

Ryder Cup Preview: Europe

In part one of our Ryder Cup preview, [Neil Johnston](#) casts his eye over the European team and their chances of retaining the trophy they won at Celtic Manor

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Europe will undoubtedly face a difficult task to retain the Ryder Cup at Medinah, even more so than the win at Celtic Manor two years ago, playing away with the added hurdle of a rowdy home crowd to overcome, but just how good do the European team look?

While patchy at the start of the year, **Rory McIlroy** has been in superb form for the latter part of the season, notably when he took his second major title at the PGA. McIlroy has won twice since then and while he didn't quite do it at the Tour Championship he will still step on to the tee as world No.1, an invaluable asset to the team. The Americans have already begun their criticism of the Northern Irishman but this will only make him more determined.

Luke Donald has a spectacular record in the Ryder Cup, winning eight games and only losing two of eleven matches. Even more incredible is his record in the foursomes, winning six out of six games. The world No.3 is an ideal partner and also finished third at Medinah in the PGA back in 2006 so the course should be no problem to him. Expect him to continue his excellent record in the event, embarrassing a few American stars in the process.

Lee Westwood is hardly short of Ryder Cup experience having played in seven, five times as part of the winning team. He can handle the pressure and recent work on his short game has made him even more consistent. If he is paired with Donald the result could be devastating as they proved in 2010 when they thrashed Woods and Stricker 6 & 5.

A wildcard yet again, **Ian Poulter**, has a superb record having won eight out of 11 points in the competition. He will be fired up and is sure to rattle a few of the American team.

Graeme McDowell has been off form recently but was in contention for two majors earlier in the year,

finishing second at the US Open and fifth at The Open. The former US Open Champion holed the winning putt in 2010 and it is likely he will step up to the mark when he is needed yet again.

Sergio Garcia, who had a backroom role at Celtic Manor, is a welcome addition to the team having qualified with just weeks to spare. Add to that his record of 17 wins out of 24 and it becomes apparent that this really is a quality European side.

Francesco Molinari is probably the straightest hitter and best ball striker in both teams so will make a great foursomes partner. If his putting is solid then the Americans are in real trouble and expect him to contribute far more than the half point he gained in 2010.

Justin Rose has played in just one Ryder Cup but performed well, gaining three out of four points. He has proved he can conquer American courses, winning several times on the PGA tour so he is likely to notch up a few points.

Paul Lawrie is the lone Scot in the team and is in the form of his life. With numerous top ten finishes this season and two wins he is not to be overlooked, and don't be surprised if he is one of the top point scorers. Lawrie has also experienced an away Ryder Cup before and a rowdy American crowd, gaining three and a half out of five points back in Brooklyne.

Wildcard **Nicolas Colsaerts** is Europe's only rookie but the Americans better not underestimate him. He is Europe's longest hitter, making him ideal for an American course and the Ryder Cup is perfect for the Belgian, having won the World Matchplay earlier in the year.

One who might not perform as well as the rest is **Peter Hanson**, who in 2010 scored one point out of three. He is consistent but in the Ryder Cup you often need a little bit more than that.

Another who might not play as well is **Martin Kaymer**. The former PGA champion has been struggling recently and is without a win this season so it would be a dramatic change if he gained numerous points this week.

Come back tomorrow for our look at the American team's chances.



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