

THEY MAY NEVER PASS THIS WAY AGAIN

Barely two years after the outstanding success of the 1998 Presidents Cup, Melbourne was lucky enough to host another major international golf tournament.

Where the fans at Royal Melbourne had been treated to 24 elite golfers from the US and non-European nations, those at Metropolitan in January 2001 could see 64 golfers from all over the world, at least on the first day, of the Accenture World Matchplay Championship.

You would have thought that many of the golfers from that Presidents Cup contest would have been back in town for the Matchplay but how many of the 12 Americans do you reckon made the trip again?

Just two – Justin Leonard and John Huston.

The internationals had a greater representation but still only half of the Presidents Cup 12 made it to Metropolitan – Australians Craig Parry and Stuart Appleby, and visitors Ernie Els, Vijay Singh, Joe Ozaki and Shigeki Maruyama.

So what is the point? It's simply this: If you are even half interested in golf and you have half a chance to get to Royal Melbourne for the 2011 Presidents Cup you would be mad not to beg, borrow or buy a ticket. Because you might never have another chance to see such a collection of heroes of the game, especially those who wear the stars and stripes of the US.

Melbourne is the first city outside the US to stage more than one Presidents Cup and you can bet that it will be much longer than 13 years before it wins the right to stage it for a third time.

With the World Golf Championship tournaments now all likely to remain in the northern hemisphere, at least in the short term, and the shrinking of the Australasian Tour in recent years, it means this might be the last chance you get to see Phil Mickelson and Jim Furyk and the first and last chance to see some of the newer stars of the US PGA Tour like Matt Kuchar and Dustin Johnson.

It will certainly be the last chance you get to see them all on the one course at the one time.

Anyone who was at Royal Melbourne 13 years ago will tell you it's an opportunity you should grab. The team environment of a Presidents Cup gives the event a totally different atmosphere to any other golf tournament and this was certainly evident in 1998 when there were more laughs and cheers from the crowd and more interaction from the players than you could ever get at an Australian Open, Masters or PGA.

Four Australians competed in 1998 – Greg Norman, Stuart Appleby, Steve Elkington and Craig Parry. But the hero of the crowd – and the man everyone remembers as the face of the tournament – was Japan's Shigeki Maruyama, who won all five of his matches. With Mark O'Meara in 1996 and Tiger Woods in 2009, he is one of only three golfers to win all of his matches in a Presidents Cup event.

The picture of Maruyama and his fellow pocket rocket Parry hugging each other after Parry's 20 metre chip-in to defeat Tiger Woods and Fred Couples on the 18th hole in the Saturday foursomes has to be one of golf's most joyous images.

Strategically, International captain Peter Thomson had paired Maruyama with his countryman Joe Ozaki in the two four-ball contests but in the two foursomes matches he gave him the experience (and complementary build and game) of Craig Parry to plot their way around Royal Melbourne.

"I hit where Mr Parry told me to hit," Maruyama said after the victory over Woods and Couples.

Woods himself provided one of the tournament's memorable performances when he defeated Greg Norman 1 up on the Sunday. Although by then competing in a dead rubber, the showdown of the young and unsullied superstar against the ageing Aussie icon was a promoter's dream – and gifted to the public by Thomson and US captain Jack Nicklaus.

In truth, the match did not reach great heights but the occasion surely did.

The internationals had only needed two wins on the Sunday to take the Cup and they got them in the first two matches of the day when Parry thrashed Leonard 5 and 3 and Nick Price took care of David Duval 2 and 1.

The first and only victory by the Internationals against the US in the eight-tie history of the event had been set up on the opening day, staged on the second hottest December day of the 20th century. With temperatures reaching 105 degrees Fahrenheit, the Internationals won the Friday morning foursomes 3½ to 1½ and repeated the scoreline in the afternoon four-balls to take a 7-3 lead into the weekend.

Thomson explained recently that he had paired the two New Zealanders Frank Nobilo and Greg Turner in the first match early Friday morning because of the two hour time difference between Melbourne and New Zealand – he thought their body clocks might give them an advantage. Whether it did is somewhat questionable but they did win and Thomson again sent them out first on the Saturday morning when they scored again to establish a day of even greater dominance for the Internationals.

With Maruyama sinking a 12 metre putt for birdie on the 17th and Parry doing his stuff on 18, the whole US team seemed stunned by the good fortune of their opposition and with a 4½ to ½ win in the foursomes and a 3-2 advantage in the afternoon four-balls, the contest was as good as over.

Thomson and Nicklaus ensured the final day would still have plenty of interest when they matched Norman and Woods to play in the 11th game and there was one more lovely touch to the day when Thomson picked Stuart Appleby to bring home the International team in the final match of the day against Mark O'Meara.

The then 27-year-old home state hero was back playing only his fifth event since the death of his first wife Renay in a road accident in London. Appleby lost to O'Meara but took the match to the 18th, enabling a massive crowd to give him an emotional tribute.

From start to finish, everything about the Presidents Cup was class. (If you like a bit of nostalgia, go to YouTube and call up John Farnham, Olivia Newton John and Anthony Warlow. There you will find a clip of a magnificent rendition of Advance Australia Fair at the opening ceremony.)

Although it was a lop-sided contest in the end, the defeat of the US gave the President's Cup a boost in credibility and helped establish the rivalry and set the desire all golfers seem to have for the event today. In raising \$US2.9 million for charity, it also raised the bar for philanthropy, more than trebling the contribution to charity from the two previous Presidents Cups.

