



2020 RYDER CUP PLAYER GUIDE

SPORTING LIFE

GOLF

RYDER CUP COURSE GUIDE

WHISTLING STRAITS

- **Established: 1998**
- **Designers: Pete and Alice Dye**
- **Par: 71**
- **Length: 7,390 yards**
- **Tournaments hosted: PGA Championship (2004, 2010, 2015), US Senior Open (2007)**

Built on an abandoned airfield, Whistling Straits is a big golf course which has hosted three men's majors over the last 20 years. That none of the three has been won by an American may in part reflect that this is an exposed layout by Lake Michigan, with eight holes running along the lake, and a design style which aims to replicate seaside golf in the UK and Ireland. Pete and Alice Dye are famed for their body of courses, all of them known to ask serious questions, and this one is no different for all that conditions do determine how challenging the course is, and to what extent big-hitters are at an advantage. The closing stretch is particularly daunting, including a par-three 17th hole where missing left is disastrous, and a par-four 18th hole named 'Dyeabolical' in a nod to its famous designers. The par-fives plus the driveable 10th ensure there are scoring opportunities and under relatively calm conditions, Jason Day blasted his way to a 20-under par total which was at the time the lowest in major championship history when taking the 2015 PGA, albeit when the course played to a par of 72. Perhaps the US side will hope for a similar set-up given that three of their current side made the top-10 there, yet Rory McIlroy was the best of the Europeans in 17th. Much has changed since but what's clear is that Whistling Straits will suit the hosts far more than Paris in 2018, though perhaps a little less than Hazeltine two years earlier. Europe meanwhile might well hope for that Wisconsin wind to blow off the lake.



RYDER CUP HISTORY

RYDER CUP

The Ryder Cup can be traced back to 1927, when the United States took on Great Britain, whose name was expanded to 'Great Britain and Ireland' after Northern Irish players competed in 1947, and Irish counterparts joined in 1953. The early years of the event, which began with 12 points on offer and did not increase beyond that until 1961, saw America dominate. In fact they won nine of the first 11, often by wide margins, and were unbeaten from 1959 to 1983. However, two significant events during this time changed the course of the competition, which is now the pinnacle of golf for many from the respective teams. First came one of the greatest moments of sportsmanship ever seen, when Jack Nicklaus conceded Tony Jacklin a short putt on the final hole of the 1969 match. Had Jacklin missed, the USA would've won, but instead a tie meant they retained the trophy. "I don't think you'd have missed that putt," Nicklaus is reported to have said, "but I would never give you the opportunity." Nicklaus and Jacklin walked off arm in arm after a fiercely competitive renewal and made headlines worldwide. But it was the expansion of the Britain and Ireland team to include the whole of Europe which really injected life into what was a one-sided event. Though the USA continued their winning run through to 1983, the return of Seve Ballesteros, who had been left out in 1981 after a dispute with the European Tour over appearance money, changed everything. With a dejected European team reflecting on their narrow defeat at PGA National, Ballesteros reportedly marched into the locker room, fist and teeth clenched, before declaring that this was a victory; that finally, Europe had told America it could compete with them; that 1985 would be different. He was right. Since that day, Europe has won 11 of 17 Ryder Cups, retaining it with a tie in 1989, and gone unbeaten at home since 1993. It's why when Jose Maria Olazabal famously conjured the Miracle at Medinah in 2012, he dedicated Europe's amazing victory to his friend, and the man who made the competition what it is today. For America, the challenge now is to show that the problems caused by having the greatest player of his generation in the side, often making life hard for playing partners, have been left behind now. A young breed used to watching the United States suffer against-the-odds defeats has shown a determination to do things differently, and some of them showed what's possible at Hazeltine in 2016. That renewal and Paris in 2018 both speak to the benefits of home advantage, which have perhaps never been more pronounced in a competition which is now established as a global sporting event.

SPORTING LIFE

FORMAT

RYDER CUP

There are 28 points available at the Ryder Cup, one for every match, and 14.5 are therefore required to win. The holders retain the trophy with a 14-14 tie, in this case Europe after their victory in Paris.

All matches are match play, which means that a hole is either won, lost or halved, and a match therefore ends when either side cannot draw level. For example, if Europe is three-up after 16 holes, they have won the match 3&2 and no further golf is played. If they are three up through 15 holes, and USA wins the 16th, 17th and 18th, the match is halved and each side earns half a point.

There are three formats used: foursomes, fourball, and singles. Foursomes sees two players from the same team take on two from the opposition. Each team has one ball, and players take turns to hit shots, resetting on each tee so that Player A tees off on the odd-numbered holes, and Player B takes the even-numbered holes.

