

**August 6, 2008**



**Oakland Hills Country Club ~ Bloomfield Township, Mich.**

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Out	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Out	Total
Yardage	435	529	198	446	490	387	449	491	257	<b>3,682</b>	462	423	593	191	501	401	406	238	498	<b>3,713</b>	<b>7,395</b>
Par	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	<b>35</b>	4	4	5	3	4	4	4	3	4	<b>35</b>	<b>70</b>
Score																					

**AN INTERVIEW WITH:  
U.S. RYDER CUP CAPTAIN  
PAUL AZINGER**

JULIUS MASON: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. On Monday, this Monday at 8:30 in the morning, Ryder Cup Captain Paul Azinger will have a news conference in here to discuss the eight members that make up his United States Ryder Cup Team, and on Tuesday, September 2, in New York City, at ten o'clock in the morning, our captain will make his four captain's picks, and in 44 days, the first ball will be hit at the 37th Ryder Cup.

So with that news, Mr. Azinger, what's your mind-set these days? How ya doing?

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I'm great. I'm glad to be here. I haven't been out in a while, since Muirfield. It's been nice to see players this week. It looks like there's at least six guys that are really secure to make this team, and I haven't run into all of them yet, but just trying to encourage these guys to play some practice rounds together if they can, but for the most part I'm happy with the way the selection process has put this team together.

It would be really difficult to make an argument that the top eight players are not America's best. If you add Tiger Woods in the mix,

the top eight players, you have seven of the top eight that have won a tournament this year, and Furyk is the only one that hasn't, but he's probably been the most consistent player.

But I like the way the team's shaped up. I couldn't be happier. I realize that the four picks is going to be a little more difficult than I thought. There seems to be -- if I just take the top eight guys that are not in the top eight right now, go down to 16, there's a lot of really quality options there for me.

So I just like how things have played out so far.

JULIUS MASON: Thank you, Captain. Questions, folks.

**Q. Welcome back to active duty. After this thing locks up on Sunday, are you still going to have some sort of points list type of thing that you'll be compiling for the wild card guys, or is that just seat of your pants from there on, because you've got all of these guys separated by not much in the next few spots, and I don't know if that will be subjective or an exercise in math or how will you do it?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: What I'm going to do is have the PGA of America continue the tally, as you suggest, the selection process just would keep going. The top eight are established. But I will be curious to see how that plays out. I think it just is another -- just to be thorough. I think it's the right thing to do.

Also after this week, I'm going to start

delving into statistics and stuff like that. I haven't done any of that to this point, but just to be very thorough.

**Q. Stats, for instance?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Driving accuracy, greens in regulation, driving distance, putting stats. I'm curious -- putts per greens hit. I think those are things that are important. And of course, personalities are going to be huge for me.

We'll just see. I mean, to me right now, it's just a big question mark. There's a lot of time left. You have a tournament this week that's worth double the value, and then the three tournaments after that are important for me.

**Q. You didn't mention birdies. How important, in match play, I think birdies are pretty important and I think past captains have maybe ignored that stat and looked at some other things.**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Well, I appreciate you bringing that up. I'll study birdies, too, and I'll look for bounce-backs. (Laughter).

There's so many stats now, it's crazy, I don't want to kill myself.

**Q. Captains generally don't want to talk about partnerships until they get there, but do you have a general philosophy on the kind of guys that you want playing together, whether it's similar games, different kind of games, same ball, all that sort of thing?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Yeah, I believe that common sense in the end will play a huge part in all of that. You know, to delve into it is fairly unnecessary, but you'll see, I think common sense plays a part.

Obviously I'm going to ask every player, that's just common sense, as well; is there somebody in particular you want to play with; is there anybody you don't want to play with. That's common sense leadership, I believe.

There's going to be some obvious pairing, I think, and maybe I will just go strictly off golf balls in some cases.

The golf ball, if the guys play the same ball, it does make it easier, if you think their personalities match up. So I look at personalities, but I also look at kind of a little bit of what they want.

