

The Ryder Cup

Tuesday, 26 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Team Europe

Sepp Straka

Press Conference

STEVE TODD: Pleased to be joined by Sepp Straka of Team Europe. How has it been in the team room and on the course just now?

SEPP STRAKA: It's been great. It's been really great. Starting with the practise trip we had here a couple weeks ago, and even during Wentworth, and yeah, today was a great day. Again, to see the course, it's in incredible shape. Playing a few matches out there, and yeah, it was a lot of fun.

Q. I know we've made a lot about the way that you speak and that you don't have an accent. But I'm wondering, you moved when you were 14; is that right?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah.

Q. So for these last 15 years or so, have you felt yourself becoming Americanised? And has this process been kind of bringing you back to your roots in a way?

SEPP STRAKA: Maybe in a way but, I don't know, I feel like I've grown up kind of split. You know, my mom is American. Spent a lot of time in the States. When I was 14, moved to the States.

But I've always felt really close to my Austrian heritage. My dad is Austrian. Always made sure I spent a lot of time going back. Yeah, if anything, it's allowed me to spend more time in Austria, which is always great.

And yeah, get back to see a lot of friends and family.

Q. Has there been any sense of mixed emotions going into this event in any way?

SEPP STRAKA: Not really, no.

Q. How has this week been a getting-to-know exercise



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for some of the players on The European Tour that you don't know since you spend time in the States?

SEPP STRAKA: I feel like I've known all of them for quite a while now. I don't think there's anybody that I haven't known for less than four or five years.

Getting to spend more time around them, more quality time around them, practise rounds, has been great. Started with the practise trip a couple weeks ago. The team bonding has been incredible. Team dinners and all that has been a lot of fun.

Yeah, just getting to know a lot of the guys has been great.

Q. I was watching some of your practise holes. I noticed on the second you took quite a lot of time taking the ball off the green and into the deep rough trying to chip it out. Will you have to change your strategy for the team in any way?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, it's very thick, and especially out of the fairways, the blades are really thick and it's very different than anything you see almost anywhere.

But yeah, the ball comes out pretty slow most of the time, and so yeah, you definitely want to spend a lot of time especially around the greens, getting the feel right, and kind of, you know, preparing for that.

Q. So half of our country travels south in the summer for an Italian vacation. Is that something you did as a child? When you think back to that time, how was it?

SEPP STRAKA: Yes, it was always our number one destination for trips as a kid. We always drove down to Venice, Legnano. We also did a lot of our junior camps over winter in Legnano. Yeah, always brings back memories coming back to Italy.

Q. Favourite pasta?

SEPP STRAKA: Carbonara maybe.

Q. A lot of players talk about the intense pressure of



the first tee and these really nerve-wracking moments. Is there going to be something you say to yourself or go through mentally that will help put you at ease?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, definitely am going to have that, but you've just got to stick to your routine in that situation. I've never done it on such a big stage, so I guess it's easy to say now.

But yeah, I think the main thing that helps is sticking to your routine and make the situation as normal as possible.

Q. Your thoughts on the course, any holes that are particularly pleasing to your eye at all?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, it's a good course. It will be great for match play. There's a lot of high-risk reward shots and a couple drivable par fours and reachable par fives. I think that will be really fun to watch and really fun to play.

I really like number five. I think it's a really cool reachable par four. The finishing stretch is great. 16, 17, 18 is great, three incredible holes. That's probably my favourite stretch on the course.

Q. As a rookie, are you curious, have you asked advice from, say, Justin Rose or Rory? What questions would you have asked them or have you talked to them about this whole experience and what you should expect?

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, definitely, you've got to lean on those guys. It's incredible how many Ryder Cups they have been a part of and been successful in.

Yeah, a typical question like "What do you do on the first tee box when you can't feel your arms" kind of thing. But yeah, overall the goal is you've just got to play golf. But yeah, just sharing stories and hearing stories from them has been helpful.

Q. What do you do when you can't feel your arms?

SEPP STRAKA: Hope, I guess. Yeah, maybe just stick to the routine and hope you make a good swing.

Q. No mixed emotions for you, you said, but what's the family dynamic like with your parents at home?

SEPP STRAKA: My mom, who is American, has been wearing an Austria hat all last week while she was in Austria. Yeah, I think they are all Team Europe. Even my mom, who grew up in the States, is a hundred per cent American. She spent 24 years in Austria. She's fallen in love with the country, and I think she's probably just as

Austrian as a lot of Austrians are.

Q. Do you have any references of four-balls or foursomes, and if so, why?

SEPP STRAKA: Not really. They are very different. They are kind of different mentalities. In the foursomes, it's hard to get into rhythm sometimes, just because you're only hitting every other shot, and then maybe you go eight, nine holes without having a real putt. So that's always tough.

In the four-ball, you just try to make -- try to get as many birdie putts as you can; try to make as many birdies as you can. It's a very different mentality, but I don't really have a preference.

STEVE TODD: Thank you.

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