Foursomes is considered harder than fourballs, which sees each member of the group play their own ball, the lowest score again winning the hole. Finally, singles is head-to-head between two players, the first and only session of the Ryder Cup which is not played in pairs. That takes place on the final day of the competition.

Day one - eight points available

- 4x foursomes, 4x fourballs, in two separate sessions
(order determined by home captain)

Day two - eight points available

- 4x foursomes, 4x fourballs, in two separate sessions
(same order as day one, as determined by home captain)

Day three - 12 points available

- 12x singles

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CAPTAIN - STEVE STRICKER

FACT FILE

Age	54
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	3



CAPTAIN ANALYSIS

From the day Whistling Straits was awarded the Ryder Cup, everyone expected Steve Stricker to be named as captain – not only is he the right sort of age and with bags of experience, he hails from Wisconsin which means this is the epitome of a home game. Stricker's Ryder Cup record as a player was poor, and even when winning as a rookie in 2008 he only managed to contribute half a point. However, he is popular and likeable and seems sure to get everybody on-side, which might be the biggest problem given a team room with one or two big egos. The fact he picked Scottie Scheffler as the last of six wild cards suggests he's given real consideration to the course and the format and it shows a bravery which will serve him and his team well. He captains a side packed with rookies but not lacking in experience – among them are Olympic champion Xander Schauffele and Open champion Collin Morikawa – and has a quintet of vice captains who, unlike Stricker, are all major champions. Is he inspirational? Probably not. But does this side need him to be?



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CAPTAIN - PADRAIG HARRINGTON

FACT FILE

Age	50
Nationality	Irish
Ryder Cup appearances	6



CAPTAIN ANALYSIS

To put it simply, Padraig Harrington looks an ideal Ryder Cup captain – especially for an away fixture. Not only is he popular both in Europe and the USA, he’s won the event four times as a player and is a three-time major champion who commands respect. It says much about his obsession with the sport that unlike so many, he’s managed to remain highly competitive as a player despite preparing diligently for this, and it’s fair to assume no stone will have been left unturned. He’ll have been particularly pleased that Shane Lowry has played well enough to remove any doubt and awkwardness as to his selection and while there are some form concerns within the team, he has more than one ace in the pack including the best player in the sport in Jon Rahm. Expect him to have followed the lead of Paul McGinley and Thomas Bjorn in planning every detail, hence committing early to the inclusion of Sergio Garcia, but also to captain as he plays: on instinct, and with total commitment.

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JUSTIN THOMAS



FACT FILE

Age	28
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	1
Ryder Cup record	4-1-0
Foursomes	1-1-0
Fourballs	2-0-0
Singles	1-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Winner of The PLAYERS back in March having been dropped by sponsors in January after some unpleasant and unacceptable remarks in Hawaii, it's been very much an up and down year for Justin Thomas, but a recent return to form and a Ryder Cup on home soil suggest he'll end it on a high. He played all five matches on his Ryder Cup debut, winning three of four alongside friend Jordan Spieth before taking the scalp of Rory McIlroy in the singles. From an American golfing family, he's one of the home side who really does appear to get what this is about and also played in every session at the subsequent Presidents Cup, joint-top scoring in the event and leading the way for his side. Another prominent role looks guaranteed on his first appearance at home, as does a continuing link-up with Spieth, and they will be mighty hard for any European duo to topple. It's early days, but I suspect he could one day retire with a deeply impressive Ryder Cup record to his name. For now, one of the key men for Steve Stricker.



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XANDER SCHAUFFELE



FACT FILE

Age	27
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Another who helps to demonstrate that the world of golf turns quickly, as this will be Xander Schauffele's debut in the event - although Jim Furyk may regret not having handed one to him in Paris. Since then, Schauffele has established himself as an immovable fixture in the world's top 10 and the only complaint which could be levelled at him is that he hasn't won often enough for one so classy. The Sunday hoodoo at least ended in famous fashion when he took Olympics gold in Tokyo, salvaging par really bravely on the final hole, and he was one of just three players to feature in all five sessions of the 2019 Presidents Cup. In part that was down to a successful partnership with likeminded friend Patrick Cantlay, and it seems likely they again tee it up together at some stage, probably in the opening session of the event. After that, Schauffele went on to beat Adam Scott in the singles, no small achievement given that it was in Australia, and while not a headline-grabber he looks the sort who could be a successful feature of this side for years to come.

