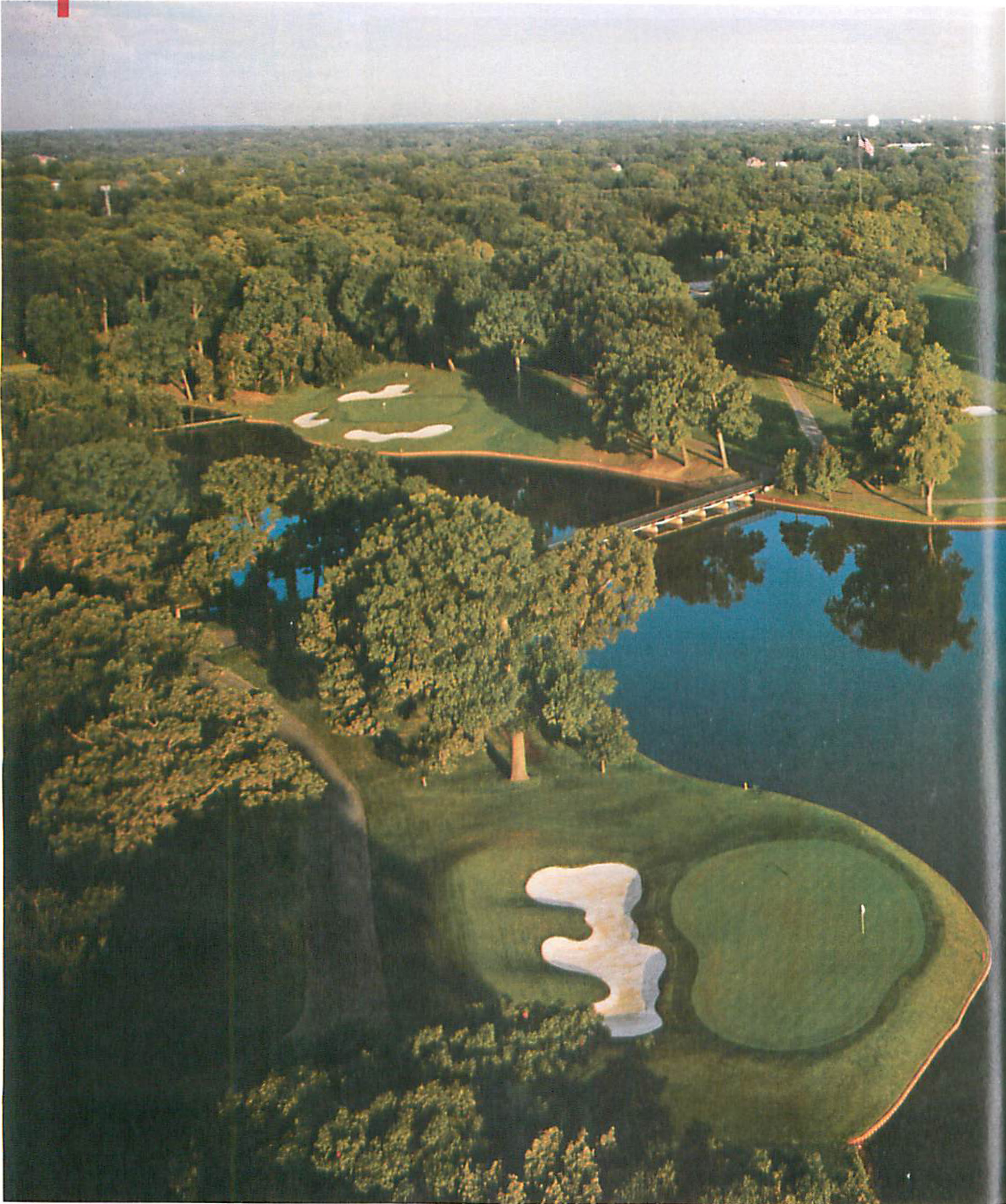


IT'S ALL CARRY OVER LAKE KADIJAH ON THE 192-YARD SECOND HOLE.



