

The Walker Cup

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Press Conference

Nathaniel Crosby

Stewart Hagestad

Andy Ogletree



THE WALKER CUP
ROYAL LIVERPOOL 2019



THE MODERATOR: I think we can make a start, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, welcome to the 47th Walker Cup matches here at Royal Liverpool. I'm delighted to have you all here. Also delighted to welcome the USA team for the first press conference. To my immediate left is the captain Nathaniel Crosby. To his left is Andy Ogletree, and Stewart Hagestad at the far end. If you'd just start off by first of all speaking, Nathaniel, to how much are you and the players are looking forward to defending the trophy this week?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: It's been a long buildup researching the players the last year and a half, and getting to know them and their parents. It's been a lifelong experience for me already, and I know all the players pretty darned well now after watching them play for a year and a half. I got the team that I wanted exactly, and I think we all couldn't be more excited to be here this week.

THE MODERATOR: You yourself, you played on a winning Walker Cup team here in 1983. What advice have you given to the players based on that experience?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Well, as everybody seems to know by now, I got sapped twice by Captain Sigel. I'm not over it, still mad at him. But we had a great captains' dinner about a year and a half ago after I got announced, and he told me to play everybody three times.

The only thing that I could say from having played on the European Tour and the Walker Cup over here is probably be aggressive downwind and be a little conservative into the wind. Other than that, I'm not licensed to give advice.

THE MODERATOR: After that excellent win in the U.S. Amateur at Pinehurst last month, how much are you looking forward to your debut this week?

ANDY OGLETREE: Yeah, obviously the Walker Cup means a lot to me. I didn't see myself being on this team if it wasn't for winning the U.S. Am, so I kind of had to go do that, and I did, and it's been a great few weeks getting to know the guys. I've known most of the guys for a long time and played a lot of them with them. Just spending time with them has been a lot of

fun, and once we got over here I've learned a lot about links golf. Still figuring out some stuff, but looking forward to getting this week going and getting back out to competitive golf.

THE MODERATOR: Stewart, this is your second Walker Cup match after 2017. What learnings do you take from that winning match into this weekend?

STEWART HAGESTAD: Yeah, that was an incredible team and it was just great to be kind of around those guys. I think to be quite honest, the biggest thing I took from it is having been around so many of the players that played for the United States in the past and just kind of the joy and excitement that our captain at the time Spider Miller had in that event versus when he had played as a player, obviously, and then when he was captain the year before, when they got beaten. Just the enjoyment and the thrill that he kind of had in his eyes was amazing.

Just kind of passed on to the kids or the boys, hey, throw everything you have at this week and play your best and if you win it'll be that much sweeter, and if you don't, well, at least you know that you did everything you could to play your best this week.

Q. Andy, you said you've still got a few things to figure out about links golf. What do you think you've got to figure out?

ANDY OGLETREE: Well, not really figure out, just still learning some stuff. The wind here affects the ball a lot more than it does in the States I feel like, especially crosswinds. Your start lines are much more offline than what it is in the States. Just kind of trusting that more. There's no tree lines or there's no defined, I guess, edges of the -- it's just the fairway and rough. You don't have tree lines. You don't have a lot of stuff to aim at. So you've really got to get specific with where you start the ball. Yeah, just get the ball on the ground as soon as possible.

Q. Is that something that you've talked to the players about because 11 of the 13 matches have been won by the home team. Obviously the U.S. Team has struggled over here, the GB&I has struggled in the United States. I wonder if you've gone over certain things that you think will be different this week compared to stateside.

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Well, Andy, I can definitely show you how to get the ball on the ground as soon as possible. Just play a few holes with me.

You know, I think these guys are so instinctive and so very talented that I'm not one to meddle. I'm looking at Akshay Bhatia, our youngest player who just turned 17, and I've been telling him to tap the brakes about turning pro for the last year and a half, but he's ready to take the plunge after this week. I'm looking at how he's navigating the wind with especially the crosswinds. He's giving it enough height and enough borrow, and he played nine holes and picked it up so immediately that you just stay out of the way is the best thing that I can do. These guys are so talented and they're so instinctive even though it's a foreign type of golf. I guess six of the guys haven't played over here, six of the ten, but they pick it up very quickly.

The only advice that I could give them is expect the worst conditions. It could be drizzling rain and blowing 40 miles an hour and our opponents are not going to try any less hard if that's the case. They might enjoy it more as a matter of fact.

