

Presidents Cup aftermath

How the 2011 players have fared in 2012

At the Memorial Tournament in May, PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem announced the appointment of the captains - Fred Couples and Nick Price - for the 2013 Presidents Cup matches at Muirfield Village. Couples will be returning for his 3rd successive stint at the helm of the United States team, Price deeply honoured to be taking the reins at his first Cup after a distinguished record as a player in the event.



Phil Mickelson, playing the 4th hole at Royal Melbourne in the 2011 Presidents Cup.
Photo by: Mark Wilson

While there is a lot of water to pass under the bridge until late 2013, including what should be an absolutely outstanding Ryder Cup clash this September in Chicago, a glance at the 2012 form of the International and United States players that contested the Cup just over 6 months ago is a sobering reminder for Price of the size of the mountain the Internationals need to climb together.

The Internationals in 2012

➤ Robert Allenby

Pilloried by most for his performance in the Cup, Allenby came close to ending a decade long winning drought on the PGA Tour in Mexico earlier this year, losing a playoff to John Huh, and recently tying for 7th behind Dustin Johnson in Memphis. Another lucrative but unspectacular year appears in store.

➤ Jason Day

A close shave in Qatar and a couple of top 10s on the PGA Tour have been the highlights of year curtailed by injury thus far. His performances are well down on his heroics of 2011 and as such, he has fallen out of the World Top 10.

Now that his wife has given birth to their first child, it will be interesting to see Day's schedule and play for the remainder of the year.

➤ Ernie Els

After a disappointing 2011 season and Presidents Cup campaign, the veteran has done more than just reinvigorate his play in 2012. The newly crowned British Open champion after his 1 shot win over Adam Scott, Els showed at Lytham that his solid play this season and strong U.S. Open showing were no fluke.

Back to Number 15 in the world, Els looked to be his old confident self on the back nine at Lytham where he was the only player in real contention for the title to shoot under par, snatching his 4th Major from the faltering Scott.

➤ Adam Scott

Scott looked for all the world the 2012 British Open champion, playing outstanding golf for 68 holes before disaster struck over the last 4 holes to hand the title to Ernie Els.

Scott had been building to a performance like this with a limited schedule in 2012, the Open was just his 10th event of the year. If he can recover quickly from the disappointment of Lytham, we could see more fireworks from him for the remainder of the season. Has climbed back inside the World Top 10 on the strength of his performance at the Open.

➤ Aaron Baddeley

Has earned just over a million dollars on the PGA Tour following the British Open, but I would suspect has not met his own expectations as yet. 'Badds' sits around the World Top 50 mark, just as he did 6 months ago when debuting for The Internationals at Royal Melbourne.

➤ KJ Choi

A Top 5 in the season opening event in Hawaii has been the highest finish of a disappointing season to date for the normally prolific Korean. However, the tie for 15th in the US Open was by far his strongest performance of the year and hopefully the portents of better things to come.

➤ Y.E. Yang

One Top 25 in 17 events on the PGA Tour says it all for the former US PGA champion.

➤ K.T Kim

A promising debut at the Presidents Cup but beyond some solid performances on the Japanese Tour, has been unsighted in most of his forays to the PGA Tour in 2012.

➤ Ryo Ishikawa

Another who has failed to shine in the big World events he's played this year. His world ranking has declined since Royal Melbourne although a T2 in Puerto Rico and recent Top 10 at The Memorial are optimistic signs for the talented Japanese tyro, despite missed cuts in the Majors this year.



A 3 time veteran if selected in 2013, Ryo will need to step up for the Internationals at Muirfield Village. Photo by: Mark Wilson

➤ Retief Goosen

A couple of close finishes very early in the season in his homeland are the highlights of a pedestrian 2012 to date. The Goose contended for 3 rounds before fading to a tie for 20th at the Transitions Championship in Florida but completed a very solid US Open, tying for 10th despite walking away with a bad taste in the mouth after 3 putting the final hole.

➤ Charl Schwartzel

A solid but unspectacular season for the sweet swinging South African who is always around the Top 20 wherever he plays. Schwartzel has certainly been overshadowed in 2012 by the form of countryman, close friend and 2011 Presidents Cup 'non-selection', Louis Oosthuizen.



Charl Schwartzel misses a clutch putt. Photo by: Mark Wilson

➤ Geoff Ogilvy

One of the feature players to miss the cut at the US Open which was a surprise given his pedigree in the tournament but finished strongly to T9 at the British Open, his best finish of the year. Had made 12 of 14 cuts in 2012 on Tour prior to the British but has not threatened for a title. Seems to be injury free so would be hopeful of better things to come in '12.

