

The Walker Cup

Saturday, 7 September 2019

Press Conference



THE WALKER CUP
ROYAL LIVERPOOL 2019



Craig Watson Alex Fitzpatrick Conor Gough

THE MODERATOR: We'll just get started. We'd like to welcome the GB&I team into the interview room. Craig, we'll start with you, 7-5 at the end of day one, what's your reaction to that?

CRAIG WATSON: It was a pretty good day. It could have been better, but we knew the Americans were going to come back to us. Everybody well. Looking forward to tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, two good results for you today, two points in the bag. How did you feel playing in the Walker Cup for the first time?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, it was a good experience. Each game was different, and was happy to get two wins out there today and put two points on the board for us.

THE MODERATOR: Conor, similar story for you. What was your reaction to today's performance?

CONOR GOUGH: I really enjoyed it today actually. The crowd is amazing. The atmosphere is just insane out there when you make a putt. It's just completely different to any other event you play in. It kind of eggs you want to make more putts. It's a good feeling. It's really exciting.

Q. Same plan tomorrow? Will you change anything for tomorrow?

CRAIG WATSON: No, it'll be very similar to today. I mean, it's 7-5, isn't it. No matter what happens in the foursomes tomorrow, we still have to play in the singles. We had a lead going into the last day of the St. Andrews Trophy match and we managed to lose that very convincingly. The boys will be up for it, I think. Over the last two holes when the matches get a wee bit closer, it will be a nice fright for them to make sure they keep going again tomorrow.

Q. Alex, your brother was out there watching you today; did he get in last night?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yes, yeah, he drove -- he was at home I think for a couple days, and now, yeah, he got in last night. Came today, and I think he's coming tomorrow, as well.

Q. Did you see him last night or talk to him?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: No, not at all. He actually sent me a really nice text, and I only picked it up this morning because I've got my American phone and my English phone, and my English phone happened to be charging, and he sent me a really nice text, and woke up to that, which was nice.

Q. Did him being out there, did that give you any extra drive?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Not really. I mean, all the drive came from the support. As Conor says, the crowds were amazing. We thank you all for the support that they've given us. But you get a real feel, like a buzz and energy off when you hole putts and hit shots close.

Q. In addition to the two English boys, Craig, the two Scottish lads made a good contribution this afternoon. Could you talk about that?

CRAIG WATSON: Sandy and Euan, I sort of watched Euan for the four, five holes, and he just grinds it out, and hit a lot of good shots, got a couple of great up-and-downs, which kept him going. You know what you're getting with Euan.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: He's a robot.

CRAIG WATSON: He's very steady, and Sandy has been great since he came back from the States, and he obviously won at Pebble Beach a couple weeks ago. He's in top form with whatever set of clubs he uses.

Q. Craig, what is it about Alex that you started both sessions with him? Matt says he doesn't give a monkey's; he's got that sort of attitude?

CRAIG WATSON: Well, he's just extremely fast, so we just set him out. He likes to get on with it. But no, he's a great player. I think if Alex was playing in front of one person, he would thrive, so to put him in front of as many people as we were watching today, it's just a buzz, and Conor the same. Conor is too young to know any better. They're both going to be stars.

Q. Conor is two days into his 17th year --

CRAIG WATSON: It was amazing, he was 16 for 365 days --

CONOR GOUGH: Never going to hear the end of that.

Q. Were there many nerves?

CONOR GOUGH: I mean, this morning you definitely

had a little bit of nerves, but actually after the first hole you're really more excited just because the crowd is going. It's a weird feeling. It's hard to describe, but I wouldn't call it nerves. I actually get quite excited. I'm excited to make a putt, excited to hit a good shot to get the crowd going.

Q. Alex, just in terms of dealing with the crowd, obviously it's a real inspiration. Is there any aspect to it where you have to kind of control yourself and your emotions because of the feeling that you're getting from the crowd, or it's just pure benefit?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I think mainly it's just pure benefit, really. I was 2-down pretty early on, and I remember I think it was the 4th or 5th hole, and I heard this massive roar from the 1st, which I think was Sandy. Sandy or Euan holed a long putt apparently, and I was like, right, come on, get yourself together here, and I won the next hole and then won the next hole, and yeah, I think it's mainly all benefit. There's times when obviously if you're not playing that well and you might be 3 or 4-down, it's tough to sort of get yourself back together because you might not be hitting good shots and not getting the applause that you'd like, but it really does spur you on once you start holing putts and stuff.