Q. Just your take on playing over here, Stewart?

STEWART HAGESTAD: For me it's not as much of an adjustment. For American standards I hit it pretty low, so my ball isn't quite as affected as much. I think one of the things that I felt like is pretty useful is to try and have your shots around the greens be into the wind versus downwind, just to kind of manage those misses, I guess you could say. But I'm not sitting here saying I've mastered it by any stretch of the imagination. But I think for an American -- listen, it'll be a fun challenge, and so much of it is a mindset, just to go out and enjoy it and have fun with it, so that's what we're going with, I guess.

Q. What did you do yesterday? How affected were you by the wind?

ANDY OGLETREE: Yeah, so yesterday the wind was crazy, as you guys know. But we just went out and played. I think we played -- John and I played nine holes. Everyone just kind of played with random people and went out and had fun. Yeah, there's some shots that you hit yesterday where you may not -- John hit a 4-iron 330 yards. That's about a 100-yard wind. Stuff like that. I mean, you just kind of have to -- there's no way to practise that. You just kind of have to go out and feel it, and no one has ever really played in that. Yeah, downwind, pretty simple. You don't really know how far it's going to go into the wind. You just try to flight it as good as you can and keep it short of the green. But yeah, we played -- I think everyone played probably eight or nine holes. It was kind of just a fun day.

STEWART HAGESTAD: It was almost like an overtraining type thing where if you go and you play where it's blowing 30 or 35, then when it's blowing 10, 15, 20, whatever it may be, it doesn't seem quite as bad. But yeah, on a day like yesterday, if it does happen to blow, whatever it was, 40 or -- we all saw the forecast. It was fun. It's more about survival and

kind of, as I said, a mindset more than anything else. On a day like that, if you make birdie, it's almost certainly going to win the hole, and par is going to win a lot more times than maybe you give it credit. If I'm not mistaken, I think the forecast for this weekend is supposed to be a little bit better, but hopefully after a day like yesterday it won't seem quite as daunting.

Q. Stewart, you're the only mid-am on the U.S. Team. The firm majority of your U.S. Team has gone through college --

STEWART HAGESTAD: I've gone through college, too.

Q. They're in college still, as opposed to you and I. But they have college tournaments to play and a summer schedule, no jobs to actually hold down. What are some of the challenges you've had as a mid-am trying to make this team and get here?

STEWART HAGESTAD: No, it's funny, I actually felt like I've gotten a lot better since college. Like if you were to look at my college resumé, it was nothing -- like people asked, why didn't you turn pro. I wasn't really in a position to turn pro coming out of college. I've actually found that when I lived in New York City after school, all of their events are during the summer, obviously, because of weather. Well, what I've found is it kind of allows me to not really play as much really at all from October until the end of March and then to focus all that energy and effort once the sun comes back out and it begins to get a little bit warmer into those summer months. Obviously like a lot of sacrifices are made specifically Friday, Saturday, Sunday as all of us in this room are out of college and could be a potentially fun part of your life.

Yeah, I actually conversely to what one might think, it allows you to kind of fully focus all of your energy and effort into it, and then after the Mid-Am, when the end of September rolls around, you're almost kind of exhausted and you're just ready to put the clubs away. I think I go back to what I've said and answered a couple times; it's almost more of a mindset and you can focus on other parts of your life, and then when you come back to it, it makes it that much more enjoyable.

Q. Nathaniel, what does this mean for the Crosby family this week, for you and the family?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: My present family, I've got a litter of four of mine and two of hers, all between 23 and 29, and I've been telling them how important I am the last year and a half, and they're finally getting a little bit of respect after some 29 years with the oldest. It's a sensational experience for me really. A lot of self-esteem has come back.

But I think my dad made his mark, obviously, and endeared himself to this island for certain during dark times, and I think I've put a chapter in my book called "British Bond," which my dad loved the British people

and he loved playing at Palladium and left his mark in golf with a lot of club championships and creating the pro-am format and the legacy of the Pebble Beach golf tournament. So for me to have this legacy is really important for me, and a continuation of the Crosby brand in the golf sector.

You know, it's terrific for me, and my oldest son has won a couple of club championships, played in a couple of state amateurs and he's 29, so I told him that he was exactly 15 years behind schedule.

