

# The Ryder Cup

Friday, 29 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

## Team Europe

**Tommy Fleetwood**

**Shane Lowry**

**Ludvig Åberg**

**Sepp Straka**

Press Conference



MARCO SIMONE  
ROME, ITALY

STEVE TODD: We are joined by Tommy Fleetwood, Ludvig Åberg, Shane Lowry and Sepp Straka.

Ludvig and Sepp, if we can start with you, your first experience in the Ryder Cup, must have been a pretty special one.

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yes, absolutely. I was very nervous this morning, but it was really cool. I had Viktor alongside me, kind of a comfort speaking the same language and having fun together. Felt like we handled that very well and hit some nice shots, too, to get the point to Europe.

STEVE TODD: Sepp, special experience for you as well.

SEPP STRAKA: Yeah, it was incredible. Having Shane on my side was amazing. I wouldn't say he calmed me down, he did not, but he kept me comfortable. He kept it fun. Yeah, we just had a really good time out there.

SHANE LOWRY: It was amazing. Quite an enjoyable morning on the golf course. I think Luke wanted us to get out there and get off to a fast start, and we did that. But we are under no illusions how much golf is left. But it is nice to be in this position, and it's nice to send the lads out this afternoon in good shape, and hopefully we can get the win in the afternoon session and kick on.

STEVE TODD: It was a terrific first session for the team.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, it was sort of nice being that last group out and seeing all the blue on the board and hearing the cheers. I think me and Rory were just very aware that we wanted to make sure we kept that momentum going.

We played well. And I think like you're always waiting for one of those Ryder Cup moments, and we managed to have a couple of those at the end. Very, very cool, clean sweeping the first morning.

But like Shane said, obviously you celebrate the good stuff, but for the team, it's keep our heads down and keep pushing and keep trying to push ahead.

**Q. Rory spoke about Luke having you guys play three-hole matches in order to stress the importance of getting off to a fast start. For the two guys who have played in a Ryder Cup before, how is that different from how you prepared for these things in the past, and what did that do for you? Did it impact the way you guys were able to come out so strong right off the bat?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, we've been playing -- that was something we just added into the practise rounds this week. Everybody that was playing together, we just played some three-hole matches.

Look, there's statistics to say the guys that go up early, there's a large percentage of wins. Having said that, I think it's all well and good thinking that and it's great when you do get up, but it's 18 holes of golf, and I think we are all very ready as well to when we have to fight and battle it out and come from down if we have to.

But yeah, like today, it was sort of I guess the perfect execution of a plan where everybody got going early, and nobody let up. So it was great to see like the work that Luke and the vice captains and the players have put in and just have it pay off.

**Q. Shane, you talked earlier on in the week about keeping your emotions in check. It was obvious to everyone you were jumping up and down on the first tee.**

SHANE LOWRY: First tee. I stood on the first tee trying to stay calm, and I'm watching Viktor on the big screen and he chipped in, and I lost it. That's what the Ryder Cup

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does to me. It's a very special tournament. I really enjoyed it today.

Luke spoke to me during the week about keeping -- Seve is a very easygoing, laid-back type of fella, keeping him -- like the way he is. I'm not sure I did a great job of that, but I feel like we brought each other around the golf course well today. And look, like I said, that's the stuff that the Ryder Cup does to you.

**Q. And could you just contrast the emotions from two years ago, you had to work so hard to get a point on the board.**

SHANE LOWRY: It's obviously different. It's different playing out there today. You know, it's amazing walking on every tee, every green, up every fairway, the crowds are cheering for you. And just hearing -- obviously we were very fortunate this morning, we had a lot of things go our way. The crowd got on our side fairly quickly. You know, you could hear the roars just echoing around the course, and it was a very special morning of golf.

But like I said, a long way to go.

**Q. Ludvig, I know you've had some time to reflect on your dream round this morning. Wonder if you could describe to us the whole experience with reference, maybe, as well to the feeling of togetherness, being out in the heat when it matters with Viktor and seeing the other matches on the screens, how that's all come together; and to cap it all off, to have Novak Djokovic following you around, and then looked like he was desperate to meet you when the match finished.**

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yeah, obviously it's a dream come true for me to play here. To get the first point on the board, that's the most important thing for us. You know, that's what we talked about, like Tommy said, and that's what we wanted to do.

Obviously playing alongside one of the best players in the world in Viktor, it gives you a lot of comfort, and you know, I felt like we both played pretty well at times. Kept our emotions intact and had a fun time on the golf course.

It's very easy to get distracted and all that, but the crowd really supported us. We felt the energy, like Shane said, from every tee box you walked up to, every green, every fairway, you could feel the support, and that was something I'll never forget, absolutely.

**Q. Meeting Novak Djokovic as well, could you see him while you were playing?**

LUDVIG ÅBERG: I saw him a little bit actually. But I got a high five at the end after the round, and it was pretty cool. It was really special. Obviously he is the GOAT of tennis, and to see him here supporting us, I think everyone really appreciates.

**Q. Did your legs go to jelly at all?**

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Yes, they did, multiple times.

**Q. Can you talk about your chemistry with Rory out there, a bit of vibes from 2018 with Frankie, and his tee shot on 17 under that pressure?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, I keep getting good partners. Even Whistling Straits, I had Viktor. Keep successful pairings, I guess just get the good partners.