This year's event will have its own set of memorable moments. Teams won't be finalised until the end of September but at this stage only Jason Day and Adam Scott would be Australians certain to earn selection. Victorians Robert Allenby, Geoff Ogilvy and Aaron Baddeley would all need to either play their way into the top ten by then or hope that Norman's sense of theatre prompts him to use his two captain's picks on locals. Norman would also know, though, that young Japanese star Ryo Ishikawa has some marketing appeal for one of the spots.

As Tiger Woods has slipped further out of the top ten for the US team, the only members of the 1998 side certain to earn selection are Phil Mickelson and Jim Furyk. Couples has said Woods only has to be fit to warrant selection but at the half way point of the season he was out of the top 20 with a captain's pick getting harder and harder to justify to others on the fringe of selection.

Whether Woods makes it, though, is not the point. 24 of the world's top 30-odd players will be at Royal Melbourne and there'll be plenty to see. A Mickelson match against Day late on the Sunday would be a spine-tingler, not quite in the Norman/Woods mould ... but not far off it.

Yes, 2011 will have to be great to top 1998 ... but you wouldn't want to miss it if it does.

BREAKOUT: REMEMBER WHEN

THE PRESIDENTS CUP - December 11-13, 1998

Captains: [Jack Nicklaus](#), [Peter Thomson](#)

DAY ONE

Foursomes - International 3 ½, United States 1 ½

[Frank Nobile/Greg Turner](#) (Int.) d. [Mark O'Meara/David Duval](#), 1 up

[Greg Norman/Steve Elkington](#) (Int.) d. [Jim Furyk/John Huston](#), 2 up

[Shigeki Maruyama/Craig Parry](#) (Int.) d. [Lee Janzen/Scott Hoch](#), 3 and 2

[Tiger Woods/Fred Couples](#) (U.S.) d. [Ernie Els/Vijay Singh](#), 5 and 4

[Davis Love III/Justin Leonard](#) (U.S.) sq with [Stuart Appleby/Nick Price](#)

Four-Ball - International 3 ½, United States 1 ½

[Norman/Elkington](#) (Int.) d. [O'Meara/Furyk](#), 2 and 1

[Maruyama/Joe Ozaki](#) (Int.) d. [Mark Calcavecchia/Huston](#), 4 and 3

[Duval/Phil Mickelson](#) (U.S.) sq with [Els/Price](#)

[Couples/Love](#) (U.S.) d. [Parry/Carlos Franco](#), 1 up

[Appleby/Singh](#) (Int.) d. [Leonard/Woods](#), 2 and 1

Totals: International 7, United States 3

DAY TWO

Foursomes - International 4 ½, United States ½
Nobilo/Turner (Int.) d. Leonard/Love, 2 up
Janzen/Calcavecchia (U.S.) sq with Norman/Elkington
Maruyama/Parry (Int.) d. Woods/Couples, 1 up
Appleby/Price (Int.) d. Duval/Mickelson, 1 up
Els/Singh (Int.) d. Hoch/Furyk, 6 and 4

Four-Ball - International 3, United States 2
O'Meara/Hoch (U.S.) d. Nobilo/Turner, 1 up
Els/Singh (Int.) d. Woods/Huston, 1 up
Maruyama/Ozaki (Int.) d. Duval/Mickelson, 1 up
Janzen/Calcavecchia (U.S.) d. Price/Franco, 3 and 2
Norman/Elkington (Int.) d. Couples/Love, 2 and 1
Totals: International 14 ½, United States 5 ½

DAY THREE

Singles - United States 6, International 6
Parry (Int.) d. Leonard, 5 and 3
Price (Int.) d. Duval, 2 and 1
Furyk (U.S.) d. Nobilo, 4 and 2
Mickelson (U.S.) sq with Franco
Maruyama (Int.) d. Huston, 3 and 2
Hoch (U.S.) d. Ozaki, 4 and 3
Calcavecchia (U.S.) sq with Turner
Janzen (U.S.) sq with Elkington
Els (Int.) d. Love, 1 up
Couples (U.S.) sq with Singh
Woods (U.S.) d. Norman, 1 up
O'Meara (U.S.) d. Appleby, 1 up
Final Totals: International 20 ½, United States 11 ½

BREAKOUT: WHAT TO SEE IN 2011

The format for this year's Presidents Cup is different to 1998. All 24 golfers will be on the course every day.

Monday, November 14

Practice Rounds (Course closed to public)

Tuesday, November 15

Practice Rounds - All day

- Gates Open: 8:00 am
- Gates Close: 5:00 pm

Wednesday, November 16

Practice Rounds / Opening Ceremonies

- Gates Open: 8:00 am

- Opening Ceremony: 4:00 pm
- Gates Close: 6:00 pm

Thursday, November 17

Six Foursomes Matches

- Gates Open: 8:00 am
- Play Starts: 1:00 pm
- Gates Close: One hour after play concludes

Friday, November 18

Six Four-ball Matches

- Gates Open: 8:00 am
- Play Starts: 11:40 am
- Gates Close: One hour after play concludes

Saturday, November 19

Five Foursomes Matches (morning)

Five Four-ball Matches (afternoon)

- Gates Open: 5:30 am
- Play Starts (Foursomes): 7:00 am
- Play Starts (Four-ball): 12:00 pm
- Gates Close: One hour after play concludes

Sunday, November 20

12 Singles Matches

Closing Ceremonies following completion of play

- Gates Open: 8:00 am
- Play Starts: 10:30 am
- Gates Close: After Closing Ceremony concludes

Ticketing Information:

Online: www.ticketmaster.com.au

Phone: Ticketmaster Australia - 136 100

More information: www.presidentscup.com