

IAN POULTER

reflects on 'best ever' Ryder Cup

If golf had Stroke and Matchplay World Rankings as tennis do Singles and Doubles, to see Ian Poulter's name at the top of the Matchplay list would surprise no-one after his inspired performance in Europe's epic Ryder Cup victory over the United States at Medinah Country Club in September.

Team Europe's fightback on the final day from 10 - 6 deficit to clinch the Cup 14 ½ - 13 ½ tied the record for the greatest comeback in history and is being hailed by some as the greatest golf 'event' in history, some say, even in 'sports' history.

36 year old Poulter was at the centre of everything the Europeans were able to achieve, enthusing and inspiring the crowd and his team mates with his passionate performances on the course and by instilling an unbending faith in their ability to win.

"What Ian Poulter did, especially on the Saturday, changed the heart of the rest of team," Captain José María Olazábal explained. "When we got together on Saturday evening, I could see on their faces there was a different look. There was a totally different atmosphere which was the key to the victory the following day."

Poulter's five consecutive birdies in the fourball match partnered with Rory McIlroy clinched the final point of the Saturday afternoon sessions and breathed life into Team Europe's campaign, which had been listing badly up until that point in time.

Poulter's adrenalin-charged personal contribution of 4 wins and no losses took his career winning percentage to an unprecedented 80% in four Ryder Cup appearances from 2004. This fearsome matchplay reputation is embellished further by victories in the 2010 WGC-Accenture Matchplay Championship, 2011 Volvo World Matchplay and his recent victory in the WGC HSBC Golf Championship 2012 proof that the flamboyant Englishman is now in the mould of the late Seve Ballesteros when the subject of fierce Ryder Cup combatants are discussed.

Teammate Sergio Garcia was equally effusive in his praise for the Brit. "Ian Poulter was amazing," he said. "He knows the

meaning of The Ryder Cup and he lives for the Ryder Cup. It's fantastic to have someone like him in the team, someone who can make the spirit turn at the right moment."

As players dispersed from Chicago to the next tournament or a week off, Poulter and his wife took their four young children to the Bahamas to unwind and quietly celebrate the monumental achievement.

When I spoke to Poulter recently at home, he was preparing for end of season tournaments around the world where he will no doubt receive a hero's reception wherever he goes.

Congratulations Ian, an enormous week for you personally and for Europe. Is it still 'Beer o'clock' or have you gone back to work?

(Laughing) It's most definitely 'Work o'clock' now. I'm heading off to China (Note: Poulter won the WBC HSBC Champions at Mission Hills) soon for a few weeks so it's time to hit a lot of balls and get ready for that before heading to Australia (to defend his Australian Masters title), Dubai, California then to Naples before Christmas.

How were your holidays?

Holiday was great. Had a great time in the Bahamas and just had a nice kind of rest and enjoyed getting away, it was fantastic.

You must be proud of your match play record and how you feel about your chances when you get to play this format?

My match play record in the Ryder Cup has been pretty incredible, 12 - 3 I think, so pretty good really. I'm very proud of that record and to have been a contributing factor to the team win. It was a team win and one that Europe should feel very proud of.

It's been very overwhelming. To have been in that position and come through and helped the team as I did, I am very proud of that and for me to get recognition the way I have has been so overwhelming. So many people, whether it's come from the US or Europeans, whether it's come through email, from friends, from people I've run into the last couple of weeks.

People are just saying how amazed they were at the spectacle, the best sporting moment they've ever seen in the way the week unfolded. It is overwhelming, it truly was an incredible week and I'm blown away by the response.

Much has been said about how your 5 consecutive birdies to take the match on Saturday shifted the momentum to the Europeans, even though you were still 10 - 6 down. Was it that tangible in the team room that night that something special might happen on Sunday?

It definitely helped. The boost it gave the team but it was also crucial when Sergio and Luke won to take the team from 10-4 to 10-5, that was a massive there.

I think Rory and I felt that if we could get a win and get it to 10-6, it would be a massive boost to the team. We knew 10-6 had been done before at Brookline in '99 and with that in mind, it gave the team a lift.