CONOR GOUGH: Yeah, I'd say the exact same, yeah. It's more just I get a buzz from the crowd. When you're getting cheered on for holing a putt, it kind of makes you want to hole another putt, and I think it definitely is just a benefit because I know it's bad, but the Americans don't get as much applauding as us, and I think that's definitely an advantage just because we're at home and the people want us to win.

Q. Alex, I just wanted to ask you about the stinger. It's almost like a trademark shot for you, isn't it. Is there anything in your golfing hinterland that has let you to developing that shot, or what's the story behind it?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: So when I was growing up, I used to just -- I used to stand there, I did a thing called YMG camp which is at Pete Cowan's golf academy, and apparently all these kids used to go and I was one of them, and I was the only one that didn't sort of behave and wanted to smash it as hard as I could. I think all the messing around and stuff when I was younger sort of led to all these sort of different shots I guess I can play. But yeah, people seem to like the stinger, and it's a shot that I hit quite a lot just because it keeps it in play. So yeah, people enjoy it. I'm not sure why, but it's a decent shot to have.

Q. Conor, you're the youngest player on the GB&I squad. You played today with such great maturity, getting two points. That must mean a lot. But do you feel that you've matured a little on this trip, or has it always been there?

CONOR GOUGH: I feel like on the course, yeah, definitely. I feel like overall my golf game is actually surprisingly quite mature. I normally keep my calm on the golf course, don't get too emotional and the just stay in the zone. I don't give too much away. You'll never know if I'm playing bad or if I'm playing good, and I feel like that's a good trademark to have on the golf course especially in match play because your opponent will never kind of get a lift from you being down. Yeah, I think this morning and this afternoon I controlled my emotions really well, and yeah, it was really enjoyable. I think I controlled them very well.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: He's matured a lot since he turned 17.

CONOR GOUGH: I have. Off the course, yeah, hanging around with these boys just boosts it up.

Q. Craig, there was a point today where we thought you might go 8-0 in singles. 6-2 was on the board for a long time and it ended up at 5-3. Is there any disappointment in the fact that you didn't get there and didn't get those points at the end?

CRAIG WATSON: Not so much disappointment. I think it's probably a good thing because they'll be more ready for something similar happening tomorrow. I mean, you could -- if they won quite convincingly this afternoon, they might be looking around for somebody else to get the winning points tomorrow. But I think the fact that the Americans came in so close at the end could work in our advantage again because we'll be a bit more ready for the fight tomorrow.

Q. Conor, there was a bit of a backup around the turn. Does that kind of waiting and kind of slow ish play, does that kind of negatively affect you and the other players because I think Alex, their match finished three holes ahead of the next match.

CONOR GOUGH: Yeah, there was a bit of a holdup on I think it was 10. It didn't really bother me. I just sat down, relaxed, had a little chillax while stuff was going on. Yeah, it could have bothered some people because it takes the rhythm out, but for me it didn't. At the end of the day, you still have to hit your shots, same concentration over every shot. So yeah, it didn't bother me.

Q. Why was it backed up?

CONOR GOUGH: I think there was a rules official.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: It was probably slow play again. That always seems to be the case.

Q. I just want to ask, this is your last evening together with golf the following day. What will you two do this evening to unplug from golf and just to kind of relax? What specifically, anything in

particular you guys are going to do tonight?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: We've been playing a lot of ping-pong. The team have had a table tennis table, FIFA, and a pool table. So we've all just been relaxing in there, enjoying ourselves, and it's nice just to switch up when you get off the golf course and just relaxed, prepare yourself for tomorrow. Yeah, it's a sad obviously last night, but it'll be a good one tomorrow hopefully.

CONOR GOUGH: I'm sure we'll have a good Sunday night.

Q. Who is the worst ping-pong player?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Raff doesn't touch the table. I think he's a bit scared.

CONOR GOUGH: I'm not the best, but at least I try.

Q. The amateur champion, you didn't play him this morning. I'm not sure if he has a bit of an injury or a niggle or something, and he had a tough finish today, as well. Is he going to need an arm around him?

CRAIG WATSON: No, I think James is fine. We had five good foursomes pairings. We could have thrown the balls up, the 10 guys, and been happy with any of the pairings they came out with, so we just went with no reason with the four we had this morning. But James is fine. James is fine. He's had a great season, and I think he's played -- everybody else is still enjoying the experience. He loves playing in front of the crowd, so I fully expect James to play well tomorrow.