

# Walker Cup

Friday, September 8, 2017

## John "Spider" Miller

## Braden Thornberry

## Doug Ghim

### USA Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, welcome to the 46th Walker Cup. First, Captain John Spider Miller immediately to my left, the 1996 and 1998 U.S. Mid-Am champion and a member of the 1999 USA Walker Cup team. To his left, Doug Ghim, first team All-American at the University of Texas, Big-12 conference Player of the Year, runner-up in the 2014 U.S. Amateur Public Links and the 2017 U.S. Amateur. And then to the far left, my far left, Braden Thornberry, the champion, NCAA champion this year. First to start off, Captain Miller, you were the captain in 2015, what did you learn from that year that you take over to this year and have you done anything differently leading up to this 2017 match?

CAPTAIN MILLER: Well, I think I learned mainly that it's no fun to lose. That's the first and foremost. But over here it's easier for me, it's easier for the players, the travel demands are not as great and we're more comfortable here and I think I try, I'm trying to main, the main thing that time trying to do is get the players ready earlier to be ready to do what I call flip the switch and go into your tournament mode, get ready to play. I think that -- I say these players are like putting a thoroughbred horse in the starting gate and then not starting for 10 or 15 minutes. So they were ready to play today and I know they will be ready tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Doug and Braden, you guys had the opportunity to play a few holes with President George W. Bush yesterday. Braden, I heard him calling you "Olive Branch" yesterday, what were some of the things that you took out of spending an hour with him just walking with him on the putting green?

DOUG GHIM: I mean, one of the things that I took away from President Bush was confidence. He talked about it a lot. He even said that it takes a little bit of cockiness to be the President of the United States. It's one person of 325 million people. So you got to be a little bit confident to be able to stand up there and say you want to run for President. But just hearing about all of the issues that he had to deal with while he was in office and to be able to make a decision, even if it's a hard call, and be able to live with that decision, I think



for us golfers, especially in the next two days it's going to be difficult and it's going to be high stakes for us, a lot of pride on the line, and just to be able to make a decision and be able to commit to that decision and not be afraid to make a mistake. I think the people who do that are going to be the most successful this weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Braden, how about you?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Obviously, there's some similarities between playing the Walker Cup and I guess being President, except his, our decision making, going for a par-5 or not, and his is very big, important decisions. But it kind of puts it in perspective a little bit to know that he was the representative of our country and that's what we're doing this week too. So kind of just to pick his brain a little bit and kind of get more of the vibe of how he talks about the country and how he loves it and try to carry that over into what we're doing.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. As the captain, when you're the home team, do you personally have any input into course setup or course conditions?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: No. I think what information I received is shared with the captain of the R & A team as well. So I fairly well knew what to expect, because I've been here for the George Thomas and the conditions I think are similar, except for the rough is higher. Green speeds are probably about what they have for that. But anyway, that's, I don't have any input, but they do share what their target is for the speeds and the firmness and they're trying to get the greens a little firmer each day and I think they're at speed now. It's going to be approaching 13.

**Q. Can you explain Olive Branch and then second part of the question is, on a serious note, foursomes golf, GB&I guys are used to playing foursomes golf and I'm wondering for the players how hard it is or how easy it's been for you to adapt to playing foursomes golf?**

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Well, first off, Olive Branch is just my hometown, it's a suburb of Memphis and that was the first thing I said I was Braden Thornberry from Olive Branch, Mississippi and he just liked that name, so it kind of stuck. But as far as the foursomes go, I

think it's just, I don't know how much those guys play it, but it comes down to just you're playing golf. So it really, I mean, I'm going to do the best on each shot, that's how I try to play my own game anyway, focus on one shot at a time and leave the ball in good places for the next one. So I don't think it's as much of an adjustment as people might think and just go out there and whoever plays the better golf will win.