Now compare if you will, their form with that of US team members over the same period:

The United States in 2012

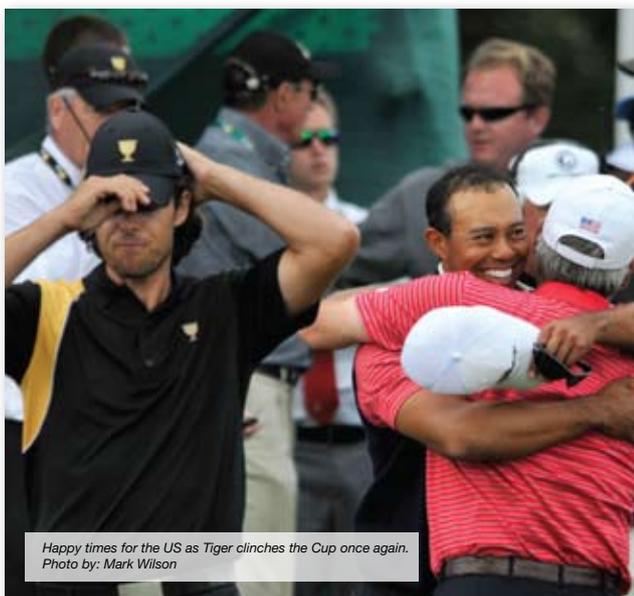
► Hunter Mahan

With 2 significant victories in the season, Mahan currently sits 5th on the PGA Tour money list and comfortably inside the World Top 15. The Texan has bounced back from his 2010 Ryder Cup disappointment in the best possible way and will be a solid talisman for Davis Love III against the Europeans at Medinah.

► Tiger Woods

Controversial Captain's pick for the Cup, won his own Chevron World Challenge event directly after the Cup and has had 3 dominant victories on Tour to climb to Number 1 in the FedEx Cup standings and No. 2 in the world. Threatened at the U.S. Open before falling back and didn't have his best stuff at Lytham but still finished in a tie for 3rd.

Can't help but think there is much more yet to come for Woods in 2012 on current form.



Happy times for the US as Tiger clinches the Cup once again.
Photo by: Mark Wilson

► Phil Mickelson

Victory at Pebble Beach and contended valiantly at The Masters once again. Was well off the pace at Olympic as he searched in vain for that elusive first US Open, and a badly missed cut at the British may be cause for concern in advance of the PGA Championship and Ryder Cup.

► Dustin Johnson

Has had a year ravaged by injury but won at Memphis in his second tournament back. DJ is a big chance to contend at the remaining big events this year, despite the disappointment of a missed cut at the US Open. Remember, he finished 2nd behind Daren Clarke at last year's Open Championship so the final major of the year being held at a seaside course (Kiawah Island) could be right up his alley.

► Bubba Watson

Masters Champion and new father, having the time of his life. A missed cut at the US Open seemed to refocus him as he bounced back to tie 2nd at the Travellers Championship the following week. Still has plenty to play for in 2012.

► Matt Kuchar

With his win at The Players this past May, collected the most important and validating win of his career and followed that with a tie for 9th at the British to confirm his status as a world class player.

► Jim Furyk

A revelation at the Presidents Cup after an indifferent year, Furyk has taken the confidence of being unbeaten at Royal Melbourne to a solid 2012, with 9 Top 25s from 13 events played. Showed he was back to his grinding best at Olympic but just couldn't complete the job over the closing stages after holding grimly to the lead all day. A heroic effort.

► Webb Simpson

One of the hottest players in the world leading into last year's Cup, 2012 'had' been less spectacular up until the US Open - with 'only' \$1.3 million in earnings. However, how quickly times change. All hail the new US Open champion, World Number 5 - and now, a first time father!

► Bill Haas

Winner earlier in the year in Los Angeles, a solid follow up from his Tour Championship and FedEx Cup winning year in 2011.

► Steve Stricker

Victory at the Tournament of Champions in Hawaii and 3 more Top 10s in only 10 starts is what we've come to expect from the consistent Stricker, who despite the recent theatrics of countrymen Woods, Mahan, Watson Simpson and Dufner who have overtaken him, still ranks Number 14 in the world.

► David Toms

Had been plodding along with earnings of \$800,000 but then had the best US Open of his career to finish in a tie for 4th behind Webb Simpson. Up until then, Toms' season would be considered a disappointment in light of the exploits of most of his 2011 teammates - but a triumph for most of the Internationals!

► Nick Watney

A slower start to the year than in 2011 but with 3 Top 10s in 18 appearances for over \$1.13m on the season - ditto David Toms.

Price said he has some 'ideas' for how to make the International team more competitive come the Sunday Singles next year, but did not elaborate any further at the announcement of his captaincy at Muirfield Village. He said he will make it a point to involve his players, especially the more experienced ones, in the decision-making processes - particularly as he will be a rookie captain and somewhat removed from the playing group. 'This is a new situation for me,' he said. 'Having played as a player and now having to be captain, I really want the players to contribute as much as they possibly can toward any decisions that I have to make.'

With the US players going from strength to strength since Melbourne, coupled with the rise of players like Jason Dufner, Rickie Fowler, Zach Johnson, Keegan Bradley and Kyle Stanley, they will field a potent lineup to go up against an equally potent European team at the Ryder Cup in September.

At this time last year however, followers of the game will remember that the American stocks were on the wane after a tepid showing at The Masters and US Open from any of their players. How quickly they have bounced back, with 2 US winners of the first two Majors of the year.

For the sake of the Internationals and the President Cup as a contest itself, Price will be hoping for a similar resurrection of form and fortune from his International contingent over the next 12 months. The results of Ernie Els and Adam Scott at Lytham may be the start of the tide turning.

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