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BROOKS KOEPKA



FACT FILE

Age	31
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	2
Ryder Cup record	4-3-1
Foursomes	1-1-0
Fourballs	2-2-0
Singles	1-0-1



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Brooks Koepka's first taste of the Ryder Cup came at Hazeltine in 2016, before he was a major champion, and it's fair to say it could hardly have gone better. Koepka had to wait until Friday afternoon for his chance but it was worth it, as he and Brandt Snedeker blitzed their opponents to ensure the USA kept hold of their lead at the end of an otherwise disappointing fourballs session. For that they were rewarded with a go at foursomes the following morning and again impressed, before Koepka lost alongside Dustin Johnson in fourballs. Finding the right partner might be the issue here, and it's safe to say it will not be Bryson DeChambeau. Koepka says he needs someone who is more animated than he is, hence perhaps the success he enjoyed with a buoyant Snedeker, although he and mild-mannered Tony Finau worked well together in 2018. With Finau earning himself a place on the team late in the day, perhaps Steve Stricker will give them another go, especially given that the more animated members of the team already have likely partners. That's if Koepka is over the injury which saw him withdraw from the TOUR Championship.

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DUSTIN JOHNSON



FACT FILE

Age	37
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	4
Ryder Cup record	7-9-0
Foursomes	1-3-0
Fourballs	3-5-0
Singles	3-1-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Had the Ryder Cup taken place as scheduled, Dustin Johnson would've looked the man most likely to feature in every session for the USA having dominated the sport late in 2020. This year he's been below his best, despite winning on the European Tour, and it's a worry that he has a losing record in both pairs formats. Perhaps that reflects the fact no captain has been able to find him a consistent partner: he's played with nine in his Ryder and Presidents Cup appearances and none have stuck. Only two of those nine feature here - Jordan Spieth and Brooks Koepka - and with relations with the latter having thawed, expect a 10th attempt at unearthing the right fit. Johnson has at least been reliable in singles, losing only to Ian Poulter in Paris, and whereas that course wasn't right for him, Whistling Straits certainly is. It was here that he famously lost out by a shot after rules controversy at the 2010 PGA Championship and there's a good chance he builds on a solid end to the season.



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BRYSON DECHAMBEAU



FACT FILE

Age	28
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	1
Ryder Cup record	0-3-0
Foursomes	0-2-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-1-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Bryson DeChambeau's Ryder Cup debut in Paris was nothing short of a nightmare. Back then, he was far from the muscled aggressor we now see attacking every course, but had earned a wildcard pick thanks to an excellent run of form and had been expected to play his part in a strong US side. Instead, he lost all three matches, only featuring in foursomes and singles, and the final nail in the coffin came courtesy of an across-the-green putt from Alex Noren to confirm he'd leave France without having registered so much as half a point. In fairness to DeChambeau, being asked to partner a wild Phil Mickelson in foursomes, and then an out-of-sorts Tiger Woods, was a big ask, but he was also a non-factor in the subsequent Presidents Cup and has since alienated himself from many in this US team, not least Brooks Koepka. It's one of the fires Stricker will have to either put out or at least contain, and it would be a shame were DeChambeau kept on the sidelines because in theory he should have much to offer. Perhaps he can prove that point come the singles. Before then it's anyone's guess.

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JORDAN SPIETH



FACT FILE

Age	28
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	3
Ryder Cup record	7-5-2
Foursomes	2-1-2
Fourballs	5-1-0
Singles	0-3-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

It's fair to assume Jordan Spieth would've missed the Ryder Cup for effectively the first time in his career had the event taken place as scheduled, with much of 2018, 2019 and 2020 spent searching for form. It was always likely this three-time major champion found it eventually, and ever since a spectacular renaissance in Phoenix he's played some of the most consistent golf in the world and rapidly climbed back up the rankings, not quite in time for automatic qualification but certainly to be the first name on the wildcard list. So far he's built a curious Ryder Cup record, one which is positive despite two defeats on European soil, and yet sees him arrive here in search of a first singles point. In fact he's also 0-3 in Presidents Cup singles, making a 0-6 overall return one of the most curious statistics in the sport, and he's yet to do all that much in the WGC Match Play. He'll be eager for that to change but first and foremost comes a likely partnership with childhood friend Justin Thomas, with whom he is 3-1-0 and helped keep things respectable in Paris. It would be a major surprise were they not sent out in the very first session, and in three Ryder Cups so far, Spieth has only been benched for one of the 15.