DOUG GHIM: Yeah, just echoing that, I think just over thinking it makes it a little bit more difficult because all of a sudden you're playing a different situation, so especially with foursomes it's just one golf ball, so as much as you can kind of simplify it and make it feel like it's just your ball and, yeah, it's a little bit harder to get in a rhythm, maybe, but you're basically one person, because you are only playing one ball and just play the shot that you see and commit to it and see if you can get it in the hole faster.

**Q. Can you just, maybe not too much grade, but talk about what maybe what went wrong in the foursomes format two years ago and also what about your pieces this year would allow you guys to have more success?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: I have thought a lot about it and talked to various players and the only thing we came up with is that the only thing we do different and we're not used to is caucusing over a shot. So if these two are partners, they're used to, for their tee shot, they would normally go back, stay in their own thoughts, and they would hit the shot the way they saw it. If I go back or if their partner goes and says, leave me on the right side of the fairway or leave me on the left side of the fairway, that's a thought they're not used to having. So we're having the players be in their own thought and hit the shot the way they see it. And then the next play, the next shot, play it the way you find it and the way you see it. That's the only thing I think that's different. And we did last time, players would tend to go back, stand on the tee and talk about the shot. So they're not used to that. When they play their own ball, they're used to being in their own thoughts. So that's what I came up with and we're trying it. The guys who go back to the tee, the next player is getting ready to hit the next shot.

**Q. Is there a certain recipe or factors that you guys are looking at in terms of different players' abilities when making teams or is it more about players being comfortable with one another when you guys are deciding on foursomes teams?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Yeah, it's a question of whether you try and match their skills or match their personalities. Quite frankly, I'm not with them enough or have gotten to see them enough, so even if I did know more about their play, I would not do that, I would pair them by

personality. So the way we did it is they privately submitted their choice to play one through three, and most all of them said I'll play with anyone. And I said, no, you have to give it to me. So that's how I pair them. What I would call by personality.

**Q. Quickly, can I just go back on the foursomes. Do you mean that the non-hitting player will be waiting up the fairway?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Yeah. He won't go back to the tee and caucus with the other one. He'll get ready to get in his thought to wherever that ball lands, to get ready to hit it.

**Q. Kind of going back to what you said at the beginning, I'm not quite clear what you meant by trying to get the guys to start sooner, I think was a paraphrase roughly of what you were saying. What did that mean?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Well, it's no secret I'm an advocate of adding another day of competition to the Walker Cup. I know it's been discussed in the past, it's not a new idea or a novel idea, but if I could do one thing, if I could, if they give me one wish to do, I would add, I would begin the competition on Friday. I would add 18 holes of a best ball component. So I would play foursomes, singles, foursomes best ball and the final day 10, all 10 singles. And that's what I meant. Would you say you were ready to play today?

BRADEN THORNBERRY: We have been ready to play whenever.

DOUG GHIM: We have been ready since the team's been announced, so.

CAPTAIN MILLER: Yeah. See, they're ready. So I think it would be great for the Walker Cup, period. I think it would in every aspect it would be a good thing.

DOUG GHIM: I think also what he meant also is we have been here for awhile and we have been doing a lot of cool things playing Valley Club and trying to a little bit celebrate the fact that we made the team. But I think what Captain is trying to say is that once we are a couple of days away, it's no more just partying that we made the team, but it's about winning the Walker Cup and being ready to play. It can kind of be confusing this week, because it's so hard to get to this point and on this team to represent our countries, but at the end of the day it's just another tournament and we have to treat it like another tournament and be just as ready just like a U.S. Amateur and we'll be ready to play tomorrow morning.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Like Doug said I think it was Tuesday that we committed to -- like so we were

playing some different golf courses and stuff like that -- but Tuesday is when Captain was like, we need to full out on LACC and concentrate there and like prepare there and kind of stop messing around. So that's kind of how I took it.