RYDER CUP 12



AN EXTRA DOSE OF DO-OR-DIE

MEDINAH'S WRINKLES ADD
RISK AND REWARD TO THE RYDER CUP

BY RON WHITTEN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY / STEPHEN SZURLEJ

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HE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM is that the venue means little in the Ryder Cup. It's man

against man, not man against golf course. Rees Jones, consulting golf architect for this year's Ryder Cup host, Medinah No. 3, doesn't dispute that. But he suggests, in so many words, that his redesign of No. 3 has the potential to serve as a 13th teammate, particularly on its closing holes each day. Just depends on which team is more likely to take advantage of it.

From the European standpoint, the mere fact of Jones' involvement in the remodeling of the course could be used to an advantage. It's no secret that several top American players have been critical of two other Jones remodels in the past year, Atlanta Athletic Club and Cog Hill No. 4.

(Was Jones stung by the criticisms? He was at first but has grown philosophical. "As an architect, you want the golf course to get into their heads. Otherwise, you're not doing your job.")

If some on the American Ryder Cup team approach Medinah No. 3 with a preconceived grudge against Jones, a neutral European team could be 1 up on the first tee. Jones was also the consulting architect for the 2004 Ryder Cup at Oakland Hills, which the European team won. He's also at work altering Hazeltine National for the 2016 Ryder Cup.

Conversely, the American team can gain an advantage because captain Davis Love III controls the setup for the matches and will prescribe conditions that will favor a style preferred by a majority of his players. He has already requested the lightest rough ever seen in a championship at Medinah. There's an extremely generous 10-yard-wide band of first-cut of rough separating fairways from slightly deeper stuff. Hole lengths and pin positions will be Love's daily decision.

The redesign by Jones provides Love with plenty of opportunities. Two of the four par 5s can be stretched to more than 600 yards, but each has shorter tee boxes. Jones suspects Love will play all four at distances less than 600 yards and make them reachable for his men.

"The shorter the course, the more shot options it will have," Jones says. The maximum length of the course is 7,668 yards, but he thinks it'll be set up closer to 7,200 yards.

Jones also added variety to the lengths of the par 3s. The 13th measures 245 yards, and the downhill eighth (the only par 3 without a pond) can play in the 130-yard range.

All that variety causes uncertainty for players when they step onto the tee—witness Jim Furyk's performance on the shorter-than-expected par-5 16th in the final round of the U.S. Open at Olympic. It also can cause doubts even before a

round. "When you mix up the lengths of holes each day, players aren't sure which 14 clubs to put into their bag," Jones says. "There's invariably a gap in every player's bag."

A NOD TO THE BELFRY'S 10TH

A SPECIAL TEST for each team will be Jones' new 15th hole, a potentially drivable par 4. He conceived it with the Ryder Cup in mind, a salute to the late Seve Ballesteros, who supercharged the matches in the late 1980s by insisting he could drive the green on The Belfry's water-laden par-4 10th.

"He made The Belfry's 10th the first do-or-die hole in the Ryder Cup," Jones says. "Now you expect one at every Ryder Cup."

To provide that at Medinah, Jones wiped away the 15th, previously a non-descript par 4 of 392 yards, and started over. He shifted its fairway to the left, dug a two-acre pond along its right side, and built a new pedestal green near the water's edge. He used fill from the pond to build a spectator slope left of the green, because he thinks the hole will be a crowd favorite.

The 15th is listed on the championship card at 391 yards, but that's only if the markers are placed on the back end of the adjacent 12th tee box. Its normal tee is more in the 350-yard range, but Jones also created a forward tee to allow it to be played at just 280 yards.

Love, as you might expect, isn't revealing his plans.