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COLLIN MORIKAWA



FACT FILE

Age	24
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Such as been his climb through the ranks that Collin Morikawa is not only a Ryder Cup debutant, but when last this competition was played he was still an amateur playing his golf at college. During that time he went 4-0-0 at the Walker Cup and also picked up valuable experience in the Palmer Cup, but this is a new experience and even a two-time major champion may find that the first tee of a Ryder Cup is something else. Of course, having won the Open Championship on his first try, and the US PGA for that matter, this 24-year-old will soon adapt and while his shaky putting might worry some, his metronomic accuracy both off the tee and with his approach shots will have more experienced teammates lining up to partner with him. Were it not for the fact they're both rookies, pairing him with the deadly Harris English would be logical and it may be that captain Stricker is prepared to do so given that Morikawa is not your typical first-timer. He looks set to be a major asset for many years to come, particularly in fourballs where he could free up a more dynamic driver to go on the attack. DJ?



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TONY FINAU



FACT FILE

Age	32
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	1
Ryder Cup record	2-1-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	1-1-0
Singles	1-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

One of the few American success stories of 2018, Tony Finau earned two points from three matches on what was his debut in the Ryder Cup. The popular big-hitter was sent out in the very first match and partnered Brooks Koepka to down Justin Rose and Jon Rahm, before losing a tight match to Sergio Garcia and Rory McIlroy in the same slot on day two, and then thrashing in-form Tommy Fleetwood 6&4 in the singles. Since then, he's established himself inside the world's top 20 but by far the most significant event occurred recently when he won The Northern Trust in a play-off, ending a five-year winless run at long last. That also ended what was considerable doubt as to whether he would make the US team, and he can call upon a top-10 finish at Whistling Straits as well as that strong debut three years ago. Finau also delivered in the Presidents Cup, halving his singles with Hideki Matsuyama and picking up some foursomes experience, and is one of the most popular players in the team room. The only worry is that such an affable character is therefore asked to play alongside the, shall we say, problem name.

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SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER



FACT FILE

Age	25
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Arguably the surprise wildcard despite being inside the world's top 25, Scottie Scheffler's form in majors (19-4-18-8-7-8) and WGCs (15-5-2-14) since the PGA Tour returned last summer were surely a big part of captain Steve Stricker's logic. So might be the fact that he's a modern, aggressive, big-hitting player who has formed strong bonds with some of the more influential names in the US team, but we shouldn't underestimate the performance levels Scheffler has reached despite not yet having won on the PGA Tour. True, it's rare for such a player to make a Ryder Cup side, but Jeff Overton fared reasonably well in Wales and the classier Scheffler looks like he'll be an excellent option. His game really doesn't have a weakness, but in terms of strengths it's notable that as well as being long off the tee he's also accurate, and it's strong driving which provides the platform for one of the PGA Tour's most prolific birdie-makers. Sounds ideal for a home Ryder Cup, doesn't it?



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DANIEL BERGER



FACT FILE

Age	28
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

When the pandemic struck in the spring of 2020, Daniel Berger looked like he might be the player to suffer most. He'd just worked his way back from injury and was on the verge of a return to the world's top 100 after three top-10s in succession, when his strong first round in The PLAYERS was wiped out. Not a bother. Berger simply returned three months later to win the first event of the restart, beating Collin Morikawa in a play-off, and from there it took him just another couple of weeks to make the top 20 - where he's been ever since. That's down to the fact he's won again, at Pebble Beach, while also confirming himself one of the most consistent players in America, missing just two cuts in a year and a half. Given that he made an encouraging Presidents Cup debut in 2017, he always looked likely to make this side and it says much that a supposedly quiet summer saw him finish seventh in the US Open, eighth in the Open and fifth in a WGC. Much of this success has been earned through grittiness and top-notch iron play, while he's also accurate and good on the greens.

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PATRICK CANTLAY



FACT FILE

Age	29
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

It was thanks to a career-best putting performance that Patrick Cantlay beat Bryson DeChambeau in a play-off for the BMW Championship, and effectively confirmed he'd be making his Ryder Cup debut, but he also showed impressive resolve and seemingly enjoyed being crowd favourite against the pantomime villain. The 2018 Ryder Cup came just too soon for this one-time prodigy, whose career stalled when personal tragedy and fitness problems combined, but in truth something would've had to go very wrong for him to miss this and in the end he qualified in sixth place. Cantlay's performance in the 2019 Presidents Cup, where he won three points having been sent out in all five sessions, was encouraging, and suggests he'll again be paired with long-time friend Xander Schauffele. The pair have similar demeanours and similar games, although a note of caution is found in the fact that they did lose both fourball matches. That's a small sample though and they will surely get to try the format again, while if this streaky putter runs hot in the singles, he'll prove a formidable opponent.

