

# The Walker Cup

Press Conference

Friday, 1 September 2023

**Mike McCoy**

**Austin Greaser**

**Ben James**



**THE WALKER CUP**  
ST ANDREWS 2023

JONATHAN COE: Welcome back to the 49th Walker Cup match. We're here with the USA team. We have Captain McCoy, Austin Greaser and Ben James.

We'll start with Captain. You finished up your final preparations this morning. How are you feeling about the team headed into tomorrow?

MIKE McCOY: I feel great. The team looks good. Everybody is healthy. We've had a nice week of preparation.

The golf course, the weather has been fantastic, and the golf course is terrific.

JONATHAN COE: For you, Ben, how excited are you to tee it up after all this preparation.

BEN JAMES: Yeah, I'm excited. We've been here for a while. We've all been working really hard, trying to dissect the golf course.

I'm super thrilled to tee it up tomorrow and kind of be here, the whole experience at the Old Course, the 100th year anniversary. It's pretty special, so I'm thrilled and pumped to get it going.

JONATHAN COE: Austin, what's this experience been like for you travelling with the team and just experiencing Scotland?

AUSTIN GREASER: It's been special for sure. It's just something you dream about, getting to tee it up with nine of your best friends really. You hang around them kind of all summer and get to travel with them a lot, and to kind of get to throw on the same colours with them and go to battle a little bit with them, I'm really looking forward to it, and it's really been special so far. I can only imagine how special the next couple days are going to be.

**Q. Captain, you've experienced the flag-raising**

**ceremony as a player. How do you think it'll be different from the other side, and then what do you think is in store for these two?**

MIKE McCOY: Well, it's a great honour to play for your country and hearing the National Anthem and seeing the Star Spangled Banner go up, it puts a little lump in your throat. You can't help but be moved by that.

It's wonderful they get to experience it.

**Q. Mike, I asked Stuart Wilson this same kind of question. What's your philosophy on the pairing of players? Are you a stats guy or do you go with your gut feeling or do you put like personalities together, that kind of thing?**

MIKE McCOY: Yeah, I think a little of everything. We have certain players that have a quicker rhythm. We have players that have played together that are very close friends. They know each other's games well. They match up well.

You do look at some of your better drivers, your better wedge players. We kind of put those types of combinations together.

A little bit of everything.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

MIKE McCOY: Yeah, we spent some time working on that, and it took a day or two for everybody to come to agreement what made the most sense. We obviously tried some other combinations, if we have to break a couple teams up for Sunday. We've worked with some other combinations.

I think everybody knows whether they're odd or even.

**Q. Austin, a year ago at this time you probably didn't think you'd be here. You didn't go to the practice session. Can you talk about everything that led to you deciding to stay amateur one more year and eventually be a part of this?**

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

AUSTIN GREASER: Yeah. I mean, I felt like there were several decisions to make regarding that, turning pro or staying amateur. But this was definitely a big one.

To me, it feels like I have the rest of my life to play professional golf, and I had this one opportunity to be a part of a Walker Cup team. Not only that, but to do it at St Andrews right on the 100th centennial kind of almost birthday of the event.

It was just something I just didn't really want to pass up, and I'm already happy even before it's started that I made this decision. It's just been an unbelievable week.

Like I said, it's just going to get that much more special the next couple days.

**Q. A follow-up to that, was there a point this summer where the pressure of making this team was too much? Obviously you had to rest a little bit earlier this summer. What was that like, kind of not being able to really play yet and maybe being unsure if you were actually going to make this team or not?**

AUSTIN GREASER: Yeah, I mean, I'd say you kind of feel the pressure a little bit, but at the end of the day all you can control is going out and playing golf and kind of letting that take care of itself and then seeing just kind of where the chips fall.

But you think about it a lot, like I said, every tournament you tee it up at, you're like, man, I want to be on that team. I want to tee up it at St Andrews in a few months, a few weeks, whatever time frame it was. You think about it a lot, but at the end of the day you've just got to go play golf and let the chips fall where they fall.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about the course, how it's been playing this week? Is it different to what you expected, and how have you found the speed of the greens?**

BEN JAMES: So the only time I've seen the course before coming here was on Tiger Woods 2K, so I had not a lot of information what to expect.

But the greens are a little slower than I thought, but the course is firming up. It's looking like it's going to be a good test, and I hear the wind is supposed to be picking up as the weekend gets on.

It's just going to allow us to really get creative around the greens, hit different types of shots, and just kind of avoid the bunkers and just kind of go battle it out there.

AUSTIN GREASER: Exactly what Ben said. It's a lot different than most of the golf we play in the States, but it's fun to kind of let your mind be a little bit more creative and kind of see shots a little bit differently, imagine the ball rolling a little bit differently, especially around the greens.