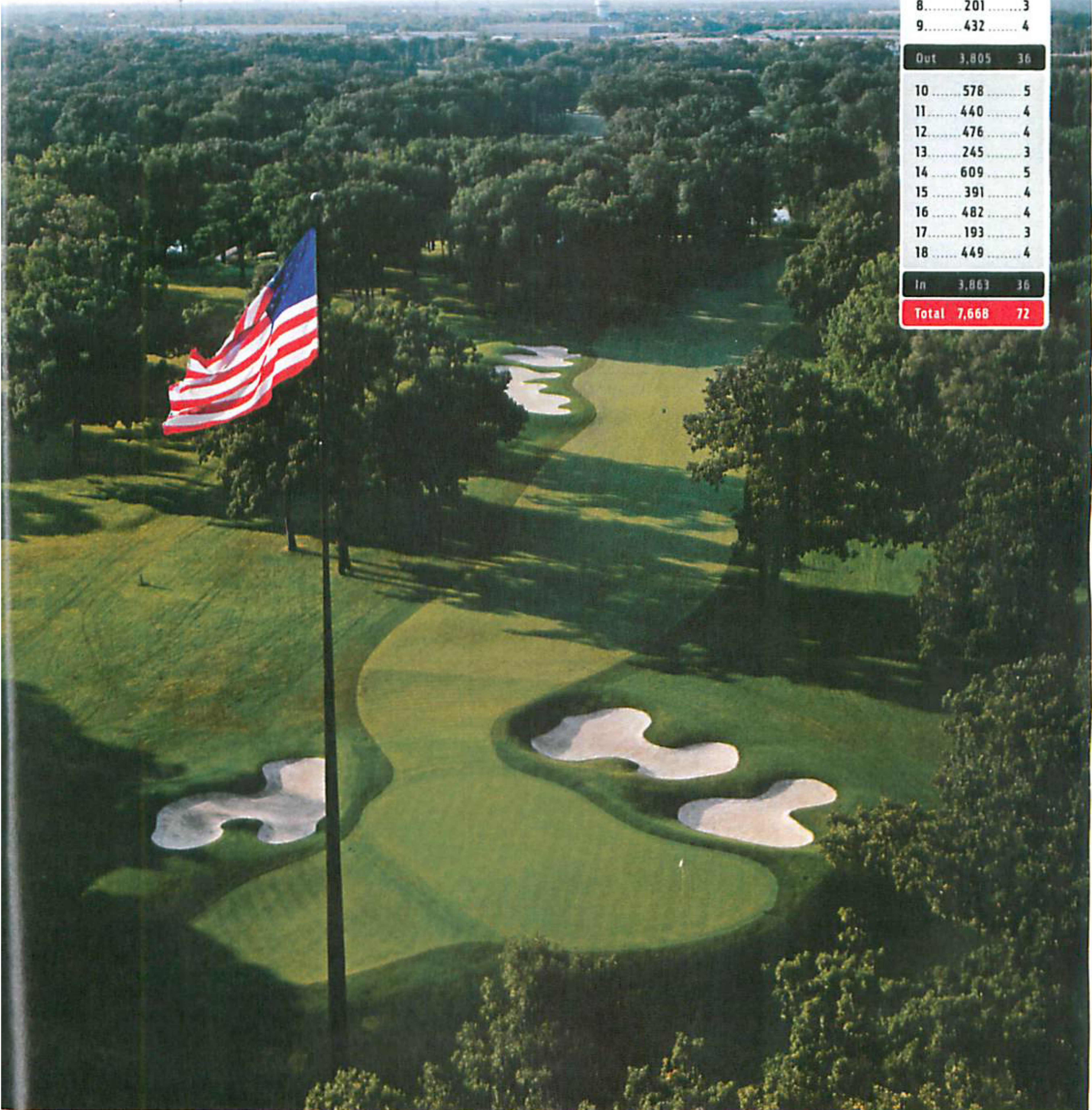
"We haven't made any decisions as of yet," he said before the PGA, "given that we don't have the final players. . . . any comment would just be speculation on my part until we get the team set,

HOW MEDINAH NO. 3 RANKS AMONG AMERICA'S 100 GREATEST

Medinah No. 3, in Chicago's west suburbs, is ranked 23rd by Golf Digest among America's 100 Greatest Courses for 2011-'12. It's second in Illinois, behind only Chicago Golf Club, which is tied for 17th with Whistling Straits' Straits course. Here's how Medinah ranks among the 100 Greatest in the defining categories: Shot Values, 12th; Resistance to Scoring, 11th; Design Variety, 49th; Memorability, 29th; Aesthetics, 38th; Conditioning, 44th; Ambience, 26th.