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HARRIS ENGLISH



FACT FILE

Age	32
Nationality	American
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

When the last Ryder Cup was taking place, Harris English was about to fall outside the world's top 300, a driver-powered downfall which threatened to confine him to the golfing scrapheap. Through hard work and a change in coach, English learned to drive the ball well again, and from the end of 2019 onwards he's climbed back up the rankings to a recent high of 10th. It's been some renaissance and he's bagged silverware to top it off, winning play-offs in Hawaii and at the Travelers Championship where his dynamite putting was again on display. Adept in the wind, Whistling Straits looks a good fit and he's one of the best putters on a team predominantly made up of players better described as long and strong. Those who take issue with his selection likely base that on a collapse at the WGC-FedEx St Jude Invitational, where he looked set to win for the third time in 2021, but every player on both sides has endured a difficult Sunday at some stage and English's calm demeanour, and apparent lack of ego, should make him a popular member of this side. Arguably more so than any other player here, he's had to fight really hard for this.



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JON RAHM



FACT FILE

Age	26
Nationality	Spanish
Ryder Cup appearances	1
Ryder Cup record	1-2-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-2-0
Singles	1-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Such has been his ascent in the three subsequent years, it's amazing to think Jon Rahm contributed little to Europe's convincing victory in Paris. Left out of foursomes altogether and beaten narrowly alongside Justin Rose and Ian Poulter in fourballs, the Spaniard then secured a coming-of-age victory over childhood hero Tiger Woods to earn his first Ryder Cup point in the singles. Things will be very different this time, and European success will surely require Rahm to be at his best. A spectacular winner of the US Open and in contention virtually everywhere he goes, there's every reason to believe he will be exactly that and though the margins separating these players are fine, it's difficult to argue he's anything but the best player in the sport. He does concede course knowledge to those who played the 2010 or 2015 PGA Championship here but is a fan of Pete Dye designs, and frankly his game works anywhere. He is not likely to form an all-Spanish partnership with Sergio Garcia as the pair are not close, so the task for Padraig Harrington is to ensure he gets the most out of his star player. Whether that means five matches from the front remains to be seen, but one suspects that's how Rahm would like to play things.

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TOMMY FLEETWOOD



FACT FILE

Age	30
Nationality	English
Ryder Cup appearances	1
Ryder Cup record	4-1-0
Foursomes	2-0-0
Fourballs	2-0-0
Singles	0-1-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

The surviving member of *Moliwood*, Tommy Fleetwood made an exceptional Ryder Cup debut at a course he loves but now has questions to answer at Whistling Straits. Not only is he without Francesco Molinari, but his form in 2021 has been below the standard we've come to expect and while excuses are there, they don't matter much once tee peg meets ground. After improved play in Europe lately, he'll hope to be the latest in a long line of players who really come alive in this environment and it's certainly a good course for the Englishman on paper. As for finding that Molinari replacement, there's a lot to be said for how well he could work with Viktor Hovland or even Shane Lowry, to whom he finished second in the 2019 Open Championship, although the latter may be pencilled in to team up with Rory McIlroy. Below the levels of Portrush since, it's highly unlikely Fleetwood plays all five matches unless striking up a similarly lucrative partnership. To do so he must find a way to dial in his driver once more.

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VIKTOR HOVLAND



FACT FILE

Age	24
Nationality	Norwegian
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

It's little more than two years since Viktor Hovland turned professional and, while yet to enjoy the success of fellow college graduate Collin Morikawa, he's been a certainty to make the Ryder Cup side since the event was delayed. Already he's a three-time winner, two of those successes coming this year, he stamped his class all over the BMW International Open on a rare European Tour start back in June. Educated in the USA at Oklahoma State, a large part of his golfing life has been spent over there so a Ryder Cup in Wisconsin shouldn't unnerve a player who has smiled his way to superstar status and will be the first Norwegian to feature in this event. Strengths-wise he's a fabulous driver of the ball not just in the sense of strokes-gained numbers, but in that he's both powerful and accurate. From there his iron play can sing and it's only really around the greens that he can occasionally look fragile, although that too is improving. Rory McIlroy has publicly hinted that he'd be keen to play with him and they share a coach now, but I wonder whether Sergio Garcia could be just as suitable a partner for Friday's opening session.



