

Have you heard the one about the five Australians, the three South Africans, the three Koreans and the kid from Japan?

Of course you haven't because the story hasn't been told yet. But you can bet it will be one hell of a tale when the International team comes up against 12 Americans in the 2011 Presidents Cup at Royal Melbourne from November 15-20.

Essentially, the contest will come down to a battle of local knowledge and experience against raw power and the changing face of US golf.

Six members of the US team are playing in their first Presidents Cup, including five of their top seven qualifiers. Worryingly for Couples, his three most experienced match play golfers – Phil Mickelson, Jim Furyk and Tiger Woods – are coming off some of their worst years on tour.

But there are some breathtaking skills amongst the debutants – the likes of Dustin Johnson, Matt Kuchar, Bill Haas, Webb Simpson and Nick Watney might not have the crowd-pulling power of Woods and Mickelson but they are potential major winners who belt the ball a mile. Just how they handle the wind and the roll on the famed Royal Melbourne greens will decide the event.

The internationals have four players making their Presidents Cup debuts but their side is better characterised by the five Australians and their knowledge and love for the RM composite layout.

Norman's captain's picks of Aaron Baddeley and Robert Allenby were logical choices to exploit the inexperience of the Americans. Given Couples' early announcement that he was bucking the qualifying measurements by picking Woods despite his lack of form, his only other choice of Bill Haas was also predictable.

Haas, the \$10 million dollar golfer, played an astonishing recovery from water to win the Players Championship and the Fedex bonus. There's some irony in the fact that he will be playing this event for no money at all. The 24 players nominate charities or golf-related projects of their choice to receive a portion of the funds raised through the staging of each Presidents Cup. More than \$23 million has been raised for charity since the inception of The Presidents Cup in 1994.

For 20-year-old Japan star Ryo Ishikawa, the charitable part of the tournament is by now almost second nature. He has been playing all year for the victims of the Japan earthquakes.

The philanthropic nature of the Presidents Cup along with the team format gives the event an almost tangible atmosphere. You can feel the goodwill. But this time there are some intriguing sub-plots.

The performance of Woods is obviously the most prominent. Should he do well and start the long journey to resurrection of his career, he will owe Couples a massive debt. Far greater than the one Adam Scott is currently repaying Norman after the Australian captain picked him against logic in 2009.

Scott will play this Presidents Cup as a leader of the team, coming off perhaps the strongest season of his career. His new found authority will make him a fascinating study and his fellow Queenslander Jason Day will also be performing under a bigger spotlight than ever before in Australia.

In 1998, the Internationals were way too strong in the conditions and beat the Americans easily. But Couples has vowed they will do better this time because they will be better prepared. Let's see how the two sides stack up.