Holing that putt on 18 and then walking into the team room to a spectacle that I've never seen before, everyone chanting my name, the whole room was going bananas. At that point, I felt the team spirit that was being shown in that room was just a preview of what could be a very special Sunday and it turned out that way.

It will go down in the memory bank as one of the best Ryder Cups of all time. At 10-4 down,

everyone was writing us off. It was looking a pretty ugly scoreline so to turn it around the way we did by winning 10 ½ points out of a possible 14 was just incredible.

For Jose to have been on that green at Brookline and how it all unfolded there, to then be on 18 at Medinah to see the turnaround of this European team from Saturday night to Sunday was very special for him and will probably stay with him for a long time, I think.

And obviously, following in Seve's footsteps as a winning Ryder Cup captain was very special for him too.

Have you reflected on some of the key shots from the week, for example, the tee shot on 17 over water when you were all square with Webb Simpson in the Singles. I thought was an outstanding play under pressure, as well as that second shot on 18?

That was a good solid 6 iron (on 17), I just wanted to take the water out of play and I knew that was enough club if I hit it properly.

The shot for me for the week, actually there were two. The birdie putt on 18 to win the point on Saturday would probably go down as probably the best putt I've ever hit and the second shot into 18 on Sunday, off the hardpan.

You had to cut it up over the tree?

It wasn't over the tree; I was too close to the tree to get it over and to the green into the wind. I had to hit a snap slice around the trees which the TV cameras didn't pick up.

I couldn't get an 8 iron up and over so I ended up hitting a 25 yard sliding cut, whatever you want to call it. I went ahead and executed it just perfectly.

Have you had a chance to watch the coverage back to see

what the boys did behind you??

I've watched some of it back and it was great.

Was that the European coverage or the U.S. network coverage?

I saw the NBC feed, it wasn't the Sky one. I'd like to get the Sky coverage actually and have a look at that.

We saw the Sky coverage here. Sam Torrance was basically apoplectic in commentary.

(Laughing) I'll bet he was! I'd like to see that.

There was the shot of you in coverage when Justin Rose was lining up his birdie putt on the 18th to win the match against Phil Mickelson. You were in the background looking as if you couldn't bear to watch.

"I had to turn away, I didn't know what to do with myself at that point! I knew it was so critical to get five points (for the day) on the board to get ahead. That would have given everyone else in the team a massive boost to go ahead with it.

That putt he holed on seventeen, 40 footer, and then again on 18. Awesome!

It would have been epic TV. I could see it (when I watched) in the re-run, the drama that was unfolding all day, I can imagine how tense people were sitting at home watching it on TV. It was magic."

Even though this Cup and others have been closely fought affairs, do you think the Europeans have it over the U.S. a little in their competitive 'DNA'? There's that 'tribalism' Europeans players have from those countries growing up, whether it's England v Scotland, Ashes cricket, World Cup soccer rivalries?

"I think we 'get' team sport a little more than what they get team sport, that's definitely is a factor and it's been talked about a number of times.

Why that really is, I'm not sure, but it definitely is a factor. It definitely plays with them and it definitely plays on their mind when they get into situations where it becomes a mind game. They're then on the back foot and find themselves in a difficult

situation. It plays a part."

It's interesting at the President Cup, there's a view the Internationals have a disadvantage in that the Americans are playing for their country but the Internationals are playing under a 'flag'. Maybe we need to bottle what the Europeans have as it doesn't seem to be a problem for you.

"Absolutely, bring out the passion!"

Maybe we need to get you to emigrate!

(Laughing) Yeah, well maybe the Americans would probably try and say the same!"

You're coming down to Australian to defend your Australian Masters title at Kingston Heath soon.

"Coming down in a few weeks and I'm very much looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to seeing Kingston Heath, it's a course I haven't played before. I always love playing those courses on the Sandbelt and it's very exciting to play a new one.

I hadn't been down for a while until last year and it was great to win at Victoria. I've got a nice fan base in Australia so I'm looking forward to having a great week and trying to defend."



Ian Poulter of Europe celebrates a putt during day two of the Morning Foursome Matches for The 39th Ryder Cup at Medinah Country Club on September 29, 2012 in Medinah, Illinois. Photo by : Mike Ehrmann/Getty Images

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