**Q. Have you spent much time at Valhalla, and is the course looking the way that you would want it to look?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Right now, it looks the way I want it to look. I haven't been there since the Kentucky Derby, but I do plan ongoing back pretty soon. I have a decent relationship with Mark Wilson -- I should say a good relationship with Mark Wilson, the superintendent, and if there is an advantage, I'll look for it, but I don't know what that would be. If there is a perceived advantage, I'll try to exploit it.

Europe's done a great job of exploiting, I feel, golf course advantage on us for a long time. They have the advantage of going to sites that the European players all know and the American players don't know. We don't have that advantage here, because most of the Europeans who play Ryder Cup play this tour on a regular basis, so it's not like we can go somewhere where they wouldn't know the golf course. And they have been able to somehow neutralize our power in the past by bringing the fairways in at certain points and forcing, you know, guys like Tiger and Phil to hit clubs off the tee where they will end up in the same spot as all of the European players who don't hit it as far as they do.

I don't know, I'm looking for it. I've got help to look for it. I like Olin Browne and Dave Stockton and Ray Floyd's input, as well. If there's something there, I'll try to find it, and if there's nothing there, then there's just nothing there.

**Q. Before you mentioned the stats, you said personalities will be huge. What are you looking for in a player in that regard?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: In personalities? Well, I'm just going to accept whatever the personalities are, you know, and then try to figure out which personalities I feel are right, together.

As far as picks, personality could play a part, but for the most part, I'm looking for guys that are playing really well and that have a lot of confidence, and I've said that from get-go, that I want players that are confident, and that makes a big difference. I think it's pretty simple.

**Q. Kenny put a lot of emphasis on making this team. Now that he's made it, have you talked to him about what -- he's talked about maybe what he's going to face when he's there and being in his home state; have you talked him at all?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I've talked to him a little bit. When he won the second tournament, I was calling him up to thank him because he made such a deal about making the

team, I felt like that I was going to have to pick him no matter what, he kind of boxed me into a corner almost. He won, and then he won again.

I read where he said he's changed his goals now and he wants to shoot for the moon. You know, I believe that Kenny Perry can win the Playoff thing, and I'm just really happy that he made the team.

I just don't want him to have a letdown, and I don't think he will, and that's what I talked to him about mostly. Just try not to have a letdown. You've established this goal of making The Ryder Cup; I told him I felt he should set more goals for himself for this year, and that I didn't want him to feel like he was limping into The Ryder Cup.

So he's playing his way. He's got a plan, and there's going to be a little bit more pressure on him maybe, but you know what, he wants to be there, and he wants to deal with that, and I'm really happy for him. He's been a good friend of mine for a long time and we have a great relationship. As the week progresses and I get a feel for how he's feeling, I'll react to that.

But all of these guys are big boys. They know how to handle pressure. There's really not a whole lot -- I can't teach them how to play golf. Kenny Perry knows how to play golf.

**Q. As this has played out, the theory being, get the hottest guys in, of course, being kind of the umbrella over the whole enterprise, the guys in spots eight through 24, that's 17 guys, have won a combined three times this year. So the question would be, do you have a tougher job trying to find four guys out of that group, or does Nick have a tougher job trying to find two guys out of a group of players that right now would include Poulter, Casey, Sergio and Monty; he's got to pick two.**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I think that's pretty hard for him, but it's still early yet. There's still four weeks to go for them and four weeks to go for us. We'll find out who has the hardest job. Maybe four of those guys make the team in the next four weeks and he's off the hook.

For me I always felt like four picks are better than two because there would be two less guys I would disappoint. Now as I look at it, it's actually becoming difficult.

**Q. Difficult, why?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Difficult, why? Because there's a lot of really good choices I feel like. When I go down the list, I think Woody Austin is a pretty good player; he hasn't won, but I believe he's had chances to win and I think he's a pretty

good match-play player. He's kind of that blue collar mentality.

Hunter Mahan, he's another, he's an amazing player, leads the Tour in greens in regulation, and then D.J. Trahan, I've had players come up to me and tell me D.J. has great hands and he won the Hope earlier this year. And Rocco played great, should be the U.S. Open Champion except for the only guy in the history of golf makes a putt on 18 in regulation to put it in a playoff, you can't say enough about Tiger Woods. So Rocco is another guy who could be very confident.

