

The Ryder Cup runway

- Story Highlights
- The Ryder Cup is always a big week for golf fashion
- Tony believes the on/off course fashion can influence the Cup's outcome
- Europe made all the right fashion choices in the 2006 competition

By Tony Q'aja
For CNN

(CNN) – Hello, and welcome to this new section of the Living Golf Web site where I've been charged with the task of being CNN's golfing fashion expert! I'll be on hand to talk you through what's hot and what's not, both out on the course and at the 19th hole.

I will also give you my latest views on the biggest fashion stories making news in the golf world. So keep checking it out.

THE 2008 RYDER CUP

The greatest event of all is on its way. Can't wait to see what's in store as far as fashion is concerned. What will the U.S. surprise us with this time around?

I must say I had a surprise at the last Ryder Cup in Ireland. The first practice day I had so many texts, emails and calls: "So when did you get the Ryder Cup contract?" You can imagine my silence.

To my shock, I saw Monty wearing a pair of trousers on the TV that looked very much "Q'aja." However, they were not and I was disappointed and flattered that such an established brand had copied my design. No names mentioned! Next time just call me guys – I thought I would get that off my chest.

CAN EITHER SIDE 'FASHION' A RESULT?

Fashion at the Ryder Cup has almost become as big as the competition itself. On course, off course – oh and don't forget the WAGS!

Can on/off course fashion decide the outcome of the Ryder Cup? Most definitely.

As soon as the teams meet up at the airport the mind games will begin. The media will compliment or crucify the outfits, and trust me, the captains and players will be reading and watching the reactions.

Then it's up to the captains to use those comments and play on the positivity, or reverse the negativity, and stir the players into battle.

On course, if the team looks and feels good, it can start such a positive and exciting feeling that it could be hard to stop. The opposite can also apply: if a team are shockingly outrageous, then that could put the opposition off their game. So watch out for those wallpaper prints!

HISTORICAL FAUX-PAS! & "THE GOOD OLD DAYS"

Talking of which, 1999: those wonderful shirts with Ryder Cup picture frame images, worn on the last day at Brookline by the U.S. team are such an example.

They could have beaten anybody with those on; even boxer Mike Tyson had to convert to Islam after seeing his American compatriots' fashion effort.

The U.S. team would do well this year to look back at their fellows of 1929. This was the era of slick-looking gangsters, and the golfer adopted that sharp but chic look: double breasted blazers with contrasting light colored pants draping onto two colored brogues with slick combed back hair – WOW! How I would have loved to have been around as a designer then.

I must say, the mafia/gangster era certainly brought fashion to a forefront and kept it sharp. Even on course, with smart plus fours and cloth caps, instead of the modern baseball cap, were so outstanding.

BAD JUMPERS, DODGY STRIDES

The 80s brought the beginning of the jumper experiment. Could such a conservative sporting male carry pink as a color of a garment? It started with polos and eventually by the 90s moved into jumpers, along with the argyle diamonds which have become the standard now.

2004 saw the Europeans arriving back in the UK wearing light brown soft suede jackets, which was a good idea for a relaxed look, but unfortunately fell flat with shirts and trousers that were too formal. The American Fred Funk did liven things up with his golf shoes with stars and stripes on the side panel. Unfortunately he was only allowed to wear them on a practice day.

2006: A NEW ERA

However, I would say that 2006 was the start of the real fashion battle.

Arrival: what the hell was the thought behind the Sherlock Holmes look by the U.S. team? Tweed bomber jackets that looked as though they had arrived for a shooting week, not a golf tournament and to top it all...TIES! The Europeans also chose brown as a starter color. Dark brown in suede (again, like 2004) but this time put together better with a casual mock turtle.

1 up to the Europeans.

Opening ceremony: here again the Europeans arrive in smart mint green jackets over black open neck shirts and black trousers, looking very chilled out. The Americans go formal in navy suits with regimental ties and looked too stiff.

2 up to the Europeans.

Gala dinner: Europe in fun cream tuxes with red bows arrived to have a good time; U.S., I'll give you one guess... black formal tuxes and bows WOW! Again, too stiff.

3 up to the Europeans

On course: here again the U.S. stuck to safe, formal golf looks with traditional blues, grays and naturally red. That tweedy look did manage to make it onto the course too. Europe continued their theme of chilled out, relaxed, here-to-have-fun by introducing some nice colors for their polos and knitwear: vibrant green, pale pinks and strong blues – oh, and not forgetting those Q'aja looking pants!

4 up to the Europeans.

WAGS: I never thought I would be using the term WAGS in golf. Wives have always been there, but not really a discussion point. I don't know if the wives have been watching the football world cup or footballers wives, but they certainly wanted to make their presence known.

The U.S. men should have taken some advice from their better halves. Here I would have to say the U.S. were in a class of their own. The WAGS dress code during the opening ceremony day (and it has nothing to do with those sexy near knee length leather boots – OK, maybe a little), was to all dress identically.

The Europeans looked as though they too were going for the team look, but unfortunately half the team went to the wrong shop. You cannot have half a team in one jacket and the other in a different style, let alone color. To finish things off they all decided to wear their own trousers or skirts – what a mess.

3 up to the Europeans.

Winning ceremony: Europe, hands down. The pink jackets not only looked very stylish, but were very appropriate for Darren Clarke's loss of Heather.

A European victory 4&3!

2008 -- WHAT TO EXPECT?

Watch this space. I shall be reviewing during the Ryder Cup week: the good, the bad and the ugly; and I shall look at the clothing too!