It's a really fun place to play golf, I think, is a really cool way to put it.

**Q. Mike, what do you think of the speed of the greens? Did you expect them to be quicker, or are you okay with them?**

MIKE McCOY: Yeah, I think the greens are really actually running pretty well right now. They're definitely firming up. They're actually a little faster than I expected, and they're rolling beautifully.

**Q. Captain, you spent all summer travelling and watching the best American amateurs play back in the States. You're finally here with your team this week here at St Andrews. Other than studying the golf course, learning about their games, what has stood out to you about these 10 young men that you've learned about them, maybe the state of amateur golf, the youthfulness of it? What have you learned this week other than their play?**

MIKE McCOY: Yeah. Well, they're a very mature bunch, very professional about their approach to things. When they put their shoes on and step on to the practice range, you know it's all business.

But you get them back in the team room, they're fun young men. But they're good people. They've got a lot of support from their families, their college coaches. They've all got great support systems.

If you had a daughter, you'd want her to marry any one of them.

**Q. As you've now seen the course a few times, what would you say are the holes you're most looking forward to playing or in your case watching, maybe in terms of what you've seen and learned about them because they're somewhat tricky to understand at first glimpse?**

BEN JAMES: Yeah, I think coming down the stretch, it's going to get -- there's always the holes you're going to want to watch. Those are the holes I care about the most and kind of think about.

Definitely after, I think -- 15, 16, 17 are going to be three

really battle holes. They're going to be trying to avoid the bunkers, kind of making sure to not short-side yourself and give yourself a good putt at it. I think those three holes are going to be when maybe pars win the holes, and maybe just play more conservative instead of the other holes you get at where birdie might win, but I think those three holes are going to be important, especially off the tee to place yourself, leaving yourself a good approach shot coming in.

MIKE McCOY: I'm most interested in the first six holes. I think we've got to get off to a good start. There's some gettable opportunities there.

I'm kind of focused on the start and getting out of the blocks.

AUSTIN GREASER: I'm pretty excited to play all of them. I'm from a small kind of city town in Ohio, and I'm not sure my dreams ever got to playing a Walker Cup at St Andrews at such an historic place. To kind of be able to feel the nerves and the pressure and just the amazing opportunity to represent the United States of America, I don't care how many or what holes I play, I just want to play.

**Q. Austin, what's it like to be from Vandalia, Ohio, a semi-flyover state, and now be at the Home of Golf at St Andrews?**

AUSTIN GREASER: Yeah, like I said, I don't really know I got that far in my dreams, but it's definitely an opportunity that I'm extremely thankful for, especially to captain and the rest of the squad here that helped make it possible for me.

I'm just really looking forward to the opportunity and just looking forward to representing the red, white and blue.

**Q. Mike, there was a remark about if you had a daughter you'd want her to marry any of them. Have you got a daughter, and is she married already?**

MIKE McCOY: Well, I do have one daughter that's married and one daughter that's not. She's just a little too old for them, I think. (Laughter.)

Anyway, no, they really are a terrific group of people, and they're a spiritual group. They have a strong faith, and they share it together. It's been nice to see that.

**Q. If you were saying the three finest things about your team and you have strong faith number one, what's next?**

MIKE McCOY: I think maturity. They're here to play golf, but they're also going to get their homework done and they're checking in on their classwork. They're getting their

practice in. They're getting their physio in. They're going to the gym. They're just very mature and very professional, and they've got a lot of self-discipline.

**Q. Ben, how crucial was your run at the U.S. Amateur, just from a confidence kind of mental perspective for you?**

BEN JAMES: Yeah, great question. So coming in there, hadn't really played my best golf, and I would say kind of reset a little bit and played really well in stroke play.

I think my whole experience at the U.S. Am was just amazing, just to see like what I could do at a small little glimpse with match play. I was very comfortable being down in my matches, and I really stuck to my game plan and was really patient.

I was really proud of myself how patient I was and I didn't care what the other competitors did. I didn't even look like where they even hit shots. It didn't matter at the end of the day. If they hit a good shot and make birdie, all I can do is tip my cap.

My caddie and I had a great game plan, and it was really cool to see it all unfold, especially playing so well, and helping me get on this team.

Again, it was cool and just a big confidence booster for sure.

**Q. Some of the GB&I guys were saying it's probably going to come down to a putting contest with lack of wind and kind of benign conditions. Have you made any adjustments putting-wise in the last couple weeks, or what have you been focused on with that?**

BEN JAMES: I mean, I've just been focused on kind of learning the golf course in general, just kind of understanding where to hit it, where not to hit it. I've done my prep work, so I've done all I can, and I know my game is good enough, and I'm just ready for whatever they have to throw out.

I know all our team is ready to go for battle, and that's what we're going to do.