**Q. Two things: One, how competitive have your practices been among yourselves. And two, how much of a premium does this course place on accuracy off the tee since we know balls sitting down in this Bermuda rough are very tough.**

DOUG GHIM: Well, all 10 of us were selected because we're incredibly competitive. I don't think any one of us likes to lose, whether it's a nine-hole putting contest or if it's an 18-hole match. But yeah it's been extremely competitive. We have been trying to simulate as much as we can, but we understand that that's almost impossible because when we walk up to that first tee tomorrow we're going to feel nerves that we probably haven't felt but, yeah, we have been doing our best to be a little bit competitive and it doesn't take much with us, but.

And as far as the premium on accuracy, it's very important. There are certain holes where hitting the fairway's even more vital to putting up a good score. Like 17, the left of 17 is just --

BRADEN THORBERRY: 13.

DOUG GHIM: -- ridiculous. 13. I mean, there's certain spots where you know you have to hit the fairway and if you're not, you're wedging out and hoping you got a good shot for your third.

BRADEN THORBERRY: The thing with this course too is like the, about the driving, there's two or three tight tee shots, but they give you plenty of fairway most of the time, so it's not a super demanding, as far as you have to put it on a string. But it just really penalizes the bigger miss.

Like on 2, it's a big fairway, but if you do miss you're going to be wedging out, so it's pretty important.

**Q. For either of you, whoever feels more apt to answer it, but how often have you guys played foursomes in events as juniors and college players? Is it pretty much just Wyndham Cup and Palmer cup are the tournaments that have that or is there one I'm missing?**

DOUG GHIM: Yeah, there's the Wyndham Cup. I think for a select few there was the Junior Ryder Cup, if you made it. And then the Palmer cup. But yeah, we have seen it a couple of times and if we were so lucky to make it to the practice session we would also be introduced to the format. But there hasn't been too

much, but again, it's not that hard of a format, you just have to kind of wrap your mind around it the right way.

**Q. To follow-up, going back to what Spider was talking about, adding a day to it, Doug, do you feel like it would give the U.S. more of an advantage to have more matches and add that four-ball component?**

DOUG GHIM: I'm all for it. I just, I want to be able to play more golf. We fight so hard for two years I feel like and then we get here and it's two days. So, I mean, I'm definitely grateful for the opportunity, but if we had another day, I would be all for it, because I would get to see one more day of golf and some nerves that you never get to feel other than this week.

BRADEN THORBERRY: I don't think it's as much as necessarily trying to give the U.S. an advantage, I think it is just cooler, like most of the Ryder Cups stuff they do kind of all the formats and this one's just alternate shot or foursomes and singles, which I think, like Captain was saying, I think best ball is a really cool thing that everyone enjoys, so that's kind of just my look on it.

**Q. What was the worst thing about being the losing captain?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Oh my.

DOUG GHIM: Losing.

CAPTAIN MILLER: Thank you. Thank you. He just answered it for me.

No, you come over and you have high hopes and expectations and you're full of confidence and we were beaten and that happens and for me, I told the guys, look, we're going to be gracious if we win and we're going to be gracious if we lose. And I tried to do that and I think I did and I think all the players did as well. That's part of it. If you compete, you don't win every time, and so this is my last go round as captain and my last go round in amateur golf, so it's up to my guys to send me out a winner.

**Q. When do you think the stink of losing finally evaporated? How long after or has it?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Well, I'm still working. I have five kids, reality hits me when I walk in my office door. I'm an amateur and I have to make a living and I'm like all of you guys, I have to go to work. And that's what I did. I had been gone and I came back and I went right to work. So, I don't dwell, I don't lament the past, nor do I dwell on it, I try and live my life and through the windshield, looking forward. And I forgot, it didn't last long.

**Q. So when you got these 10 guys together, and they looked at you and you looked at them and they want to know what happened at Royal Lytham, what did you tell them?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Excuse me, you mean this team or my other team?