After that, you have Sean O'Hair, and I believe it's maybe Zach Johnson and Brandt Snedeker and J.B. Holmes, and these guys are all amazing players. Zach has won the Masters and Atlanta, J.B. Holmes won Phoenix, is from Kentucky. Sean O'Hair is arguably one of best players not on the list.

Actually, any of those guys I'm happy with and there's none of those eight guys that know for sure they are going to be on this team and there could be somebody all the way down to the 24th name, as you mentioned, that could get hot at the right time and just sidestep all those guys and go right to the top of my selection process. As you can see, there's a zillion choices. I think it's very compelling and it's going to be worth watching the next few weeks to see what happens.

**Q. Kenny was talking last week about how the excitement is building in Kentucky and it's been a long time since the U.S. has won The Ryder Cup. Is there any concern about fans getting over-exuberant, out of hand, crossing the line and doing things that would be considered to be untoward in a golf environment?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I'm a little worried that that could happen. You know, it's possible. It's possible at any great big sporting event. It's kind of usually dependent on how much alcohol is being served probably.

One of the messages during the week I feel should be about the crowd being enthusiastic, but also acting properly. So I'll try to address that. I don't know if Nick should try to address that; it might backlash, but I'll address that. I might actually address it during the opening ceremonies.

**Q. Hunter Mahan's recent comments seemed to send out the message, once again, that perhaps the passion for The Ryder Cup amongst the Americans isn't as great as it is in the European camp; at least some parts of it**

are seen as a bit of a chore. Can you comment on that?

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I'm really surprised someone from Europe would ask me that question. (Laughter).

Actually Hunter Mahan is young, he feels terrible about the comments. I don't believe he's right. He's apologized to me. He's apologized to the PGA of America, he's done all of the things he's needed to do to try to correct what was a little bit of a faux pas for him, and he feels terrible about it.

I didn't take it personal. I talked to him and told him I don't take those comments personally; I don't work for the PGA of America, but I think you're wrong. I think those issues were old issues. Those issues were from 1999, some of those issues, so those issues have been addressed by the PGA of America.

Some of those issues regarding money and dollars to charity, there's \$200,000 that are given to the players to give to charity, the charity of their choice, which I think is fantastic.

The dinners, they have made a real effort, one of the nights where one of the dinners, I guess, has been eliminated.

JULIUS MASON: The welcome dinner on Tuesday is now combined with the gala dinner.

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: We've now combined the welcome dinner on Tuesday with the gala on Wednesday night, so those were old issues that were brought up. I don't care where he heard them from or whatever, and he hasn't played a Ryder Cup; and I think if he makes this team or is on this team, after the Matches, Hunter will probably feel differently about it.

David Duval felt similarly until '99, and he played those Matches and all David Duval talks about is how much he wants to play on another Ryder Cup Team.

You know, it hasn't been a lot of fun to lose, and the Americans don't maybe look like they are having as much fun because they have been behind a lot. But trust me, from what I've heard the last few Ryder Cups, the European players are coming over and hanging out in the American Team room, because we're having so much fun. So maybe we need to have less fun. More fun on the course, less fun at night.

**Q. Captains always bring their own things; what do you think the characteristic is that you bring to your team; cast modesty aside for a moment?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Hopefully intensity and a sense of humor. I think it's a nice blend.

**Q. How important is it for you to get an American Major Champion this week; conversely, how much of a blow would it be if a European won this thing for the first time in a long time?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Well, I would love for an American to win this tournament. I expect the Europeans to contend here. I think that there's going to be a lot of Europeans who played Ryder Cup and have a lot of confidence on this golf course. So it would not surprise me one bit if a European won here.

But if we were playing The Ryder Cup this week, maybe I would be more concerned, but we are not; we are playing The Ryder Cup in six weeks.

**Q. When you got the job and were asked about what's been the cause of the Americans not doing as well, you talked about being out-putted. Now that you've had this job for a while and looked into that, have you got anymore answers on why the Europeans seem to putt better than the Americans?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Yeah, we have been out-putted and also outplayed, and certainly the last two Ryder Cups were so lopsided, it was terrible for the American side.

