Furyk left off US team for first time since '96

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By DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

Jim Furyk kept waiting for the phone to ring to learn about the Presidents Cup. News came from the buzz of a text message, a peculiar way to find out he would not be part of an American team for the first time since Tiger Woods was still trying to get his PGA Tour card.

U.S. captain Fred Couples used his captain's picks Wednesday on Webb Simpson and Jordan Spieth, the 20-year-old rookie and youngest American in Presidents Cup history.

"I'm disappointed," said Furyk, who began his streak of 15 consecutive teams at the 1997 Ryder Cup. "I'm sure Dustin Johnson is disappointed and Bubba (Watson) is disappointed. Webb and Jordan, I think they're good picks and they're going to be excited. You've got to say 'yes' to somebody and 'no' to somebody."

Getting the news through a text was awkward, especially because Furyk at first thought the picks were to be announced on Tuesday, one day after the final qualifying event at the Deutsche Bank Championship.

"I felt he would pick Webb because he was so close to making the team, the difference of about \$6,000 in the last tournament," Furyk said. "I thought I was the last guy up in the air."

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Couples said Furyk and Steve Stricker were two players "I wanted dearly to be on the team." Stricker was runner-up at the TPC Boston to earn one of the 10 qualifying spots. Furyk essentially was beaten out by Spieth, who started the year with no status and already has a win, a runner-up after losing in a playoff and is guaranteed a trip to the Tour Championship.

Couples said he couldn't handle a phone call, so he "took the easy way out and sent him a text."

"The whole thing was not fun," Couples added.

Furyk wound up 13th in the Presidents Cup standings, about \$250,000 short of Zach Johnson at No. 10. Just his luck, this was a year like few others when it came to making two captain's picks. Couples narrowed it down to Furyk, Dustin Johnson, Spieth and Simpson. Furyk is No. 15 in the world, a higher ranking than every player on the International team except for Masters champion Adam Scott. Dustin Johnson is at No. 22, one spot behind Watson in the ranking.

"Before we started Boston, I was looking at the list of guys who could be picks — Stricker, DJ, Bubba ... wow, "Furyk said. "The bad news is it's always tough to pick. Everyone is going to argue what the right call is and hindsight is 20-20. He had so many good players in and around the top 12, he wasn't going to make a bad choice."

Being left off the team was the latest blow for Furyk over the last few years. He had at least a share of the 54-hole lead three times last year without winning, including the U.S. Open. He finished bogey-bogey in the Ryder Cup to lose a pivotal singles match to Sergio Garcia. He also had a 1-shot lead over Jason Dufner going into the final round of the PGA Championship, where Dufner outplayed him and closed with a 68 to win.

The Presidents Cup is Oct. 3-6 at Muirfield Village, where Furyk won the Memorial in 2002 and was runner-up to Tiger Woods in 2009. Furyk isn't sure where he'll be that week. He isn't sure if he will watch. These are questions he hasn't had to think about since 1996.

"I have a lot of good friends and teammates, guys I admire and respect on the team, as well as three captains," Furyk continued. "My heart will be with them. I'll be rooting hard for them."

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Furyk is seen as a shoo-in to be a Ryder Cup captain when the time is right, though missing out on a team isn't enough to make him think he won't be at Gleneagles next September for the next team competition in the Ryder Cup. Nor is being left out any additional motivation.

"I'm sure I'll hear that question a lot," he added. "I'm not really a 'slight' guy. I'm not into bulletin-board material or whatever. I push myself hard and I expect a lot out of myself. I don't think I'll push myself any harder the next time."

Meanwhile, he is No. 15 in the FedEx Cup, set for the Tour Championship and still with a chance at the \$10 million prize. This year, that will have to do.