



For Immediate Release

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FIRST RAYS EMPLOYEE AND PAUL AZINGER TO THROW OUT CEREMONIAL FIRST PITCHES AT FIRST TWO DIVISION SERIES GAMES

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA---Rays Senior Vice President John Higgins, who joined the organization as its first employee in 1995, and Paul Azinger, captain of the 2008 United States Ryder Cup Champions, will throw out the ceremonial first pitches prior to the first two games of the 2008 American League Division Series at Tropicana Field this week.

Higgins, a long-time resident of St. Petersburg, will throw out the first pitch before Thursday's Game 1. He will be accompanied by many of the other 51 Rays employees who have been with the organization since its inaugural season in 1998. Many of these honorees have been with the franchise since its founding in 1995.

Azinger, a long-time resident of Bradenton, will throw out the first pitch prior to Game 2 on Friday.

"The hard work and dedication by our entire organization have enabled us to reach this extraordinary moment. The ceremonial first pitch for our first-ever postseason game is a fitting tribute to their contributions," said Rays Principal Owner Stuart Sternberg.

"As a lifelong resident of this community, I am honored to represent not only the Rays employees who have played such an important part in attaining this success but also the fans who have remained steadfast in their support over the past eleven years," said Rays Senior Vice President John Higgins.

"This is very special for me," Azinger said. "I've been a Rays fan since the inception of the franchise and attend games at Tropicana Field as often as I can. This year's Rays club shows what a team with talent, character and faith can do."

Higgins has practiced law in the Tampa Bay area since 1979, specializing in corporate, commercial and real estate law. For three years, he represented Vince Naimoli and the rest of the Tampa Bay ownership group in its efforts to acquire a Major League Baseball franchise.

Higgins received his bachelor of business administration degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1975 and his juris doctorate degree from Duke University School of Law in 1979. He resides in St. Petersburg, his home since 1960, with his wife, Robin, and sons, Sean Patrick and Patrick Ryan.

Azinger has won 14 worldwide professional championships since becoming a Tour professional in 1981. Shortly after the 1993 Ryder Cup, Azinger was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in his right shoulder. Azinger overcame his battle with cancer and became a Tour winner for the 12th time in his career with an emotional victory at the 2000 Sony Open in Hawaii.

Azinger attended Brevard Junior College and Florida State University before turning professional in 1981. He captured his first Tour victory in 1987 and also earned that year's PGA Player of the Year Award. In 1995, he was honored by the Golf Writers Association of America with the Ben Hogan Award, presented to an individual who remains active in golf despite physical handicap or serious illness.

This year he joined a succession of golf's greatest players in the role of Ryder Cup Captain. Walter Hagen, the first Captain in 1927, was followed by such legendary performers as Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and Lee Trevino.

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The Tampa Bay Rays have proudly represented Major League Baseball in the Tampa Bay region since 1998. The organization and its foundation are committed to building a strong community bond through meaningful interaction and charitable contributions.