

The Walker Cup

Press Conference

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Stuart Wilson

Calum Scott

Alex Maguire



THE WALKER CUP
ST ANDREWS 2023

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Walker Cup. I am delighted to be joined by members of the GB&I team. We've got Calum Scott, Stuart Wilson, Alex Maguire. Stuart, we'll start with you. Can you give us some opening remarks about the team that you've assembled this week and how your preparations have been going so far?

STUART WILSON: Okay, Olivia. Obviously it's a long hard season for the boys, and it's quite a challenge for us to put together a team of 10, given the amount of golfers that are out there with aspirations to make the team.

Thankfully I've got a slate -- there's four of us that we gained consensus on who we think the top 10 are going to be for delivering the points for the GB&I team. So I think selection went really well.

We're really delighted with the team we've got, and since we've been here have all really been putting in all the hard work and effort into reflect the effort they've put in over the year to get the performances to make the team.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Alex, obviously getting selected for a Walker Cup team is always special, but for that to be played here in St Andrews in Scotland, just how much more memorable does that make it for you?

ALEX MAGUIRE: Yeah, it's obviously an honour to play for GB&I, especially in the Walker Cup. To have it at St Andrews just makes it that much more special.

With the home support, having family and friends being able to come and watch, also makes you want to win just that little bit more, you know. So yeah.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Alex, speaking of winning, you did of course win here in St Andrews Trophy earlier in the year. Does that bring good memories for you out there on the Old Course so far?

ALEX MAGUIRE: Yeah, obviously winning here was probably the best weekend of my life. Again, that photo down on Swilcan Bridge a few months ago was a photo that will never be beaten, but I think regardless if I won or not, coming back to St Andrews, like Calum said, is so special.

You take for granted as players getting to play the Links Trophy, you take for granted how cool it is here and how like people all over the world want to come here and play a round of golf, and we're able to do it for free this week and represent our home country.

Yeah, winning here gives me a few more better feelings.

Q. Stuart, Alex has pretty good memories here and so do you. What do you remember about winning the Amateur here? I guess it was 20 years ago now.

STUART WILSON: Yeah, 20 years. Thanks for bringing that up. I needed reminding.

Obviously it was a special week, as well. Right up there with what's happening this week, and it was the 250th anniversary of the R&A, as well, so there was a lot of activity around that week just like there's a lot of activity around this week with it being the 100 years since the first playing at St Andrews. That kind of reflects what was a little bit -- same kind of feeling as to 20 years ago.

Obviously the guys are maybe playing off slightly different tees and hitting into slightly different places than I used to do, but I'd like to think that we can still draw on those positive experiences and the knowledge of getting around the Old Course and put it into good practice this week.

Q. What was your toughest match that week?

STUART WILSON: For me we managed to get through them, but the biggest match was probably the quarterfinals against Francesco Molinari. Francesco was probably the top European player at the time, and we'd had a few matches in the past and been on a few teams together, so we knew each other well. It was a nice match to get through, and probably, yeah, the kind of performance that

was required at the time to make the semifinal and the final possible.

Q. Calum, obviously following in Sandy's footsteps playing in this event. Can you take me back to Royal Liverpool; were you there that week, and was that a dream at that time for you to be involved in this one?

CALUM SCOTT: Yeah, so yeah, we got there. My whole family was there. We were all watching. Obviously I had aspirations of doing what he's doing.

He was top of his game. He'd just come off a win at Pebble Beach that week and then went straight to the Walker Cup.

He was playing well, playing against the Americans, being part of that GB&I Walker Cup team, being able to watch him win two out of two singles, that was pretty cool.

I remember I think he gave me a towel or something and I hung it up in my room, and it's still there to this day. I told myself I wanted to make that team, and I'm sitting here now. Very thankful that all that's paid off.

But yeah, that was amazing being there with my family watching him, and it was a special moment.

Q. Stuart yesterday said yesterday you were always the wee brother, then you've gone to America and now you're the man mountain. What's happened physically to you over the last couple years?

CALUM SCOTT: I don't know. It's probably just certain foods over there just clearly make me grow a little more.

STUART WILSON: I think it's the heat.

CALUM SCOTT: It's great. It's great that I'm taller than him so I have something up on him.

But yeah, it's just growing, some maturity, hitting the ball longer. Just a whole bunch of different things since I was a young 16-, 15-year-old that I was. Things have changed some.

Q. Alex, the most recent winner of the Links Trophy, how much of an advantage might that be this week since most of the players on the GB&I team have played in that event and know the course. Can that be a big factor this week?

