time has been special. Nothing but the utmost respect for Luke. We've been buddies for quite a while. Kind of doing this with him I think has been a joy and certainly something that I feel fortunate.

He's been overly transparent with me on things that we can kind of hash out together. I don't take that lightly.

Again, my excitement is immense. The best thing personally is being able to share this with my wife, Kim.

JULIUS MASON: Final question for you: There's another team event that's happening right before the Ryder Cup tees off in Rome that you're pretty familiar with.

ZACH JOHNSON: Yes, the Junior Ryder Cup. I think I just missed the selection when I was 16, 17 years old, probably because I -- well, I didn't know what I was doing back then. But this is impressive. I can only imagine how they're feeling.

But I certainly want to congratulate and welcome Leigh, Kylie, Gianna, Anna, Ryleigh and Yana, the young women that will represent our nation over there in Rome. Billy, Nicholas, Jay, Will, Miles and Jackson Byrd, who might live where I do and is one of my dear friends. I've known the kid since he was born. That is special.

I can't wait for these guys to go over there, these gals to go over there and compete. What an honor. What a way to be a teenager. Go play golf in Rome and represent your country. That is amazing. Bring us a victory.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you very much for joining us today. We look forward to seeing you very, very soon. Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude our news conference for the day.

As you quietly exit to the north lounge, we'll be taking pictures with you and the Ryder Cup over there. Again, we're going to wind up knocking out a few satellite interviews here. Thank you very much for being here, and we'll see you in Rome.