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RORY MCILROY



FACT FILE

Age	32
Nationality	Northern Irish
Ryder Cup appearances	5
Ryder Cup record	11-9-4
Foursomes	5-4-1
Fourballs	4-3-2
Singles	2-2-1



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Whether or not he remains Europe's talisman, having fallen behind Jon Rahm in the world rankings, Rory McIlroy remains its biggest name in an event he soon realised means a lot to him. Now a five-time member of Team Europe, suffering defeat only in 2016, he defied traffic problems to play his part in the Miracle at Medinah when undoubtedly the best player in the world, and has always been one of the first three out in Sunday singles, leading the way in both 2016 and 2018. McIlroy lost both those matches and will be desperate to do more for the team and bolster what's a good record, but not as strong as you might expect having featured in every session. As for who he plays with, McIlroy has experience alongside Ian Poulter and Sergio Garcia but more recently has asked to partner a rookie on the first morning. It didn't pay off at Hazeltine, where he lost with Andy Sullivan before stumbling into a brilliant partnership with Thomas Pieters, and it didn't work in Paris either. Pdraig Harrington will likely persist and the prospect of McIlroy and Shane Lowry heading out together in the first match on the first day is both mouthwatering and entirely realistic.

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TYRRELL HATTON



FACT FILE

Age	29
Nationality	English
Ryder Cup appearances	1
Ryder Cup record	1-2-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	1-1-0
Singles	0-1-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Tyrrell Hatton made his debut as part of the winning side in Paris, where he formed a close bond with a buoyant Paul Casey. The pair only featured in fourballs, losing in the first session to the strongest USA duo before beating Rickie Fowler and Dustin Johnson, meaning the Englishman is yet to play foursomes at this level. It shouldn't be an issue: his laser-straight iron play and tidy short-game make him the sort of player who could fit nicely alongside anyone, and no longer is he a rookie who might require the experience of someone like Casey. That said, a reprisal of their partnership could well happen, especially as it can be argued that Casey's cheery manner helped negate Hatton's combustibility which was on display during a frustrating Open Championship as a year which started so well threatened to peter out. In fact while he's a player Padraig Harrington may well have expected to lean on, his only notable effort since the spring came in a weak PGA Tour event and a poor defence at Wentworth leaves him with major form questions to answer.



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PAUL CASEY



FACT FILE

Age	44
Nationality	English
Ryder Cup appearances	4
Ryder Cup record	4-3-5
Foursomes	1-1-0
Fourballs	2-1-3
Singles	1-1-2



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Once cast aside from Team Europe having refused to bend to the European Tour's qualification requirements, Paul Casey made an emotional return in Paris where he gelled nicely with rookie Tyrrell Hatton, and then fought hard to share the spoils with Brooks Koepka in the singles. Alongside Hatton, he went 1-1-0 in fourballs and it's interesting that he's played just two Ryder Cup foursomes matches in his career, because as one of the premiere ball-strikers around it's a format which should suit. Given that he's been one of the most reliable operators in the sport throughout 2021, surely we'll see him play a bigger and more varied role here, although a reprisal of that partnership with Hatton seems entirely possible. Look for Casey to play with a similarly strong tee-to-green performer, rather than someone like Ian Poulter who is better known for his short-game, and for one of several 40-somethings in the side to again be matched up with those less experienced - unless we're treated to an Arizona Sun Devils link-up with Jon Rahm.

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MATT FITZPATRICK



FACT FILE

Age	27
Nationality	English
Ryder Cup appearances	1
Ryder Cup record	0-2-0
Foursomes	0-1-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-1-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

To the man in the street, Matt Fitzpatrick might be among the least known and most underrated members of this European side. Only recently turned 27, Fitzpatrick has collected six European Tour titles already and gone close to breaking through in the US, where he was their amateur champion once upon a time, and yet a lack of big performances in majors keeps him off the public's radar. His 2016 Ryder Cup debut might have come too soon, as he was still searching for consistency when part of a beaten side at Hazeltine and was made to wait until Saturday for his first match, which came in the more difficult foursomes format. Older and wiser now and certainly more consistent, he's the best putter on the European team and should play a much more significant role, with experienced caddie Billy Foster also by his side as he looks to contribute his first point. The Foster factor could make a partnership with his old boss Lee Westwood appealing and both have similar temperaments, but a slight lack of firepower may force Pdraig Harrington to look elsewhere.