**Q. To the players, obviously based on the World Rankings, you guys are very strong favourites. Can you share with us what Mike has told you to stop you being complacent when you get out on that golf course over the weekend?**

BEN JAMES: Yeah, so they're going to throw out all they can. Captain and Stew has been a big help for us because

this is going to be his fourth Walker Cup, so he's been just a great leader for us. He's our veteran. Those two have been great to learn from because I know they're going to give it 110 percent so we're going to have to give it 120 and respect them because they're going to play well.

We're just going to, again, kind of follow our game plan, play hard, and again, that's all we can do.

AUSTIN GREASER: Yeah, I would just say that I feel like Captain has kept our head on straight, and the rankings don't really matter. He's just really told us we've just got to go out and do what we do, and it should put us in a good spot to succeed.

But we're all pretty self-disciplined on and off the golf course, as he mentioned, and whether your ranking is 1 or 20, when you tee it up tomorrow morning, I don't really think that puts you 1-up or 1-down. So he just keeps saying we've got to show up and take care of business.

**Q. Austin, as you mentioned earlier, you remained amateur for a year to put yourself in position to be on this Walker Cup team. In 2025 and 2026 the Walker Cup will be played in September so there very well may be some college juniors and seniors that are going to have a very difficult decision whether to move on to the professional ranks or spend another summer chasing down an opportunity to represent the United States. What are some things you would say to some college players as you go back to North Carolina to share what you were able to experience that maybe it's worth staying amateur for two or three months, one more summer, to give it a shot?**

AUSTIN GREASER: Yeah, so I've had one other chance to represent the USA last year at the Team Amateur World Championships. What I'm about to say, I'd say about that event. So far I've had some pretty cool experiences in golf. I've gotten to tee it up at the Masters, got to tee it up at the U.S. Open. But none has felt as cool or greater than playing for your country.

Like I said earlier, and we've talked about before with some of my close friends, is professional golf is going to be there. Most of us as seniors, juniors, we're probably somewhere in the 20 to 22 range. If you're good enough, you're going to make it someday, and I think if you have an opportunity or you're kind of on the bubble or whatever to play this thing, right now with where I sit, and I haven't even teed it up yet in the competition rounds, I would strongly urge you to consider to stay and play.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, whether it's here, whether it's in the United States or any other great golf

course. It's once in a lifetime, and something I'll really cherish forever, and we're all now kind of a part of that Walker Cup fraternity for the rest of our lives, and we'll get to give back to the teams to come and share some of the memories that we've had in the team room, some of the laughs, some of the funny moments on the course, and just some of the times in the competition, in the battle that are yet to come in the next couple days.

I think it was an amazing decision for me. Everybody has got to make their decision, but I really think you should sit down and give it some serious thought and the fact that professional golf is going to be there for a decade or two after you turn pro, but this won't be.

**Q. On the heels of that question, for Captain, what was your reaction when you found out that Austin was going to stay amateur, and what was your reaction when you saw the way he played the first few days at Cherry Hills a couple weeks ago?**

MIKE McCOY: Well, obviously I was communicating with Austin when he -- he was invited to participate in the practice session and elected -- I was proud of him for saying, look, I'm not going to be an amateur, and I don't want to take the spot away from somebody, and then as the year went on, his feelings began to change a little bit, and he and I talked a number of times. He was really honest with us.

We know what a competitor he is. We've seen him play for the last few years. Great match play competitor. We really wanted him.

He earned the spot. He played well, and I was happy to see that.

He had to lay off for some time to let his wrist heal and called and said he was going to go play the Korn Ferry event in Chicago. I flew in and watched him, and I was happy to see he wasn't favoring his wrist, and over the last three or four weeks, he looks like the old Austin.

**Q. Obviously you're looking very comfortable out on the golf course. Also fashion-wise, I'd like to get an insight into the cardigans. Very traditional, very Scottish. Mr. Greaser, I know being from the country, that might not suit your fashion sense. Can you run me through the outfits and maybe what's to come?**

AUSTIN GREASER: Well, we have just been told what to wear, but so far it has been really great stuff.

I don't know if you show up anywhere else in the United States for any other amateur event, I think you'd be quite

the laughing subject if you showed up in this, but I'll tell you what, so far I feel like this is perfect for this place and this event and the history and whatnot.

I'm going to speak on behalf of all of us, but I think we really like it. We really like the look. It's a fun look. It's an historic look, and we're just kind of rocking with it and waiting to be told what to wear tomorrow.

**Q. What can we expect tomorrow, Ben?**

BEN JAMES: I have no clue.

MIKE McCOY: More cashmere.

AUSTIN GREASER: Hopefully more cashmere because it's warm. It's pretty good out here in the morning.

JONATHAN COE: Thanks, guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports