

The Walker Cup

Friday, 6 September 2019

Press Conference

Conor Purcell

Sandy Scott

Alex Fitzpatrick



THE WALKER CUP
ROYAL LIVERPOOL 2019



THE MODERATOR: We'll make a start with this afternoon's press conferences. I'm delighted to welcome GB&I into the interview room. To my immediate left is Conor Purcell. To his left is Alex Fitzpatrick, and then on the far end is Sandy Scott, who is a last-minute replacement for Euan Walker. We'll kick off with you, Alex. This will be your first Walker Cup and you're obviously going to follow in your brother's footsteps. How proud are you of that particular achievement?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, obviously I think as any amateur would like to be playing in the Walker Cup, it's probably the pinnacle of the amateur game. Obviously being involved in the team, it's something I've always wanted to do. So yeah, I guess it's an achievement that can't be matched, really. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: And Sandy, you come into this match having won in the U.S., so you're in good form. How important is that?

SANDY SCOTT: Yeah, I mean, any time you're playing good golf, it helps, I guess. But no, it was a good win there in the U.S., and hopefully I can take that into this week.

THE MODERATOR: Conor, you've had the chance to practise on the course a few times now. Are you just itching to start the match tomorrow?

CONOR PURCELL: Yeah, you come over here and you have a week to prepare and you think on Monday it's going to be a long week, but we're already at Friday, and we're itching to get going. Yeah, we've prepped well and we're ready for it.

Q. Alex, what advice has your brother given you about handling the next few days?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Good luck. That's about it. The odd text now and then. But no, not really any advice. He's been given sort of just do your own thing and play well really.

Q. Is he coming?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: He'll be here tomorrow, yeah. He'll be here tomorrow and Sunday. Be nice to have the whole family over here. Hopefully the dog. I don't know if he's allowed, but yeah, he'll be here Saturday

and Sunday.

Q. Was there any sibling rivalry this week?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: None, no. People are getting this idea that it's me versus him, but no, there will be none.

Q. I think the last thing he said about you was at the British Masters was you were just there to get free stuff.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Am I getting free stuff from him?

Q. No, off equipment manufacturers.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I tried my best for a period of time, but no, I got a putter at the moment that I'm happy with, so so far I'm not sort of switching or switching anytime soon.

Q. Alex, did you watch your brother play when he was playing in the Walker Cup?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I was out there, yeah. I can't remember lots of it, to be honest. But yeah, I went out there and enjoyed my time.

Q. Sandy, you obviously experienced a Walker Cup at Nairn, although you'd be very young at the time. Do you have any memories of that?

SANDY SCOTT: I was one. (Laughter.) I can't remember much, no.

Q. You are very young.

SANDY SCOTT: Yeah.

Q. Alex, obviously lots made of home advantage because of the recent record certainly. How much of an advantage is it, and what have the conditions been like for you guys this week so far?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Apparently the conditions tomorrow and Sunday will be not as much wind, so this past week has been pretty windy. There's been a few showers and stuff, so the conditions will be a little different tomorrow. But I still think it'll play an advantage with any sort of wind that we'll have. The Americans aren't quite as used to playing hard, fast courses, so hopefully that will sort of catch them out a bit. But I'm sure they've prepared well and they'll adjust to how strong the wind is.

Q. How much have you personally played this course before?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I have only played since the

training sessions that we had in I think last year and all through this year. But I feel like now sort of everyone here has adjusted to the course well and got used to it. Spent a full week playing it this week, and we've played a lot of golf, so hopefully we'll be okay.

Q. Sandy, I know you were in your pram at the last Walker Cup at Nairn, but it's obviously a big part of the club's history and legacy. Has it been a goal of yours to play in this match because of that?

SANDY SCOTT: Yeah, definitely. I've learned a lot of what the Walker Cup is about just from being at Nairn and people talking about it and having history all over the walls and stuff. So I've been around a lot of Walker Cup stories and stuff. No, it's been a goal of mine pretty much the whole amateur career, so it's great to be here.

Q. How much have you developed since the Links Trophy at St. Andrews (indiscernible) done very well. There's something that's happening to your game, and you're probably growing, as well?

SANDY SCOTT: Well, I've not grown in about four years, unfortunately. I wish I could, a couple inches at least. But I'd say being in the U.S., it helped me develop a lot. I've been there for three years now, and yeah, I've gotten physically stronger and technically better, but I'd say that I've progressed most in the mental aspect of the game, so I think that's helped me the most.

Q. Your coach there, do you see him or --

SANDY SCOTT: Did you say coach, sorry? Oh, yeah, he's a really good coach. He's helped me tons, yeah.