THE GREEN AT THE 18TH INCLUDES A TIGHTLY MOWED CHIPPING HOLLOW.

SCORECARD		
Hole	Yards	Par
1	443	4
2	192	3
3	412	4
4	463	4
5	536	5
6	509	4
7	617	5
8	201	3
9	432	4
Out 3,805 36		
10	578	5
11	440	4
12	476	4
13	245	3
14	609	5
15	391	4
16	482	4
17	193	3
18	449	4
In 3,863 36		
Total	7,668	72



and I meet with some players and my assistants.”

Jones suspects Love will play the 15th as a reachable par 4 at least one day of the matches, and perhaps every day.

“It falls in the perfect spot during each round,” Jones says. “Not too late, when matches are already decided, but not too early, either. I think the 15th is the ultimate match-play hole.” (See accompanying chart: Since 1979, almost 91 percent of the matches have made it to the 15th hole; more than six out of 10 matches end before the 18th hole.)

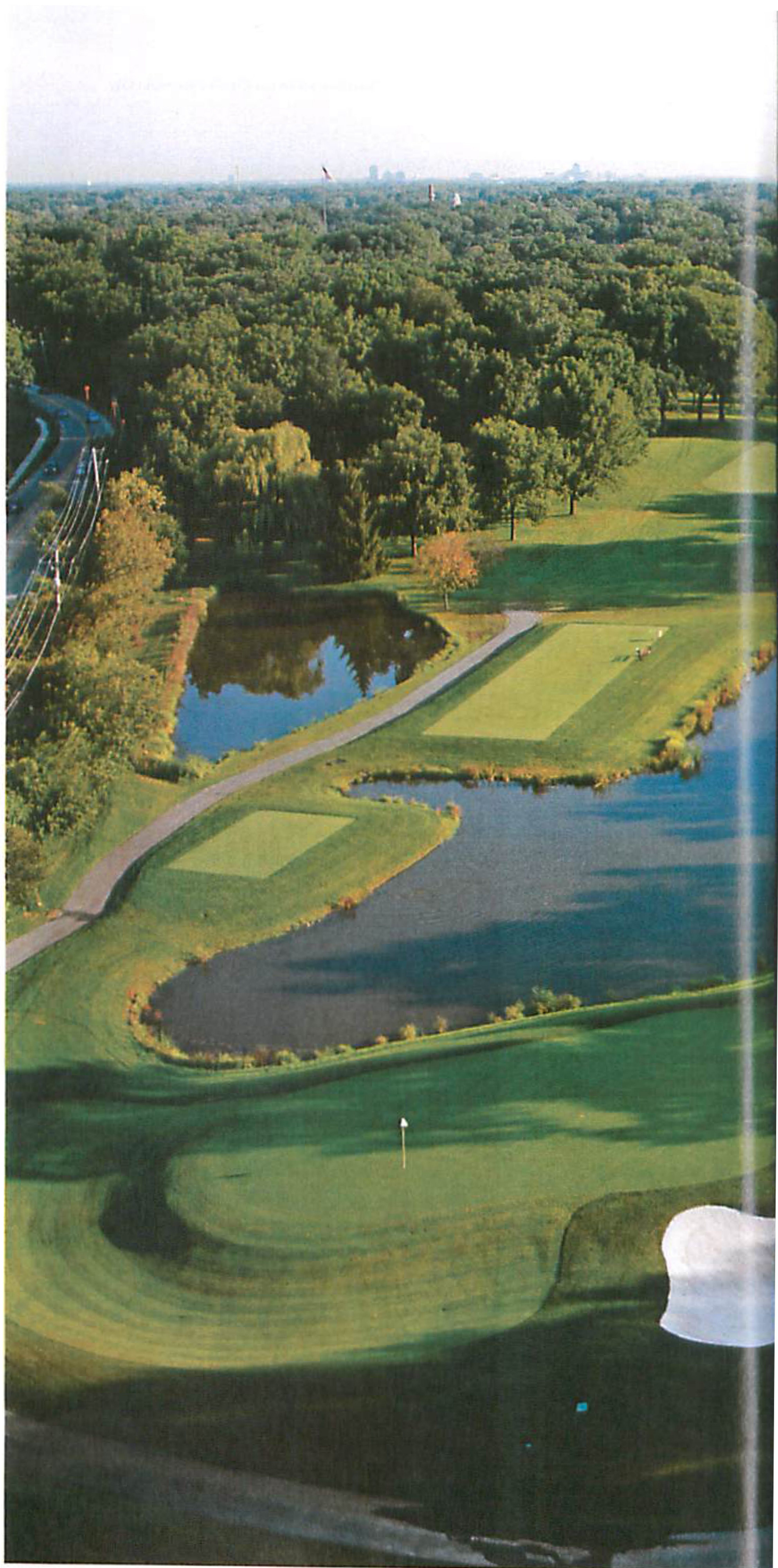
Behind the 15th green is a deep trench of tightly mowed turf, which Jones calls a collection area. He has similar chipping hollows guarding the first, 12th and 18th greens. Each offers the opportunity to putt, chip or lob a ball onto the green.