Honestly, I felt like from the get-go, and I've said this for two years now, I feel like the selection process was kind of outdated. I felt like that with the infusion of all of the South Africans and Australians and Europeans that have played the TOUR since the early 90s, that a system that included and rewarded points for Top-10 finishes alone just wasn't good enough anymore.

If 100% of the TOUR was Americans and you gave out points for Top-10 finishes, you would give up 100% of the points. But with so many foreign players playing the TOUR, just not enough points were being given out to American players.

I didn't feel like Top-10 finishes should be the barometer and I didn't like the 2 1/2 year system. I liked the one-year system and settling on the four majors last year count last year was very fair and having the four majors be double value this year is correct, and if anyone makes a cut in any tournament they are making money. The barometer or anything we do out here is prize money.

I've said this many times, I've choked for

two things in my entire my career, I've choked for cash and prestige. And the most prestigious tournaments made me the most nervous, and if I had a putt to finish third by myself or third with eight people, I was choking for cash.

So I feel money is the barometer for everything we do at this level, and I like the system. I think the system right now is producing what I think should be the best Americans we have to offer.

If Europe beats us again, then it's time to say maybe they are beating us because they are just that much better. They are great at team play and they seem to have some kind of chemistry that works really, really well.

I think all you can do is just take your hat off to Europe and their dominance and how well they have played. They played fantastic in the event, and in order to beat those guys, we are going to have to do something special.

But I really believe in the end the work done after I was picked with a consensus from the higher-ups at the PGA of America, the officers, was to change the selection process, so I'm going to say that I think that's been the big difference for us.

**Q. Two questions.**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Hold on, let me add one thing. Europe uses a one-year system and has used a one-year system forever and they get the players every year, and so it was time for us to make that move, as well.

**Q. Are you done?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Done.

**Q. When you talk about a one-year system, is it more important because you have the top players or you get rid of the dead weight, the guys that did their damage the year before?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Well, I wouldn't say dead weight. I think that the system that's a one-year system produces a guy that plays well that year. Even a guy like D.J. Trahan or J.B. Holmes won earlier this year, are still confident players even this late in the year, and they still have the confidence that they were able to do it this year.

If you won early last year on a system that just rewarded Top-10 finishes, that one win last year, you know, carried so much weight, that a guy could actually make this team based on last year's performance. It's going to be impossible to make the team based on last year's performance alone

this year. You had to have played decent this year. And if you look at the list, I don't think you could make an argument that anybody in that top eight hasn't had a nice year.

**Q. And secondly, as you look down the next three weeks or so on the captain's pick if you're a guy, someone like a Snedeker or a Chad Campbell, didn't make the team, are they basically on audition? How should they look at it?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I think that's exactly how they should look at it. To me it's as if you have this one-year qualifier with the four majors from last year and the top eight make it, and of course, I don't think they are thinking about it -- maybe now they are, but I believe those guys are just playing golf and they are playing well, and they end up making this team. And then the three weeks after that, I believe the players will be thinking about, if they really want to be on this team, the value of what they have now is, to me, now they are choking for prestige because they are prestigious events and cash and a chance to make The Ryder Cup team. So whoever is playing the best is being rewarded as far as I'm concerned because they held up under the pressure under three really difficult scenarios.

**Q. Is there any way you can paint not having Tiger as a positive or use it to your advantage? Are there any good points to it at all?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I don't see one single positive that Tiger Woods isn't on our team. I can't imagine how you can argue a team would be better off without arguably the greatest player, potentially the greatest player who has ever lived. Certainly the greatest player of his era.

It would be really difficult to make that argument. I think, as far as I'm concerned, it really puts Europe in an advantageous place. It puts Europe in a, I would say, without question, a favorite role. There's just no question about it.

In the past when you looked at teams on paper, you could maybe say that it would be close and it turned out the last two weren't close at all. But to argue that Europe wouldn't be the favorite this time around would be very difficult.

**Q. Given that next week is one where a lot of guys skip because of the way the schedule is, if a guy is on the bubble, are you going to be disappointed if he doesn't play?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: If a guy

doesn't play, I understand. If they want to make the team, I hope they play. Next week counts. There's a lot of money there.