Q. Conor, Irish golf, they've had a lot of success here in the home internationals in recent years. I'm just wondering what do you draw from that and what are the qualities you need in team match play and links golf that help things gel together so well?

CONOR PURCELL: I think the biggest part for us is that we've played so much match play growing up that we kind of form a camaraderie whether it's just playing for Ireland or playing for GB&I. All the lads, we mingle together and we get on so well, and then we can pull that on to the golf course. I think when you're playing a match, if you're playing foursomes, it's important to be able to get along with your partner, feed off each other, have the same kind of energy and kind of pull each other through tough times, and I think if you're not so used to playing match play, you're so focused on yourself that maybe you lose track that you're actually playing for a team or playing for your country or whatever. So I think it's just more so experience over the last few years we've played a lot, and hopefully we can pull on those experiences to get us through.

Q. Can you just talk a little bit about the dynamic in the team, who are the serious guys, who are the jokers, who are the quiet ones?

CONOR PURCELL: I'll be struggling to get you a serious person on this team. There's one, Euan is probably our dad this week. But yeah, we're all joking we can slag each other and bounce back off each other. Yeah, the atmosphere in the team room is good, and we're all pulling for each other, so it's good.

Q. Who would be the guy that you'd send out to do a job for you?

CONOR PURCELL: I think we're lucky in the sense that we have 10 guys here this week that can all play really well. You prepare, as Craig always says to us -- I think any of us could play with each other. I think we're just a -- we have a lot of depth in the team, and we're not really leaving two people out of any session because they're playing bad. I think we're all playing quite well.

Q. Sandy, as well as the Walker Cup, Nairn staged a Curtis Cup, and I know you were older than one when that took place there. Did you attend that?

SANDY SCOTT: I did. I was a walking scorer, or a scoreboard carrier. So I had the face paint on and everything.

Q. That was obviously a great win for GB&I. What are your memories of that?

SANDY SCOTT: Yeah, it was great. I remember walking around some matches and admiring how well the girls hit the ball. I think I would have been -- seven years ago, so 14 maybe. So yeah, I was still aspiring to pursue golf, and it was great to see these girls playing at such a high level. It was pretty inspiring. I remember as the winning point coming in, the team celebrating, and yeah, it was just a great scene, yeah.

Q. As one of the GB&I players based in America, is there any kind of sportsmanship, gamesmanship when you get on that tee over the weekend?

SANDY SCOTT: Sorry, say that again.

Q. You're based in America; you know some of the guys on the American team --

SANDY SCOTT: Well, I do know a lot of the guys. We play a lot of tournaments together, and I mean, we want to beat them. That's really what it's all about. I mean, us knowing them a little bit might make it a little bit more comfortable to play against them, but we're still very competitive. At the end of the day, we're going to try and win.

Q. Alex, you've obviously caddied for your brother when he won the U.S. Amateur. Seeing he's coming this weekend, were there any thoughts to make him repay the favour, carry

your bag?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: I actually don't know if -- I don't think we're allowed to have caddies of our own choice. I think we have to get set with caddies, so we're randomly allocated 10 from the club I assume. So no, he won't be able to caddie.

Q. It's a pity, make him do some real work for a change.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: That's right. He wouldn't be that good, though.

Q. Is there any extra pressure having him and the rest of your family here this week?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Not really. I think it's just nice to have sort of the whole family together almost. It's normally me that's sort of watching him, so it's a nice taste, really, where he can come watch me play my golf because we don't get to spend too much time together, so now at least he can see my game a bit more and see how it developed over the past year or whatnot.

Q. And obviously because of Matt we're asking a lot of questions about him. How do you cope with that? How do sort of do your own thing?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Not sure, really. I just sort of get on with it. People have had -- I guess a lot of people ask me the same things, and it's something that's brought up daily, but you sort of get used to it after a while because it occurs a lot. But it's not a bad thing. I get a lot of people that sort of ask me about me first, which I think is nice. People that sort of just come up to me and say, "How's Matt," tends to end it a little differently.

Q. How is your game?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: My game is all right. Not too bad.

Q. What are your plans going forward? Obviously I think it's just the first year you finished at Wake Forest, you're hoping to stay there the full --

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I mean, the first year I had was great. I'm sort of really -- I had a week before I came back here, so I had school for a week. But now looking forward to sort of getting back there and trying my best and seeing how we do this season. But my aim is to stay there four years and get a good degree and then we'll see what happens with golf.

Q. What are you studying?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Not sure. I'm not sure what my major is. I'm studying multiple subjects this year and then will decide on what I want to major in at the end of this year.