ALEX MAGUIRE: Yeah, I think a factor for the whole team, not really just for me. I won, but Calum was five behind me, like he shot 16-under here, as well.

Fortunately I was the guy who come out on top that week, but I think the whole team, we've all played this course before, and I think -- it's a strange sort of course because depending on the wind you get, like the front nine plays very similar and the back nine plays very similar to each other. You're sort of aiming up the left and you're cutting it back to the hole you're on, but if that wind switches and you can't really do that because of the wind you get, I think because we've played it in so many different winds, we sort of know -- I guess we have two or three different game plans just based on how the wind is because with no wind, the tee shots are pretty easy, but then once the wind comes in, you have to start moving your lines further and further left or further and further right.

But yeah, look, it's one of those courses that it can play very easy or play very, very hard just based on a 20-mile-an-hour wind.

Q. Alex, with four Irish on the team this week, how much have you enjoyed playing and staying with them so far?

ALEX MAGUIRE: It's class. Yeah, as an Irishman, it's amazing to have three of the lads alongside me. You know, even sitting here, it's so surreal. It's something that when I obviously seen the five lads who played Lytham, the fabulous five or famous five, whichever it's called, I wanted to be one of those guys, and I'm sure the same with Mark and Liam. We'd seen the picture with the five lads with the trophy, and they actually brought it to Carton House the January after for the Champions Dinner, and I was there.

So yeah, since ever seeing that, I've always wanted to be on one of these teams, and to have three of the lads with me from Ireland and to be in the most represented country here, yeah, it's a massive sense of pride being Irish this week.

Q. What do you feel yourself you can bring to the team this week?

ALEX MAGUIRE: Like personally, I think I won't give up regardless of what state of my match I'm in. If I'm put out there first or last or in the middle, I'm going to do my job and I'm going to make sure that I'm going to fight for every shot.

There's different parts of my game -- yeah, you could say I am going to hole a few putts, but everyone wants to hole putts, but I'm going to try my hardest to, if I put them in awkward positions or hit a bad shot, collect myself for the next shot and be prepared for the next challenge ahead of

me. My coach always said, just pretend like you always wanted the ball to be there, so if you hit a hook that goes 80 yards left, just pretend like you wanted to go there and then you're in a good frame of mind going to the next shot.

Yeah, I'll bring a bit of grit and a bit of intensity to the team, which I'm certainly looking forward to.

Q. Alex, you seemed to have brought some weather from Boca Raton, Florida, here to St Andrews. Can you speak about the team's thought on the weather and how it may affect the competition? I know it's a bit of an uncharacteristic look for the Old Course. Share some thoughts on what you're seeing the last couple days in the practice rounds.

ALEX MAGUIRE: It's definitely gotten a little firmer, I think. Today we noticed around the greens it was a little more trickier to get to certain flags if you were chipping up a slope.

But being part of a team, it's cool, right. We were driving up there, and like we had the course to ourselves today, and as a team we can go out there and help each other on different tees.

It's a very, very unique setting at the moment, playing St Andrews but also having the course to ourselves and only being 20 guys and then 10 guys on our team.

Yeah, think I being part of a team is something that I've been used to over the last few years. Being over at FAU and having the chance to play a lot of competitive golf and so on and practising all year-round I think has given me a bit of an advantage and definitely made me a better player over the last few years. I think if you asked me four years ago, I wouldn't say I was good enough to ever play a Walker Cup, but yeah, being over in Florida has definitely prepared me for this moment.

Q. Quick question for Alex. Who's the longest player on the GB&I squad?

ALEX MAGUIRE: The guy sitting over there.

Q. I kind of knew you were going to say that.

ALEX MAGUIRE: I played British Am with him for the first time a few weeks ago, and he was hitting 5-irons as far as I was hitting my 2-irons. I couldn't believe it -- I thought he was hitting 3-irons. Then I look over in his bag and you'd see the 3 and the 4 and the 6, and he's hitting 5-irons. Yeah, Calum can get it out there pretty, pretty far.

Q. Calum, where do you think this length comes from,

and what are some of your numbers, like club head speed, ball speed with the driver?

CALUM SCOTT: I think I've got very long arms. I'm tall. I'm lanky. I wouldn't say it's muscle or anything. I've played a lot of sports growing up, and I played tennis, squash. I know how to move things fast.

I think just timing, as well, is a big thing. A lot of shoulder rotation, that kind of thing.

