

The Ryder Cup

Wednesday, 27 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

U.S. Team

Brian Harman

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have the Champion Golfer of the Year, Brian Harman. Brian, making a rookie appearance for the United States team. Can you sum up the year and how it's felt for you.

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, it's been a whirlwind. Really excited to be here. It's been a lot the last couple months. But super elated. Super happy to be here with these guys. It's been a lot of fun to get to know them even better than I did, and I'm excited to get to work with them.

Q. A lot of talk about who's going to play with whom Friday and Saturday. There's analytics, there's guys who are best friends. If you're the captain and you're making these things, how do you weight all of that? Sometimes it just sort of seems to be very mysterious, there's some sort of alchemy where guys just play well together and you can't explain it.

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I don't envy Zach's job at all. I'd be happy to play with any of the guys. They're all super talented and they've won a lot of golf tournaments and they're all very, very good.

It's tough because you end up with the analytics say one thing, the players say one thing, captains say another thing, and it's Zach's job to try to put the best out that he thinks gives us the best chance to win. That's Zach's job, and we're happy with whatever direction he takes us.

Q. Do you secretly imagine the other 11 guys on the team campaigning to Zach saying, hey, I want to play with Brian Harman?

BRIAN HARMAN: Like I said, I'm honoured anyone would want to play with me. They'll get my best, and that's all I can do.

Q. I've been asking everybody about this concept of people cheering against you at a Ryder Cup and how that's not normal in golf. You were in a little bit of a



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unique situation. You probably got a small taste of it at Hoylake, but you're also a football fan. You've watched Georgia play and seen exactly what that means. Any way you can prepare for that, and what do you think of that concept, the novelty of it in the sport?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I don't think there's any way to prepare for it. I expect them to be as fervent and I expect to be at times overwhelmed by it, just like I was at The Open championship. It was overwhelming at times.

The best you can do is just acknowledge it and just move forward and try not to let it affect you as best you can. But it will affect you. You'd be silly not to think that -- obviously the home teams in the Ryder Cups have been extremely successful, and a lot of that has to do with the fans. They can affect outcomes of matches.

It's just our job to try to stay as present as possible and execute more than the other guys and see what happens.

Q. Do you have any memories? I know you were a baseball player and things like that. Is it so far in the distant past that it doesn't help, or can you draw on memories of being cheered against?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I think as you ratchet up different levels of sports, we're at the top of our sport, and the fan engagement just gets higher and higher and higher. To say I'll be ready for Friday morning or Friday afternoon, I don't think there's any way you're ever totally ready.

It's kind of like if you're trying to give someone advice if they're about to have their first child. There's nothing you can tell them to get them ready for it. No, your life is going to change, it's going to be really hard, but you'll get through it. There's lots of people that have done it, and it's up to you how you handle it.

Q. I'm just wondering, what are your thoughts on the golf course, and if you could pick out one specific thing about the course that's going to be really important this week, what would you say it is?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I think driving the ball in the



fairway is going to be extremely important, and then some of the approaches tend to be a little bit on the longer side, your medium to long irons coming into the greens. So you have to be a little bit smart about where you leave the ball.

It's a really challenging golf course. I find it to be really challenging. I think it'll be a good test. It's going to be an interesting match play because I think par is a really good score around this place.

Q. Brian, at least in my mind as someone who covers a lot of college golf, I think your and Rickie's match back in 2010 was one of the most memorable ones and maybe Rickie's reaction afterwards. How much do you and Rickie still talk about that, and what would be the dynamic if you guys were to partner this week?

BRIAN HARMAN: I'd be elated. Rickie is one of the -- I call him Iron Byron sometimes. He hits the ball so great. We've never talked about that match. We were college kids. I was trying to beat him; he was trying to beat me. I got the better of him that day. He's had an incredible career. I've done okay.

Rickie is a good friend and he's a great dad, and I've got the utmost respect for Rickie.

Q. Did you ever get to meet Ricky Ponting?

BRIAN HARMAN: I have not. I have seen pictures of him, though. He's got a better head of hair than I've got.

Q. Have you been hunting much since, because we were asking you about that at Hoylake?

BRIAN HARMAN: No, I haven't. My dad has been down. We got the new tractor. We've prepared all of our fields for the hunting season. We plant, gosh, almost 25 acres worth of food, so we've been -- we've got to spray the grass, turn it over, mow it, turn it over, and then we'll be planting next week.

Haven't done any hunting. Bow season in Georgia opened up last weekend, but I've been really focused on this golf tournament and getting ready.

Q. 10 days ago at the Drive, Chip and Putt regional at Sea Island, one of the winners came running back to his father, and he said, Dad, that was the Brian Harman on the range and we got our picture with him. I was just wondering, you've won an Open, is there sort of a line of demarcation where you didn't get that reaction that much and now you're getting it more?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, certainly after you win a big golf

tournament like that, people notice you more, especially with the kids. I'm happy to take some time because I was one of those kids, and it would have meant the world to me.

Happy to see those kids out there competing, and got to talk to a few of them. I just happened to be out there practising. I'm glad that Sea Island is doing such a nice job of taking care of junior golfers, and like I said, I was happy to hang out with them.

