

THE 2010 RYDER CUP

The Ryder Cup has been billed as the single most significant event to take place in Newport in years. So what does it mean for the city?

Michael Brown takes a look at this huge coup.



For the first time in its 3 year history, The Ryder Cup will take place on Welsh soil. Due to be held at the luxurious Celtic Manor Resort in Newport from 1-3 October, the event will give the city and, indeed, the entire country a considerable boost,

both in terms of tourism and investment opportunities. It will also provide the chance to see some world-class golf. Although Wales has not always been known as a golfing hotspot, it has over 200 courses scattered amongst its rolling hills and valleys. In 2005, three of these courses (Royal Porthcawl, Royal St. David's and Aberdovey) made *Golf Digest's* list of the top 100 international courses outside the US and, as a result, Wales has seen a huge increase in the number of golf tourists between 2004 and 2009, with 184,000 visitors in 2009. Added to the fact that one of the biggest tournaments of the Ladies European Tour has been hosted in Wales since 2001, and this year's Ryder Cup location soon makes perfect sense.

Two teams, one cup

On Fri 1 Oct, European captain Colin Montgomerie and US captain Corey Pavin will lead their teams of 12 onto the Celtic Manor Resort's first purpose-built venue and first golf course specifically designed for the event, the 'Twenty Ten'. Offering magnificent views of South Wales in amongst the tight treelines and treacherous lakes, the course has already seen plenty of action in the 2010 Wales Open earlier this year, where it was received with almost unanimous acclaim; Scottish golfer Marc Warren gushed that "you just can't see why it won't be a success here", while the Open's winner, Graeme McDowell, called the course "magnificent".

Even more important than the quality of the course is the skill of the players involved and, as is customary with every Ryder Cup, each continent's team is chosen using a variety of means. For Europe, the team will include the top four players on the Ryder Cup World Points List, the

highest five players on the Ryder Cup European Points List (of those not on the previous list) and three captain's picks. Players such as Lee Westwood, Graeme McDowell, Ian Poulter, Luke Donald and Martin Kaymer are all likely to make an appearance while Welsh hopes lie with Bridgend's Rhys Davies, currently no.14 on the World Points List and no.17 on the European Points List. Following Colin Montgomerie's comments on this year's line-up, Europe has good reason to be optimistic in the 2010 competition: "I truly believe this is the strongest team we have ever assembled for Europe both on and off the course". Fighting words indeed.

The US uses rather different values to assemble its team, instead basing their selection on a somewhat capitalist agenda: the amount of money a player has earned in the 2009 major championships. The top eight players from this list will automatically make the team, while the remaining four places will be filled by wildcard selections by the captain, Corey Pavin. Sure to appear are Phil Mickelson, Hunter Mahan, Jim Furyk, Steve Stricker and Jeff Overton but the question on everyone's lips is "will Tiger Woods play?" Currently positioned just shy of the top eight, in 12th place, the world number one will need one of Pavin's wildcard picks, after a poor run of performances in the PGA Championship and the Bridgestone Invitational, where he finished joint 78th out of 80. His non-appearance at the tournament could prove detrimental to the success of the Ryder Cup in Wales, as his celebrity status alone would bring considerable attention to this year's competition.

Making A Splash

For those who aren't part of the 45,000 strong crowds at Celtic Manor, there are still plenty of reasons to celebrate the Ryder Cup in Wales. As the host city of the tournament, Newport has been holding a year-long festival since January, with particular focus given to The Big Splash outdoor festival. The banks of the River Usk will play host to a wide variety of events, including Cardiff-based circus company NoFit State, Xtreme Action's jet ski stunts and Europe's highest ever wire walk across the Footbridge, as well as the world's finest portable crazy golf course. Cardiff will also get in on the action with the Welcome To Wales Ryder Cup Concert on Wed 29 Sep at the Millennium Stadium, just two days before the main event gets underway. Featuring the finest in Welsh talent, including Katherine Jenkins, Catherine Zeta Jones and Only Men Aloud, the concert is sure to be a fitting introduction for the European and American teams, and celebrates the country hosting one of the world's biggest sporting events, as well as the bright future it will no doubt provide for Wales.

WHAT THE RYDER CUP MEANS FOR WALES

THE success of the Cup will greatly benefit the entirety of Wales, raising the country's profile, not just in terms of golf but as a nation of culture and natural beauty. One of the world's largest sporting events, The Ryder Cup is broadcast into 750 million homes in 100 countries, providing the most effective advertising the country could hope for; when combined with the "conservative estimate" of a £70 million boost to the Welsh economy for hosting the event, the future looks brighter than ever for tourism in Wales. Of course, much of the £70 million value will be focused on the city playing host to the cup: Newport. The establishment of the "Newport Unlimited" fund, making use of both public and private investment, has led to a £2 billion cash injection for what Ffion Lloyd, Project Director for the Ryder Cup at Newport City Council, calls "A city in transition". A £25 million train station renovation and upgraded sports facilities are just the beginning as Newport moves towards its "2020 Vision", including 150 regeneration projects, two million square feet of new office space, 11,000 new homes and one million square feet of refurbished retail space, not to mention the £35 million new university campus in the city centre. Most importantly, these new developments will result in more jobs in an area where the unemployment rate is above the national average. In its first five years of operation, Newport Unlimited helped to provide the city with an estimated 1,600 new jobs and this trend looks set to continue with the global attention the Ryder Cup will bring. Celtic Manor alone puts £14 million into the local economy each year and this will increase dramatically over the coming months. It's not just Newport with big plans for the future, as, in April, the Welsh assembly government announced a 10-year plan to promote Wales as a major contender for international sporting, musical and cultural events, following the increased future tourism from the tournament. Heritage Minister Alun Ffred Jones commented that "now is the time to build on this success" in order to create a "sustainable portfolio of world-class events". While recent years have seen Wales host six FA Cup finals, the Rugby World Cup and the Ashes in Cardiff, ministers are now setting their sights on "mega events" such as the Commonwealth Games. These are big plans but, providing the Ryder Cup is as successful as predicted, Wales could become a genuine force to be reckoned with when bidding for events on a global scale.



The Ryder Cup, Celtic Manor Resort, Fri 1-Sun 3 Oct. Info: www.rydercupwales2010.com