Yeah, driver I think it's cruising at 123. Ball speed in the lower 180s.

Q. Have you ever had over 200 ball speed going after one?

CALUM SCOTT: Not on record. I haven't really tried to go full, full out. But yeah, I'd say -- I wouldn't say 200, but 190 something, yeah.

Q. How much have you kind of heard about Gordon Sargent's length and how maybe appetising would it be to face him at some point this week, maybe even in singles?

CALUM SCOTT: Yeah, well, I've played with Gordon a couple times in college, so obviously I know how long he is. I think everyone in the college scene in America knows how long he is.

Look, he's a great player. He's No. 1 in the world, so it would be great to play him in singles. I would love that match. I'd love any match, but it would be cool to play him at the Home of Golf.

But yeah, I think we'll see. It'll be good.

Q. Stuart, I think there's been a low front in the UK every weekend since The Open; I think there's a high front here now and staying here for the weekend. Is that untimely in terms of would you have preferred a little bit nasty weather just for maybe a better chance?

STUART WILSON: I don't think so. I'm all for good weather. I think the team would appreciate that, as well.

I think it's nice that the guys will get to go head-to-head without having to battle the elements. It loses something when it's howling wind and rain and things. At least these guys will be able to kind of show what they can do in good conditions. Maybe a club and a half wind would have been nice quite and a wee bit of bounce on the Old Course, but we'll take it the way it is.

Q. Have you read anything into the Americans having a big W on the front of their hats today in practice?

STUART WILSON: No, no, I actually haven't seen the hats. I could think a lot W help me out there.

Q. Win.

STUART WILSON: Oh, right, okay.

Q. For the two players, obviously on paper, the Americans are very impressive ranking-wise. Does that intimidate you guys or does that inspire you to try and beat them this week?

CALUM SCOTT: I mean, I wouldn't say intimidates us. It's a completely different game over here. We've all played golf everywhere in the world. I think anyone on their "A" game, from GB&I side to the U.S. side, it's anyone's game, and also it's match play, so that's different from stroke play.

I think that you can play as well as you want and sometimes lose, and sometimes it goes your way. I don't think the rankings really matter for this, especially being at St Andrews. It's anyone's game, and I think the winning team is the team that holes the most putts. That's it.

ALEX MAGUIRE: Same. Like he said at the very end, I think the person or team who holes the most putts is going to win.

I think our games are definitely good enough to compete with the Americans. It will all come down to the greens here. Stuart put a text in there last week saying "practise putting" because it's the one thing it'll come down to. You'd be surprised how similar our games will be to the Americans', I think.

We're not intimidated by the rankings. Obviously they're great players, and they're high up in the World Rankings for a reason, but at the end of the day, it'll come down to who can hole the most ten-footers and who can hole the most five-footers. That's pretty much all it's going to come down to.

Q. You don't mind that you're in most people's eyes underdogs?

ALEX MAGUIRE: Yeah, that's absolutely fine. But I want to play being the underdog. I've won a few times being the underdog.

STUART WILSON: I think it's fair to say we're probably always going to be in the underdogs, the second favourites in a two-horse race every time this comes around.

History tells us that's probably appropriate, but then when you look at the results over the last 25 years, it's become a lot more evenly matched certainly with home advantage, as well.

Everybody knows who we are and I think our guys are quite familiar with the American team or certainly the collegiate guys, and some of the Americans will be obviously familiar with our guys. Everybody knows where they're at in the grand scheme of things, but it all gets sorted out over the weekend, doesn't it.

Q. Calum, is that towel still at home or is it with you?

CALUM SCOTT: No, it's still at home. It's in my room.

Q. Lastly, if the Ws were actually for "win" versus "Walker Cup," would you consider that to be somewhat of a slight?

STUART WILSON: No, everybody is -- we've done our preparation and we've done what we think is right in trying to get the guys into the right position come Saturday morning, and I'm sure Mike and his team have done the same. If they feel that's appropriate for them, that's absolutely fine.

Q. You said you really don't want the course to get crazy, meaning weather-wise, but doesn't that somewhat take away an advantage you might have since you guys know this course better than most of the Americans and having bad weather might actually benefit you?

STUART WILSON: No, no. We all know in links golf things can change from the front nine to the back nine given a wee bit of a change in direction of breeze.

Like I said, I'd rather see the guys just going head-to-head on a nice links day rather than battling the elements, absolutely.

OLIVIA McMILLAN: Gentlemen, thank you very much for your time today. Best of luck this weekend.

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