Look, I think without being cheesy, I think it's a dream to play with Rory McIlroy in front of so many people on the planet. Going out there with him in a Ryder Cup is very, very cool. We played well together. Going out with someone, it is a very high-pressure situation, but having someone that you have known for so long that you're close to that it's easy being out there with makes a huge difference.

Yeah, 17, it was just perfect. You know, watching it all the way, just walking up there, I'm like, I wonder if it's as close as what it looks on the screen. I had a few mid-range chances that I felt I hit decent putts but just let them slip by where we could have got away in the match. But I'm very happy with the ones he left me there.

It was great and, yeah, very nice to just be out there with a friend that I've known for a long time.

**Q. Got a question for Shane. Sorry to disturb you --**

SHANE LOWRY: No, just watching the footy (looking at match on screen).

**Q. On the first tee, you were fist-pumping Justin Rose finding a fairway. Why are you so invested in the Ryder Cup, and what was your first Ryder Cup memory?**

SHANE LOWRY: Why wouldn't I be invested in the Ryder Cup? I'm European. I play professional golf for a living. This is where you want to be.

I mean, we're very fortunate to have José María Olazábal with us this week. He's been very successful individually on the golf course, but people know him for the Ryder Cup. Same with Seve. You know, what do people know him

for? Ryder Cup. When I finish my career, I think obviously I'm very fortunate to have a Claret Jug in my house, but you know, I really want one, if not multiple, of these under my belt as well.

So yeah, I mean, I just love it. I love -- this is, honestly, the most special week in golf. There's a reason it's the greatest tournament in golf. Yeah.

**Q. What was your first Ryder Cup memory? Do you recall?**

SHANE LOWRY: We were talking about this yesterday actually. My first, like lasting memory is I remember being at the local golf club watching McGinley hole the putt at The Belfry to win the Ryder Cup in 2002. I was 15 at the time. I do vaguely remember watching Brookline, but before that I wouldn't have walked the Ryder Cup. Yeah, I didn't get into golf until I was 10 or 11.

**Q. How difficult was it to cope with the distractions, the big screens and cheers from the fans?**

SEPP STRAKA: It was pretty difficult, but once you got out there, the first tee was the hardest, especially when Viktor made that chip and everyone went crazy, and you're trying to tee up a ball and hit the fairway.

But after that, once you get out there, you get in your routine, it doesn't feel normal because it's unlike anything you've ever done. But you just focus on your routine and try to do the best you can.

**Q. Did you take a look at the screens?**

SEPP STRAKA: Oh, yeah, I was actually joking to Shane that it would be kind of nice to sit back and watch all the matches. But we got to watch a lot of it out there, anyway. So it worked out.

**Q. Tommy and Shane, bear with me a second while I run numbers by you: Since Medinah, in every format except foursomes, the home team has 50 wins and 46 losses, so pretty close. In foursomes, it's 33 wins and 10 losses. So kind of drastic there. And you've seen both sides where the home team does really well. I can't figure it out. Do you have any theories why that format has been such a success for the team at home?**

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Not really. I guess numbers don't really lie, but I think when it's you that's playing, everything kind of goes out the window and you're just focusing on trying to play your best. When you look at numbers like that, obviously the odds seem like they are very much in your favour in a foursomes setting but you would never

think like that.

It's amazing, we have a great team of people this week. The stats, Edoardo has been heavily involved with that, and he's done a great job and we've heard plenty of numbers this week. It's strange. Like I said, the numbers don't lie, but it's hard to put your finger on it at all, really. I don't know. I like the numbers for this week.

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, I have no -- I hope it goes that way again tomorrow to be honest.

But I have no reason for you why that's happened. I mean, the home team, obviously there is an advantage there. It's quite hard when you're away. I was in -- look, I was in the position the Americans are in now in Whistling Straits and it's not easy.

But yeah, we are at home and we are enjoying it.

**Q. Just real quick for Ludvig, what language were you speaking with Viktor?**

LUDVIG ÅBERG: So he spoke Norwegian; I spoke Swedish. It's very similar. I actually have two Norwegian roommates that I live with, so kind of got used to the Norwegian language.

But yeah, it's comfort.

**Q. Sepp and Ludvig, curious how well you slept last night. Is it hard to get to sleep when you're nervous thinking about what's in store?**

SEPP STRAKA: How did you sleep?

LUDVIG ÅBERG: Well, I didn't sleep for that long because we were up at like 4.00. I wish I could have slept a few more hours.

No, I was obviously very nervous. It would have been weird if I wasn't nervous. I guess I slept a little shaky but hopefully I'll sleep a little better tomorrow night.

SEPP STRAKA: I was pretty tired last night. I a little longer sleep would have been nice but that's part of it. We do that a lot.

**Q. Many Austrian fans out there and looked sometimes very crazy and funny. What do you think about their performance and the atmosphere?**

SEPP STRAKA: Unbelievable. Even yesterday, just the nine-hole practice round was incredible. So many Austrian people vacation in Italy, anyways, so I think it was pretty

comfortable for them to come down and just so happy to your support. There's a few crazies out there but it makes even more fun.

STEVE TODD: We'll let you get out and watch the matches. Thanks for joining us.

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