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LEE WESTWOOD



FACT FILE

Age	48
Nationality	English
Ryder Cup appearances	10
Ryder Cup record	20-18-6
Foursomes	9-5-4
Fourballs	8-6-2
Singles	3-7-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

One of the most successful players in Ryder Cup history, Lee Westwood's run of 10 consecutive appearances came to an end when he failed to make the 2018 side. Back then it would've been reasonable to assume he'd left his playing days behind, but he showed the fire still burns with a win in South Africa later that year, and ended last season as the Race to Dubai champion having started it with another lucrative victory in Abu Dhabi. His form at the beginning of 2021 was also strong courtesy of back-to-back runner-up finishes, including at Sawgrass, but he's been quiet since and only scraped through after a dramatic end to the BMW PGA. At 48, perhaps his on-course role will be limited although his significant contribution towards the success of Team Europe has been via pairs golf, as his singles record is quite poor. We may then see Padraig Harrington bank on that excellent foursomes return of his, a format which is also less physically demanding, and it would be quite something to see him rekindle a partnership with Sergio Garcia at a combined age of 89. They're unbeaten together in the format, but it is old form now it must be said.



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SHANE LOWRY



FACT FILE

Age	34
Nationality	Irish
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Although it's more than two years since Shane Lowry last collected silverware, that trophy was a significant one as he stormed to victory in the Open Championship in front of a massive home crowd at Portrush. It was meant to be the platform for automatic qualification but the combination of a post-major lull and the effects of the pandemic on a player whose heart remains in Ireland saw him forced to pull out all the stops to impress his captain, who of course is also his close friend. Typical of the man, Lowry kickstarted a big summer with a top-10 finish at Sawgrass, made it a top-five in the PGA Championship where he played with Harrington in round four, and then put up a stout defence of his Open title. In fact few Europeans have been so consistent and his approach play in particular has powered this sustained run of form, one which promises to make him an important part of the side on debut and which meant there was never any serious doubt he'd be selected as a wildcard once his failure to qualify had been confirmed. Could we see him paired with Rory McIlroy, soon after the two represented Ireland at the Olympics?

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IAN POULTER



FACT FILE

Age	45
Nationality	English
Ryder Cup appearances	6
Ryder Cup record	14-6-2
Foursomes	5-2-0
Fourballs	4-4-1
Singles	5-0-1



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Ian Poulter's exploits in the Ryder Cup have earned him the nickname The Postman, and Padraig Harrington will hope that he can once again deliver having been selected as a wildcard. Six times a member of Team Europe prior to this year, four of those came when one of the captain's picks and ever since he showed strong form at the start of the season, it always appeared likely he'd get the call for a fifth time. Anyone who remembers Medinah, where he dragged Europe back into the match and then won his singles yet again, will be inclined to expect something of the veteran Englishman, but it should be noted that his latest two appearances, both on home soil, have been his worst on an individual level. That is to say nothing except that even the very best players in the history of this competition fall victims to time, and one of Europe's best putters will be all too aware that this is likely his final chance to win on US soil again. Can he go out on yet another high, or will Harrington live to regret taking him over Justin Rose?

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SERGIO GARCIA



FACT FILE

Age	41
Nationality	Spanish
Ryder Cup appearances	9
Ryder Cup record	22-12-7
Foursomes	10-4-3
Fourballs	8-4-3
Singles	4-4-1



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Rewind three years and Sergio Garcia's inclusion in the European side was somehow controversial, many feeling that Matt Wallace's burst of wins should've tipped the scales in his favour. Wisely, Thomas Bjorn kept his head and relied on one of his best players to come good, which the Spaniard did in securing three points in Paris. The last of those, earned in the singles to bring his record in that format back to level, saw Garcia become the leading points-scorer in the history of the competition, and he's one others will look to to lead the way on and off the course. His form in 2021 has been encouraging, too: he's added a bit of length off the tee late in his career, and remains a dazzling iron player when firing on all cylinders. Clearly, short putts remain an issue but he's one of those who can leave his troubles behind in this event. Don't expect an all-Spanish partnership with Jon Rahm, but do expect Garcia to feature, perhaps back with Rory McIlroy or Lee Westwood, or else asked to accompany one less experienced.



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BERND WIESBERGER



FACT FILE

Age	35
Nationality	Austrian
Ryder Cup appearances	0
Ryder Cup record	0-0-0
Foursomes	0-0-0
Fourballs	0-0-0
Singles	0-0-0



PLAYER ANALYSIS

Bernd Wiesberger qualified for the Ryder Cup side through an old-fashioned route, that is to say thanks to his success in Europe. It looked for a while that the Austrian had a mountain to climb, but a victory in Denmark plus second in Switzerland meant he arrived at Wentworth, where double points were on offer, with a golden, perhaps once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And, despite a horror start, to his immense credit he played some excellent golf to do what he had to do. He brings to the team a quality tee-to-green game, his approach play in particular capable of extremely high standards, and though not vastly experienced in the US, he did contend for the US PGA in 2014. Since then he's become a fairly prolific winner and it's good for the European Tour that there's a path to the Ryder Cup for a player like him. Pdraig Harrington will likely blood him on Friday afternoon and how he plays may determine the role he performs thereafter, but it would not be at all surprising were he to prove a real force in fourballs. Close friends with Sergio Garcia, they could well be paired together.

