

## THE RYDER CUP

**Age?** 68 years-old. The first one was played in Worcester Massachusetts in 1927.

**Where and when is it?** Oak Hill, New York on September 22-24.

**Why is it called the Ryder Cup?** It was named after St Albans seed merchant Samuel Ryder who offered the gold cup for a biennial match between the golfers of Great Britain and Ireland and the United States.

**You said Great Britain and Ireland. Haven't I seen Seve Ballesteros, Bernhard Langer and Jose Maria Olazabal play major roles in the Ryder Cup?** Well yes. The rest of Europe was brought into the fold in 1979.

**Why was that?** It was becoming too easy for the Americans.

**Too easy?** Yes. Of the 22 matches which had been played since 1927 and up to 1977 US had won 18 of them, GB&I three and one had been tied. GB&I hadn't won a match since 1957 and before that 1933.

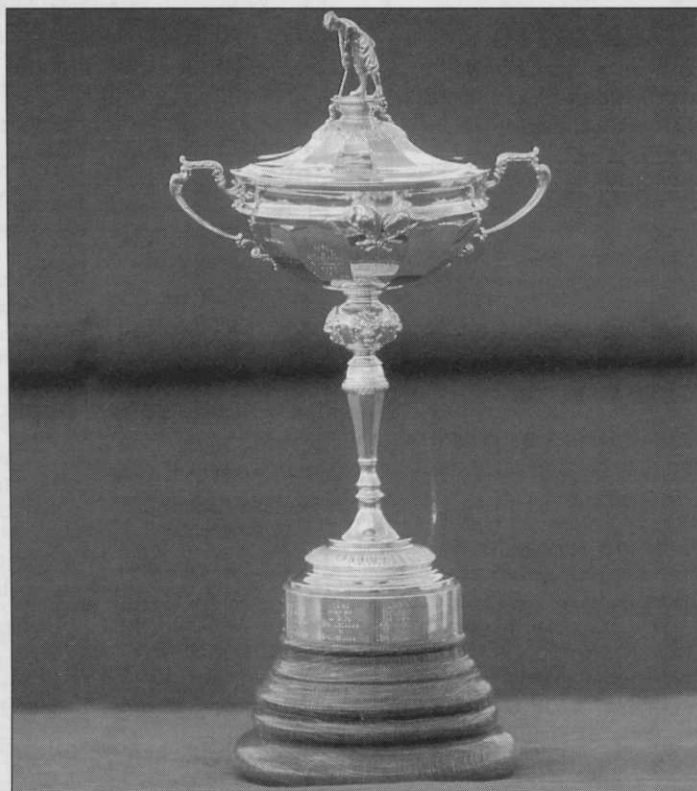
**Whose idea was it to bring in Europe?** Jack Nicklaus wrote to Lord Derby, President of the PGA, saying that the matches would die if the GB&I team wasn't strengthened.

**Who were the first "Europeans" to play?** Seve Ballesteros and Antonio Garrido.

**How did they do?** They won one point between them and Europe lost 17-11.

**Have they made a difference since then?** Undoubtedly Europe lost by the narrowest of margins in 1983, won in historic fashion at The Belfry in 1985. Retained the Cup in the States for the first – ironically defeating US Captain Jack Nicklaus on his home Muirfield Village Course – and tied when it was played again at The Belfry in 1989.

**How about since then?** Europe lost by the narrowest of margins in both 1991 and '93.



**So in effect we haven't won it for eight years?** Well yes. I suppose so.

**Why is that?** Europe has a small core of superstars and they generally have to play all five matches in the three day Ryder Cup format and are often tired when the crucial singles come along on the Sunday.

**What are our chances this year?** Er. Not good.

**Why?** We changed our selection process so there was a fair chance we couldn't pick our best players.

**How do you mean?** We've gone from three Captain's picks to two Captain's picks and with some of our best golfers playing on the US Tour and others not competing too often on the European Tour several have not managed to get into the 10 automatic places.

**That was a little silly wasn't it?** No comment.

**How important is the Ryder Cup?** It's the most important team event but the players would all rather win a Major than win the Ryder Cup. It does induce severe patriotism among

the spectators though and is the only event where you will hear cheering for a missed putt.

**Why is that?** Well a missed putt by one is a won hole or match for the other side.

**Any examples?** Bernhard Langer missed a six footer which would have halved the 1991 match at Kiawah Island and the whole of America went wild.

**Is that the most famous putt in Ryder Cup history?** Probably or it might be the birdie putt Sam Torrance holed on the final green of The Belfry in 1985 to clinch the first win since 1957.

**What's the most famous non-putt?** That would be the 18 incher Jack Nicklaus gave Tony Jacklin in 1969 which guaranteed the first tied match.

**Will that happen this year?** Not likely. Nicklaus wasn't universally popular with his teammates then and would be lynched now.

**Any other famous shots?** Christy O'Connor hit a superb 2-iron to the 18th green at The Belfry in '89 to defeat Fred Couples and Nick Faldo had a hole-in-one at

The Belfry's 14th two years ago.

**You keep mentioning The Belfry. Since Europe's involvement has the match ever been played outside the UK?** No but in 1997 it is to be played at Valderrama in Spain as a mark or respect for all that Seve has done for European golf.

**Has it ever been to Ireland?** No.

**Why not?** Haven't got a clue. It should have gone in '97 and Spain in 2001 but golf politics work in mysterious ways.

**Politics?** Oh yes. It got so bad that Lord Derby who was President of both the PGA and the PGA European Tour renounced Presidency of the European Tour.

**Why?** Well it used to be that the Ryder Cup was run by the PGA but when the European Tour was born in the early 70s the Ryder Cup players were members of it and not always the PGA as well – particularly when the European players came on board. The Tour therefore wanted more control of The Ryder Cup but the PGA didn't want to give it up as, particularly nowadays, it generates huge sums of money in television rights and sponsorship deals.

**Any examples?** Well that's why you'll find that the matches when in Europe will now always be played on relatively new courses which are prepared to pay for the privilege and not one of many wonderful traditional courses Europe boasts.

**Any others?** Most people won't see it this year because the television rights have been sold to BSkyB.

**Most likely to happen?** Uncle Tom Cobley and his friends will be allowed inside the ropes blocking the views of the paying galleries, the American wives will be dressed like Auntie Samantha and provide enthusiastic chants of "Go USA".

**Least likely to happen?** Europe gets back on the winning track and Bernard Gallacher is praised for his handling of the team.