Q. Alex, at the beginning of the year you talked about how your game was progressing, you were hitting the ball better off the tee, but you were really focusing on your putting. Both Matthew

and Coach Haas were talking about how you are kind of a work in progress off the golf course. Can you tell me the year that you've had, are you still -- do you feel like you've kind of gotten the off-the-course figured out, and where are you with the on-the-course?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, I think sort of over the past couple years I've been a bit lazy with my practice, sort of not really being very structured in what I do. I think I was sort of maturing a bit over this year, and sort of towards the end of last year I sort of found a place where I found a plan that I could use that sort of helped me structure my practice. I sort of decided that's something that needed to be done about my putting, I guess, so I've now gone from like a really bad putter to an average putter, which is great for me, so trying to get that next step of going from an average putter to a good putter.

But I think my game has developed nicely just with the opportunities that I've had to see someone like Phil Kenyon or Pete Cowen. They've helped me a lot over the past however many years, so I'll keep obviously doing that sort of thing, and hopefully it keeps developing the way I want it to.

Q. Sandy, obviously you're on Texas and Cole Hammer is on the other side. Can you talk about what there would be -- what discussion will happen after this week when you guys get back to school?

SANDY SCOTT: Well, we technically to go to different schools -- I go to Texas Tech, he goes to Texas, but we played a lot of tournaments together. But I've never played with Cole before, but we're technically rival schools. If I see him after this, I'll make sure to say hi.

Q. Alex, could you just clarify who you regard as your coach? Were you taught both by Pete and Mike Walker, or was it just Pete?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, so it's a difficult one. Pete has a driving range over in Rotherham that consists of sort of a lot of coaches over there. I would say that Pete, Mike and a guy called Nick Huby, who works there, I would class them as my main coaches, but I don't see Mike anywhere near as much because he's travelling a lot with my brother. So it's normally Pete and Nick are at the driving range, so when I go there I'll see them.

Q. Pete travels a lot, too.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, but when he's home he spends all his time there, sort of serving drinks behind the bar and picking up range balls with a plastic bag.

Q. And have you been able to hit the ball over the net?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Do you know I haven't tried that one yet, but when I get back, I might try it.

Q. How can you not have done? I thought it was a challenge that everybody had to go through.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: No, not that I know of anyway.

Q. I think Matt scored three points out of four on his Walker Cup appearance but the team lost.

Which one is more important to you this week, playing well personally or the win?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Obviously the team winning. If I got zero points and the team won, I'd still be pleased. Overall it's a team game in this tournament. So yeah, I'd be delighted if we got the win.

Q. There's such an emphasis on professional golf these days, especially on TV and in the media.

Why is the Walker Cup important do you think?

To each of you, what is it about the Walker Cup that made you want to make this team?

CONOR PURCELL: I think as your amateur career progresses you kind of -- you go through stages and winning tournaments obviously builds up your CV, and I guess Walker Cup is kind of adding another thing on to that CV. It's the top of our amateur game. It's the biggest team competition we can play in, and I guess if you turn pro or whatever the case may be, I think someone who's looking to help you, whether it's management or sponsorship, I think having said you've played in a Walker Cup can help and that round of things.

But yeah, just builds your CV I think is the main thing.

SANDY SCOTT: I think there's such a rich history behind the Walker Cup, and that just adds to the experience. There's so much talk about how big an event it is and just everybody's reactions to the team selection and the media, and it's just such a big deal. It just adds to the whole experience, I think.

ALEX FITZPATRICK: Yeah, like both these two said, it's sort of the pinnacle of the amateur game really, so you work -- I guess you work your whole amateur career trying to get to this point, and yeah, I think it's one of the best things you can obviously play in as an amateur, and once you turn pro, people look back and think, yeah, that was a great week and I'd love to go back. Yeah.

Q. This is a question for all three of you. You've obviously made it to this point in your career, which is really the pinnacle of an amateur career for any golfer, whether you go on to turn pro or not. Regardless, who would you say individually has been your, I guess, biggest role model or inspiration throughout your careers from when you were maybe a wee lad to where you are now?

ALEX FITZPATRICK: My dog.

CONOR PURCELL: I think for me it was my dad. When I was younger, he was obviously a pro back in his time, and I joined Portmarnock when I was 12 or

13, and he was the pro there at the time, so he's the one who got me into the game. I learnt the game by playing golf with him, and he taught me his ways. To be able to play in things, like I'm playing a Walker Cup and he's never played it, it's kind of like -- I can see that he's proud of me for what I've achieved so far, and if I'm able to get one up on him, it's nice, too. So I'm just trying to beat his records at times and do some better stuff.

SANDY SCOTT: I really don't like to say Tiger Woods, but yeah, Tiger Woods was my idol growing up, just in terms of what he was achieving. I just found him mesmerizing. That's just what I wanted. Yeah, I just looked up to him the most.