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BEN COLEY'S EXCLUSIVE TIPS

TO WIN THE RYDER CUP

If you're relatively new to the Ryder Cup, it might be that you're familiar with a particular formula: before the event begins we read about how superior the USA side is on paper; after it, we dissect what went wrong for them after another resounding victory for Europe. But while that has undeniably been the case on European soil, in the USA the hosts have won two of the last three and should've won the other, instead coming off second best in the Miracle at Medinah. As implied by the name which will go down in Ryder Cup folklore, it took extraordinary happenings for 2012 to go Europe's way and the USA look rock-solid favourites to win back the trophy. They've an incredibly strong team, and the absence of both Patrick Reed and Tiger Woods might be a positive. Both were poor in Paris, Reed equally so for large parts of the Presidents Cup, and there's no denying it's been hard for some Americans to pair up with Woods in the past. This set of 12 represent a new breed and at a course far more suitable than Paris, not even the feud between Bryson DeChambeau and Brooks Koepka should derail them. The trouble is, 8/15 isn't going to appeal to many, so my advice is to dutch the **17-11 and 16.5-11.5** scorelines in favour of the USA. Those are the margins by which they won in 2016 and 2008 respectively and you'll get something in the region of 6/1.

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TOP COMBINED POINTS SCORER

The key to this market is to find a player who will feature in Friday's opening session, and likely play each of the five. That's been true of every clear winner over the last 30 years except Ian Poulter, who managed it by winning all four of his matches at Medinah. Europeans have also dominated, not only because they've bossed the competition, but perhaps because they've had to rely on a smaller pool of star players. Past winners include Seve Ballesteros, Sergio Garcia, Lee Westwood, Ian Poulter and Justin Rose, and **JON RAHM** now holds the key for the visiting underdogs. He's come a long way since a bit-part ended with singles victory over Tiger Woods in 2018, and the world number one will surely feature throughout unless something goes badly wrong. I like that he chose to stay sharp on the PGA Tour a week before the Ryder Cup, while others perhaps dwell on it too soon, and he's going to be hard for anyone to beat. It's not easy to predict his partners but Europe are lacking form candidates and also have four veterans, making it all the more likely the best player in the competition is tasked with leading from the front.

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TOP USA POINTS SCORER

There might be six rookies in the USA side but it looks particularly strong, with every team member ranking inside the world's top 25. That may mean that Steve Stricker doesn't have to ask anyone to play every session, but **JUSTIN THOMAS** has done so in all three team appearances so far and has been the leading USA scorer in the last two, both in the 2018 Ryder Cup and then a year later in the Presidents Cup. All told he's been outscored by just one of his 33 teammates since his 2017 debut in the latter competition and he's the real Captain America, who will surely play with long-time friend Jordan Spieth in the opening session. They went 3-1-0 together in Paris, despite playing on a course less suitable than this one, and rekindled their partnership in Melbourne. Should they go out and secure a point on Friday morning they'll have the chance to double up in the afternoon, and it would take a brave or foolish captain to halt their momentum. Given that Spieth has an abysmal singles record, the percentage call is to side with Thomas, who ended the season playing nicely again and seems to value this more than some of his peers.

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TOP EUROPEAN POINTS SCORER

Jon Rahm is no less tempting to be the top European scorer for the reasons given across the page, and this is a good safety net should one of the Americans win four or more points and pip him to overall honours. In the event of a convincing win for the hosts it could be that Rahm needs just three points from a likely five matches to take this market, and that's well within his compass. For a spot of value, **SHANE LOWRY** is put forward as the best alternative. Wildcards top-scored for Europe in their 2008 and 2016 defeats on US soil, and Lowry has been one of the form players over the last six months, as well as being a major and WGC champion. His big-time mentality is ideal for the format and with several Europeans struggling for form, he might well get the nod in the first session, perhaps alongside Rory McIlroy. The latter hasn't yet missed a session but hasn't top-scored, either, and it may be that Lowry can emulate Thomas Pieters in forming a winning partnership with his Olympics teammate before deliving in the singles. He's more than good enough to star for compatriot Pádraig Harrington.

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