“Pros don’t like it when they have to choose,” Jones says, implying that the team that can eliminate frustration when faced with such lies will have the advantage.

The most dramatic collection area is on the 476-yard, par-4 12th, where the green is perched well above a pond to the right. For the Ryder Cup, the slope down to the pond went from thick bluegrass rough to clipped bentgrass, so that any ball missing the green to the right will bound down the hill and, if Captain Love removes a small belt of rough hugging the lake’s edge, into the water.

Ryder Cups can turn into putting contests, and at Medinah No. 3, an appreciation of its green contours could be a weapon. All 18 have been rebuilt by Jones (seven before the 2006 PGA, the other 11 two years ago). Medinah once lacked a sufficient number of viable hole locations, but Jones made sure there are flattish pin positions on every green, though some are only the size of throw rugs. There are spots where downhill putts run the risk of rolling far beyond the hole, and in some cases, off a green. The fourth green has a scary false front. The left side of the sixth green has a roll-off. The back-right corner of the eighth green dips dramatically to the rough. There are places on every green where you don’t want to hit it.

Which team does that favor? Neither. As Jones has often said, greens are the great equalizer. ♣



THE COMPLETELY NEW 15TH HOLE CAN PLAY AS A DRIVABLE PAR 4 OF 280 YARDS, BUT BEWARE THE WATER ON THE RIGHT.



HOW DEEP INTO THE ROUND DO RYDER CUP MATCHES GO?

What's the old saying in match play? Never quit. In fact, more than a third of the recent Ryder Cup matches (foursomes, four-ball and singles) have reached the 18th hole. Since the rest of Europe joined the Great Britain & Ireland team for the 1979 competition, here are where the matches ended:

YEAR / SITE	11TH	12TH	13TH	14TH	15TH	16TH	17TH	18TH
2010 Celtic Manor	0	0	1	2	3	6	6	10
2008 Valhalla	0	0	0	1	3	6	8	10
2006 The K Club	0	0	0	2	3	6	5	12
2004 Oakland Hills	0	0	0	3	5	7	2	11
2002 The Belfry	0	0	0	2	4	2	7	13
1999 The Country Club	0	0	1	1	3	7	5	11
1997 Valderrama	1	1	0	2	1	6	5	12
1995 Oak Hill	0	0	2	1	5	8	3	9
1993 The Belfry*	0	0	2	1	4	5	4	11
1991 The Ocean Course*	0	1	0	1	1	6	10	8
1989 The Belfry	1	0	1	0	1	5	5	15
1987 Muirfield Village	0	0	0	1	0	5	8	14
1985 The Belfry	0	0	1	2	2	7	6	10
1983 PGA National	0	0	1	2	2	5	8	10
1981 Walton Heath	0	0	2	1	4	8	5	8
1979 The Greenbrier*	0	1	1	2	3	7	5	8
TOTALS	2	3	12	24	44	96	92	172
PERCENTAGE	0.4%	0.7%	2.7%	5.4%	9.9%	21.6%	20.7%	38.7%

* DENOTES YEAR IN WHICH ONE MATCH WAS NOT PLAYED BECAUSE OF INJURY.