**Q. This team.**

CAPTAIN MILLER: I never had that question. These guys, I assume probably knew we lost, but it was never discussed. I think I discussed some things with Maverick, who is my returning player, as you know, about his take about things and offer his suggestions as to how we can do it better. And we both agreed that the last time we got caught up in the moment, it was the first time for me as captain, first time for everyone as players, and we didn't flip our switch to go into our tournament mode quick enough. That's what I focused on with this team is thinking about playing and winning way before Saturday morning.

**Q. Secondly, to Doug and Braden, so obviously Captain talked about the driving situation, where one guy will be on the tee, the other guy will be out in the fairway. What happens when we get in the fairway and a questionable shot, on the green, will you guys help each other or will you play it a different way and just go ahead and receipt the putts yourselves and hit the putts and not worry about the other guy?**

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Yeah, I think it's not necessarily -- it's more thinking on your own, but if you do have a question on a read, I don't think it's the end of the world to get a second opinion. But I think what Captain is saying more is don't get any extra thoughts in your head that you just don't need. Like he was saying, with hit it left of this pin or something like that, if you go out there and -- we're all good players that's why we were chosen for the team -- so we all know how to do things our own way and no matter how you do it, if you give your partner a 15-footer he'll take it. So doesn't matter how you were thinking the shot or how it curved in the air, as long as it ends up good, they will take that.

DOUG GHIM: It's not like it's a rule, like if I ask him I get like a shock buzzer or something to me. I just think that, yeah, for the most part, just try to get the team thing out of your head and just try to play the shot. Obviously, if you really need an opinion, but I think that another important thing is to be really specific of what you're asking for just like and kind of like I think just. So some of the guys and I going back and forth just talking like, if I was your partner, what would you want to know or like these are the type of questions that I want to ask you. Nothing more or nothing less. So it's like where's the wind coming from or what's this putt

doing. But that's about it.

**Q. Usually what happens in all these cup events is par-3s are crucial because of the wind, not knowing how it's happened before the group that went through ahead of you may have been short because they didn't realize that there was more wind up there than that, will you in some way, shape or form be able to share that information with these guys?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Yes, our rules are that I am the only one who can give advice or share information. Well, give advice, actually. I think information is, I think the observers can give information. But we have a rules meeting here yet today, so I'll find some of those things out. But I do know that as far as advice, I'm the only one who could do it, who can do it and the same with captain Ingram.

**Q. For both of you, Mitch Voges was here for the media day, and he was teary eyed, recalling his experiences all these years later, talked about opening his bag and crying for 30 minutes. Can you guys talk a little bit about your Walker Cup moment of kind of realizing you were on this team and can you appreciate what you might appreciate years later from now about this experience?**

DOUG GHIM: Yeah, it's still pretty overwhelming to think about. I was fortunate enough to play the practice session last December, but just to be out here again, I remember the first day when we were playing it was kind of like reminiscing on December and trying to imagine what the Walker Cup would feel like and what it would be like to be a member of the team and all of a sudden realizing that I actually am a member of the team, it's just, it's a huge honor. It's so fleeting as well. It's so hard to make this team, it's every two years, it's not like the Palmer Cup, and just to be here and I wouldn't want to play it for any other captain than Spider, so I'm very honored to be here and definitely trying to soak it in as much as I can.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I think that it's one of those things that no matter how much you try to slow down and appreciate it, I think it's you realize how cool it was after the fact. We're doing really cool things and it's really neat while you're there, but still it's hard -- I think we take it for granted a little bit. So it's going to be sad on Monday morning when we all leave. We have had a really awesome time and hopefully it's only going to get better from here.

**Q. Do you feel like you've gotten to know some teammates better than you would have otherwise?**

DOUG GHIM: Absolutely. I think I've only played with Braden like twice before this, so just, it's really cool, we learn a lot, too, from each other this week, because

these are the best of the best and you hear their takes on how to play a certain shot or certain hole or how to prepare the best and I'm almost about to whip out a notebook every single time I step on a practice tee with these guys, because it's so cool. Everyone's from different backgrounds and done it different ways, so, yeah, definitely getting to know these guys a lot better.