I understand, there's a lot, they played in several events leading into this event and a week off would probably make sense for a lot of these guys, which is one less week that they can do it. So there's a week off before the Matches, so they have that going for them if they want to think that way.

But it doesn't matter to me when they play or where they play. I'm going to look at who is hot. If somebody wins Greensboro, he's going to get a really good look from me; when somebody wins Greensboro.

**Q. You seem to have taken very much a low-profile since the comments about Nick Faldo; could you say whether that was deliberate for you to step back from the limelight and do you think it caused any lasting damage, either between you personally or between the two camps?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Well, I regret saying that. I was referring to two different Nicks, and, you know, there's the old Nick and the new Nick.

But we shot a commercial together the other day and we get along just fine, Nick and I do. If you want to make a big deal out of it, you can, but I think it's fairly a dead issue between the two of us. That's about it.

**Q. Can anything other than a win be regarded as a success for you?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Well, I mean, what do you think?

**Q. Well, I'd like you to say it?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Say what?

**Q. What you think.**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: About what?

**Q. My question.**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: What was the question again? (Laughter).

**Q. Can anything other than a win be regarded as a success?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: What do you think? (Laughter).

**Q. I'm not paid to be Ryder Cup Captain.**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I'm not paid, either. (Laughter) That makes two of us. Next question.

**Q. Unlike most Ryder Cups, there's that week between what you just mentioned and Kenny Perry actually talked about wanting to go out to Valhalla and play some on that week prior to the Ryder Cup. A, would you have any plans on what you might do with the team on that week; and B, is he allowed or precluded from doing that?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I don't know. I haven't made any plans. I told all the players if they want to go there and play there, they can; and if they don't want to, they don't have to. I don't feel like it's for me to organize the team to go there together and play. We're all from this country. If Justin Leonard and Anthony Kim and Kenny Perry want to go play Valhalla, I want them to prepare the way they are comfortable preparing. This let's all go there and play together, I don't think that's important. We'll have three days before the Matches to prepare on that golf course which is a lot, that's plenty of time. If somebody feels like they need to go there and play Valhalla, then I would encourage to do it, but I'm not going to ask them to do anything they would not do ordinarily.

**Q. But they are not precluded from doing it?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: What are you talking about, the week off?

**Q. Yeah.**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: Hasn't been decided, I don't believe.

**Q. It seems in recent Ryder Cups, a lot of American players who have proved very effective at closing out tournament victories have not been very effective in closing out matches that get to the 18th green and that's been where the last couple have been won and lost, and why the last one was so lopsided, four or five holes could have made a huge difference. Why do you think it is that the same guys who are so good at majors and other tournaments have so much trouble in the end closing out?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: You know, just because I'm Ryder Cup Captain doesn't make me a genius or anything. I can't answer that question, I really don't know. All I know is that match play affords players opportunities, and

there's going to be three or four momentum opportunities during every match, there just is, whether it's a putt to tie or a putt to take the lead.

So Europe has beautifully capitalized on their momentum opportunities, and the Americans haven't. So for me to say why that is, I don't know. I can't answer the question.

**Q. I'm looking at your top 13, seven of those guys would be rookies. Is that a cause of concern for you, or are you just ready to see some new blood in this thing for once; it might be a change?**

CAPTAIN PAUL AZINGER: I've said this all along, that to me, experience is important, but it also is overrated. I mean, experience now, anyone who has played Ryder Cup in the last six Ryder Cups has experienced getting their ass beat. So, I mean, I'm not looking for experience.

I feel like I want players that are playing well and that are hot; I feel like we're going to probably have seven rookies on this team, unless, an experienced player gets hot, then I'll pick him. I'm not going to say I'm not going to pick any of these guys because they have experienced getting beat, because that is unimportant to me; however, I'm not going to pick experienced guys simply because they have experience. I'm going to pick players that are playing well and that are very confident, and if they are experienced guys, I'm picking them; but if they are inexperienced, I'm still picking them.

My best Ryder Cup was my first Ryder Cup. I had no experience.

JULIUS MASON: U.S. Ryder Cup Captain Paul Azinger, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you.

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