

# The Walker Cup

Sunday, 8 September 2019  
Team USA Press Conference

**Nathaniel Crosby**

**Cole Hammer**

**John Pak**

**John Augenstein**

**Akshay Bhatia**



**THE WALKER CUP**  
ROYAL LIVERPOOL 2019



But like I said, it's great, and Captain did a great job with the picks, obviously, and it worked out well for us.

**Q. Captain, not too many guys have won over here. What's it mean to lead this team to victory over here?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: I think the three-hour beat-down speech last night was probably the -- okay, seriously, you know, it's just -- I think we really focused on alternate shots. I think the guys being over here for six, seven practice rounds, we played alternate-shot in all the practice squad matches almost exclusively -- exclusively really, and played our own ball very selectively over the course of the past week. You know, it's not a format that we've grown up playing, and these guys have grown up playing the format.

I think Robbie Zalzneck, our team manager, who I joked because Robbie was supposed to remind me to bring him up in the speech, and he didn't remind me, and I left him out of the speech tonight, so I'm very upset. But Robbie Zalzneck, this is his ninth time as the team manager for the Walker Cup, and he's got this thing down to a science. The idea that we were -- give Robbie a hand, guys. (Applause.) He's not here, but he's mad right now at me. I know he is.

At any rate, I think that his telling me and advising me on the focus of the alternate shots, otherwise you get three or four points -- you lose three or four points down in alternate-shot matches and you're playing catch-up in the singles. And I think that's what's happened to us in the past over here.

Hand it to -- tip my hat to Robbie on really getting the team exclusively focused on alternate-shot, and then finding the personalities. This whole process the last couple of weeks in identifying the right partners for each other, these guys have -- they're partners for life. These guys are couples for life. It's kind of weird. But no, these guys are inseparable, and they've got a great memory now. This Walker Cup experience is going to be a memory one way or the other. It's never going to be a bad memory, but it's going to be a winning memory or a losing memory, and I told them that and emphasized that to them as soon as I started recruiting them a couple years ago.

**Q. Can I have a show of hands that are going to turn professional after this? Five, yeah? And**

THE MODERATOR: We'll make a start. I'm delighted to welcome the winning team from the United States of America into the interview room. Congratulations, Nathaniel. Well played. At the start of the afternoon singles, did you think that the team were going to perform so strongly?

NATHANIEL CROSBY: You know, I hand-picked this group of people over a two-year -- no? Should I not go with that? No, I honestly thought that these guys would let their talent come to the surface. I liked the idea that the wind was laying down a little bit this afternoon, but these guys have been over here for seven or eight days. The overconfidence thing went away after yesterday where we were kind of fortunate to be as close as we were. The alternate shot in the morning could have been worse ^ check, and the afternoon with John Pak, a really pivotal match, and I think that really made a big difference in our psychology. We could have been two points or even worse down going into today.

The singles were amazing. The guys played great. But they're a very talented group of guys. As you know, I hand-picked them.

**Q. Who picked the trousers?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: You know, first of all, we're very happy with the Ralph Lauren collection of Justin Thomas, and you know millennials, they like the different stuff. You are millennials, right? You just made the cut on that? They're younger, what's that, Gen X? At any rate, so we were -- it was a little bit of a fashion statement, I agree, but we're very happy to be wearing the Justin Thomas collection.

**Q. Akshay, you were five years old the last time the U.S. won over here. That's 2007. Can you try to sum up what it means to win on foreign soil?**

AKSHAY BHATIA: It's definitely something we all dreamed about, and it was just the expectation level of winning here is big for us. I mean, I can't put into words what this means to us and our team and the United States of America because you've got to wear these pants and win. So thankfully we did that.

**secondly, the two Johns, were you aware of how significant your match was?**

JOHN AUGENSTEIN: I did not know that my match this afternoon was the clinching point. You know, when I was on the tee box, I did look at my caddie and say, this could be the clinching point because I had seen the scoreboard on 13 and I knew there was a lot of red up there and I didn't know when those matches were going to be closed out or whatnot, but I felt like it was going to be somewhere close. But yeah, I mean, it really doesn't matter who clinches it. The fact is that we're a team and we won the Walker Cup for each other and for the United States and whoever else that we're representing. It was really cool, and it was a special moment, but I did not know exactly that I had clinched it.

JOHN PAK: I did see the leaderboard. There's one on, I think, 13 green, and yeah, I saw that, and I knew that if we got another point, there was a huge difference between four points and two points. Yeah, I knew that we needed that, and you could see by my emotions on 18 green that I also really wanted it, too.

**Q. I'm curious, for those of you that are turning professional, did it dawn on you last night or maybe after your round today that this was going to be your last day as an amateur, and did you think about that perhaps before your singles round or maybe after your singles round ended, during closing ceremonies? Just curious if you can maybe speak to your amateur careers for those of you that it has just wrapped up for.**

ISAIAH SALINDA: I actually didn't think about that at all until you brought it up after my match, so thanks for that. I mean, I couldn't think of a better way to end my amateur career. This was awesome. I don't know, I'm not even thinking about turning pro yet, I just want to enjoy this win with the guys, to be honest. But again, like perfect ending to my amateur career. This is kind of the one thing I wanted to do before I turned pro.

**Q. This question is for whoever can give me the best answer, but I understand last night all you guys offered some thoughts, but Stew channelled his inner Herb Brooks and really kind of moved you guys with a little brief speech. Can anyone describe that speech and kind of sum up basically what it meant to you?**

AKSHAY BHATIA: I can do it. I mean, Stew obviously has been in the position before, so he knows what it takes to win the Walker Cup. Just, I mean, everyone in the team room gave some great speeches that motivated all of us, and just Stew touched us all just because he knew what we're capable of and just the belief that comes out of the words he said were phenomenal. It definitely carried on for me today playing with him. We had a great time, and definitely some emotion came out for all of us, I'm sure. Obviously here we are with the trophy next to us, and

got it done.

**Q. Captain, I think a lot of people last night were kind of questioning the decision, at least on Twitter, the decision to sit John in the morning. Now that your plan paid off, what's your message to all the people who didn't think it was a good idea?**

NATHANIEL CROSBY: I think that -- I was very comfortable with the whole philosophy that I went with, and I don't think it had -- it might have had a little bit to do with the scar tissue from 36 years ago, but all 10 of these players had a tremendous two-year period of golf. Regardless of WAGA rankings or recent wins, everybody was qualified equally. There's no short straw in the whole deal, so picking who's going to play four matches, who's going to play three. But I really wanted to keep the partners in alternate-shot playing together, and that was a decision that I made before the week started. So everybody knew who was playing on Friday afternoon on Saturday, as well as Sunday. I was very comfortable and very happy that I stayed with that decision, and not everybody was comfortable with it, but not everybody is going to be comfortable about sitting anyway. Everybody wants to play. It was awkward, but it was comfortable.

**Q. In two years, the Walker Cup is going to be played May 8th and 9th. For the guys who will probably still be in college, I guess that's Cole and maybe John, what are your thoughts on that? That's going to be right up against conference and regionals. Is that going to be a tough decision to leave the team for another team?**

COLE HAMMER: That's not a decision at all. After this week I can say if -- I'm sure this goes for John, too, but if we're lucky enough to have the opportunity to play on that team again, we're not missing it for the world. I'm sure Coach Fields would be just fine having me play on the Walker Cup team again. But yeah, hook 'em.

But yeah, everybody knows what a special place Seminole is, and it's kind of weird we only have one summer left of amateur golf in between that. It's coming up quickly. It doesn't really feel like two years from now. That'll be an interesting deal, but I'm not really thinking about it yet.