Q. Obviously you've spent the last five weeks preparing (indiscernible) --

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, a lot of it is resting up. Not enough gets made -- our bodies take kind of a beating all year. So getting done at the TOUR Championship, pretty much just a week of nothing, practised a little bit, came over here, and then two weeks of just grinding on my game, just trying to get as ready as I can.

I feel like I owe it to -- it's a different sort of feeling being on a team. Like you don't want to overprepare. You don't want to get yourself too psyched out about it, but at the same time, you really feel like that team -- like, man, I want to play great for this team. I've been really focused on that.

Just been trying to kind of lay low and not do a whole lot. It doesn't make for good clickbait for the media, I apologise, but yeah, I've just been grinding. Resting and grinding.

Q. (Indiscernible.)

BRIAN HARMAN: No, I didn't play a lot of golf. I've got sort of like a plan set, if I can do this -- it's kind of like the building blocks to get into really good form, kind of how I've done it. Just going through that stuff over and over and over again, good fundamentals, good alignment, good posture, good grip, stuff like that, making sure it's trying to get a little bit better at that every day.

For me, if I play five days at home and I'm shooting great, it's almost like that's my peak. And then there's always a little bit of a valley. There's always these contrasting things in golf, like you can't have great golf without a little bit of bad golf, so you need to struggle a little bit in order to get to that good spot. I don't know if that makes sense or not.

Q. As a country boy, what are your impressions of Rome and your experience here so far?

BRIAN HARMAN: I'm a big flora fauna guy, so I think they call them the Scot pine, the pines that have the canopy, they're beautiful. Just been taking them in. I think there's a few Linden trees hanging around downtown.

It's a beautiful place. I've been overwhelmed. Our hotel is incredible, and it looks out over the city. The history and just the magnitude of how long everything has been here is pretty overwhelming.

Q. Is it your first trip here aside from when you came to practise?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yes, ma'am.

Q. You said you got the new tractor. Is that what you treated yourself to after winning The Open?

BRIAN HARMAN: I had plans for it before The Open, but I did get a couple days where I got to go spend some time on it, got my daughter down there. She loves riding around on the tractor with me. It's another chance I get to spend time with her, so I was pretty happy. It was a nice week to be home.

Q. Have you treated yourself to anything else?

BRIAN HARMAN: No, no, not really. I'm not a big rest on my laurels guy. I was pretty excited to get back to work. My wife threw me a nice party.

I've got to get one of those tabloids of Brian the Butcher because it was a Brian the Butcher theme party that my wife threw me, which is fantastic.

Q. There was a picture the other day of you practising on the far left end of the range, far away from your team. I just wonder if it was a wind thing or --

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, right. Friends I need, right?

Max and I were joking about that this morning, and he's like, I love reading these things, they make me so happy. We all get along great. Yeah, I was trying to chase -- I like hitting balls -- rest in peace, Jack Lumpkin, he was my instructor for 25 years, but we would always try to find what we call a hook wind.

So I'm always trying to find a hook wind a little in and off the left is how I like to warm up. It's how I can tell if I am able to hit my irons like I want to.

I was the first one there, so I just started down there, and they were the lazy ones and ended up on that end of the range.

Q. Match play is probably the most personal format in golf. Did you make it personal the years you played in the Austin match play, back in the Walker Cup,

whenever?

BRIAN HARMAN: I mean, you have to sometimes, especially if things aren't going your way. But match play for me, it's kind of like -- I've always enjoyed match play because it really is, there's such a different dynamic. Stroke play is just -- it's basically you versus you, you versus the golf course. In match play it's you versus the golf course, you versus you, you versus the other guy.

There's this whole different thing. I've just always really enjoyed the strategy of it, being able to maybe play golf holes a little bit different than you normally would.

It's a nice mix-up from stroke play for sure.

Q. Did you ever make it personal against somebody?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, I have.

Q. I'd love the details.

BRIAN HARMAN: It's usually just made-up stuff. I love the story Michael Jordan told about the guy talked trash to him and he goes out and scores 40 and the guy never said a word to him. Just totally made up. I love that story.

Q. Just digging a bit deeper on the Brian the Butcher party, did everyone come dressed as butchers?

BRIAN HARMAN: No, I can show you the emblem my wife came up with. It was very funny.

No, we had tee shirts, golf balls, and one of the rotating cameras where you can hold a Brian the Butcher picture up and take pictures. It was fun.

Q. Did you do the catering?

BRIAN HARMAN: Oh, yeah.

Q. What did you kill or serve up?

BRIAN HARMAN: No, no, I did not -- I could have provided the catering. Let's see, we had food trucks, hot dogs and hamburgers.

Q. As a tree guy myself, do you have an app --

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, PictureThis. Is that the one? It's incredible.

I use it at the farm because I'm like, well, damn, I saw the deer eating that weed or whatever, and I take a picture of it -- all the herbs, they have the most incredible names. It's

like, purple top, whatever it is. It's great.

Q. I was curious if you have a favourite tree?

BRIAN HARMAN: Yeah, the swamp chestnut tree. You guys aren't familiar with swamp chestnuts? They call them cow oaks, too, because when we used to graze cattle, they would graze them through the swamps and they'd eat these giant acorns, so they call them cow oaks or swamp chestnuts.

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