Q. Nathaniel, you said earlier that four of your teammates played over here before in links condition. Stewart is obviously one of them; who are the other three?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Well, Brandon Wu played the British Open this year, Akshay Bhatia played the British Amateur and the European Amateur, and Cole has played over here recreationally. He played the Junior Ryder Cup.

Q. With foursomes being such a crucial part of this match, not to prevail in the U.S., how specifically is the team prepared for foursomes going into the weekend?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Both of our practice squad matches last December in Florida, Robbie Zalneck, our team manager, stepped up and grabbed me and said, this is probably a good idea because we keep getting shellacked in the alternate-shot, and especially on foreign soil. So we really focused on it.

Two weeks ago in Pinehurst and during our practice squad matches, we played almost exclusively alternate-shot, and we played a lot of guys playing with different partners, so they can expect the unexpected.

You can just go out there and adjust. It's not something we grow up doing, but I think we're prepared, and we've kind of got our teams organized now, and I think we've got the right players playing with the right players, a lot of chemistry, a lot of bickering, which makes it healthy. So I think we're in good shape, and we're optimistic about alternate-shot this time.

Q. Just to follow up on the foursomes, I've seen a lot of you guys talking about the type of golf ball you're going to use when you're playing alternate-shot, whether it's something softer around the greens that has a little more bite or something that's not going to be affected by the wind off the tee. Either one of you two, your thoughts on what you're going to go with or trying to find a ball that works best for your other partner?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: I told them to go with the round one.

STEWART HAGESTAD: I think it's kind of a work in progress. You know, it's something that whoever you end up being paired with can kind of decide when the time comes. But it ultimately kind of comes down to whatever ball you use -- I mean, we're all here for a reason. We've all played in some big events, whatever it is, just there's kind of an expression we use back in the United States of "just play better." So I think that's ultimately what it comes down to is just kind of know what your misses are. Maybe you're playing a ball that you're not as used to and spin is a little more or less, whatever it is, then just kind of ask your partner, let those lines of communication be open, where would you prefer this, maybe be it around the green or something like that. Just kind of know your strengths and weaknesses.

I think what that just comes down to is communication and being comfortable, but if you're not entirely comfortable, you're a big boy; you've earned your way to be here, just go out there and do what you're capable of. I think it's one thing that maybe it's made out to be a little bit bigger of a deal than it actually is, but if you can't make it work, then I don't know, maybe you shouldn't be here. But maybe that's a rude way of putting it, but we're all big boys, we should be able to handle it.

ANDY OGLETREE: Yeah, all the golf balls are pretty similar nowadays. You can figure it out. It's not going to be a drastic change. A 20 mile-per-hour right-to-left wind or 20 mile-per-hour right-to-left wind, the golf ball is not going to do much different. Yeah, just kind of figure it out.

Q. You were talking about foursomes and how you worked on it and you guys' approach. What do you tell the guys in a format that they're not that familiar with, where, as Robbie has said, you've pretty much gotten shellacked most times. What do you tell them to actually help them or what knowledge do you impart to help them get through this?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Well, I played one alternate-shot match in my life, so I'm not certain that I'm full of pearls of wisdom, although I did win here on that match with Bill Hoffer against Bill Baldwin and George McGregor. We just played a lot of alternate-shot in our practices last December. I think we played three days in a row, 36 holes a day, all alternate-shot. Last week -- we didn't play our own ball one time last week, and that was another six rounds of golf.

You know, if nothing else, we really focused on it. I don't think I'm going to be giving instruction on the how-to. I don't have a manual. But I think it's just something guys -- we don't play it, so if you don't play it, then you're not going to be used to it, and I think that's perhaps what's happened in the past. So I think Robbie's curriculum of playing alternate shot every practice squad match we had was a great idea, and I think we're more comfortable with it than

perhaps in years gone by.

Q. Where else did you play over here this week?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: We played at Birkdale and Wallasey. Wallasey right off the plane, no sleep. Hard on me.

Q. Your father was an anglophile; are you as much of an anglophile as he was?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: I would say so, but you know, it's nice to be part of the legacy with my own little contribution. You know, hopefully we get a little divine intervention this week, knocking a few balls from the rough or making a few putts fall in, so I'm hoping for a little energy from on high.

Q. How many times have you been back here since '83?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: Well, I played the European Tour for three years from '85 to '87, and as I told Robbie when I was encouraging him for warmer uniforms that I think, in three years over here, I was based in Camberley and at the Holiday Inn at Heathrow, I was never dry and I was never warm.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time, and good luck this week.