**Q. The Ryder Cup teams have had their ping pong matches, what have you guys done outside of golf to compete?**

DOUG GHIM: Corn hole and ping pong. Braden's gotten a lot better.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I have gotten a lot better.

DOUG GHIM: I'll take credit for it.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: This guy and Scottie are about as good as it gets.

**Q. At ping pong?**

DOUG GHIM: Yeah, UT's ping pong's program is pretty strong.

(Laughter.)

**Q. For both of you, neither of you guys played on the same college team with Collin, but you both were observed this summer by us at [amateurgolf.com](http://amateurgolf.com) having a great time playing at the Sunnehanna Amateur and one week after defeating him, Braden, he won at the Northeast Amateur. I know, Doug, you and he get along pretty well from what we can see. Who is going to get him as partner and how tough do you guys think he will be as team. I'm guessing one you have guys is playing with Collin one day.**

BRADEN THORNBERRY: We don't know yet, but Collin is, he's as good as it gets. I mean, we joke around with him on the range, we were doing a junior clinic and people were telling him to hit hooks and fade and he couldn't do it, it just dead straight every single time. But he's one of those guys that doesn't have a weakness. I think he doesn't even realize how good he is. I was watching him, he's really impressive, so.

DOUG GHIM: Yeah, we always say, if you're keeping up with Collin or you're sneaking by him by a shot, you're probably winning the tournament. So he's great. He's a good standard to live up to and try to beat every week and, yeah, if you're competing against him and playing as well as he is, likely you're, you have a chance to win the event.

**Q. I won't put any pressure on the captain here, but a follow-on question is, what did you guys see from**

**your teammates at the U.S. Amateur? Obviously, you both went very far and you had some amazing matches.**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Oh, you're talking to me?

**Q. All of you, really.**

CAPTAIN MILLER: I'll let Doug answer that.

**Q. Doug's was one of the most amazing matches in history.**

CAPTAIN MILLER: For me, I've been watching the amateurs, the college players, intently for four years, it was the best match I've ever seen. It was amazing match. And I think, Doug, if I -- I went back in my mind with Robby, and we figured he would have probably won the last six or eight or nine probably all 10 of the last 10 final matches, but.

DOUG GHIM: Thank you.

CAPTAIN MILLER: He ran into old Doc with a hot hand.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: Hot putter.

DOUG GHIM: Yeah, that was a lot of fun. Just the crowds and getting to experience the final of the U.S. Amateur. Yeah, I felt like I played pretty well, I made a lot of good putts. I just felt like every time I made one, there was another one going in. I don't think I've ever halved as many holes as I did in that match. But kudos to Doc, I'm very glad that he's on my team this week and, yeah, let's see if GB&I can get a little taste of Doc.

**Q. So the team's been practicing out of the North Course for the last few days. I know you guys have said that you've been able to play a few other clubs in the area. And while practice rounds don't necessarily always translate to great play over the weekend, is there anybody or a few players on the team that you guys are looking at right now and just thinking, wow, he looks really sharp? And don't be afraid to include your selves.**

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I'll echo the practice rounds don't matter as much as the tournament, because I'm probably the worst practice round player of all time. But who, I don't know -- everyone -- no one looks bad. So everyone's hitting it solid, no one looks bad, so that's, going into a tournament, that's how you want it. You don't want to be firing on all cylinders, necessarily. But I can't think of anyone -- Doug shot 63 the other day, but that's kind of normal for him -- so I don't know if you want to consider that good or bad, but. Everybody's playing well and I think it's going to be good.

CAPTAIN MILLER: And Will Zalatoris tied Doug that

day as well. 62.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I think I had the 6th best round at 67, so.

DOUG GHIM: Thank you.

**Q. Was that here or Valley Club?**

CAPTAIN MILLER: Valley Club.

DOUG GHIM: That would have been a stretch here.

BRADEN THORNBERRY: I don't think we'll find that out here.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Braden, Doug, Spider, thank you very much.