

The Ryder Cup

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Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Luke Donald

Guy Kinnings

Media Conference



MARCO SIMONE
ROME, ITALY

SCOTT CROCKETT: Thanks, everybody, for joining us today on what is a special day for everyone associated with Ryder Cup Europe. Just over an hour ago, we announced that Englishman Luke Donald has been confirmed as Europe's Ryder Cup Captain for 2023 at Marco Simone Golf and Country Club on the outskirts of Rome next September.

Before we hear from our new captain, it's my pleasure to ask Europe's Ryder Cup Director Guy Kinnings to say a few words.

Guy?

GUY KINNINGS: Thanks, Scott, and thanks, everyone for joining today.

By now you'll all have received our press release which announced Luke Donald as the European Ryder Cup Captain for the 2023 contest at Marco Simone Golf and Country Club in Italy.

On behalf of everyone at Ryder Cup Europe, we are all delighted to welcome Luke into the role and I'm pleased to be here with him in person today as his captaincy journey gets underway. We look forward to supporting him and Diane and working with them in our quest to reclaim The Ryder Cup in Rome.

Undoubtedly we have found ourselves in unique and unprecedented circumstances over the last couple of weeks, but what happened, happened, and we dealt with it. And as you can see from today, we have moved on in a positive way for the European Team.

There are 14 months until The Ryder Cup, and we had to ensure we took the appropriate steps to guarantee the new captain was the right person to come in and lead Team Europe in Rome.

There is no doubt that we have that person in Luke Donald.

Luke, of course, brings a wealth of experience from his own Ryder Cup playing career, representing Europe on four winning sides as a player in 2004, 2006, 2010 and 2012 and he then served as a vice captain in Paris with Thomas Björn, and last year with Pádraig Harrington.

He also commands a huge amount of respect in the game from his peers and from everyone else in golf. He memorably led Europe out in the singles in Medinah in 2012, putting the first blue point on the board which set the tone for that remarkable comeback ten years ago.

He also held the considerable honour of being world No. 1 for 56 weeks in total; so he scaled the heights in the game.

I have known Luke for many years, managing him from when he first turned professional. So I know exactly what he will bring to the role. He's very considered, intelligent, organised and articulate and while he's also very likable, you don't get to be world No. 1 or have his impressive Ryder Cup or Walker Cup C.V. without being a truly gritty competitor, too.

Those attributes will serve him well in his term as captain, and of course he's not alone in that journey. He and Diane are a strong team themselves and they love Italy and Rome in particular, so they will be welcomed with open arms in that country.

We have an incredibly talented support team, too, who have been working flat-out behind the scenes already. Luke will be able to build on the strong platform that the team at Ryder Cup Europe has provided for him, and as you will have seen from the press release, he has already been busy in that role confirming his first two vice captains, and we have discussed other plans that he has for his captaincy to put his own stamp on things.

He has the experience, respect and strength of leadership to now take Team Europe forward. So, Luke, we are delighted to have you in position.

We look forward to working with you and supporting you over the next 14 months as together we do everything we can to reclaim The Ryder Cup in Rome.

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SCOTT CROCKETT: Thank you very much, Guy. Before we move into questions from the audience, let me ask you a couple myself, and of course, many congratulations from me.

There's been a good deal of speculation going around in the last few days, Luke. So how does it feel now that you've officially been confirmed as Europe's Ryder Cup Captain?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, maybe not the best-kept secret, but thanks, Scott. I'm certainly delighted. I'm excited and extremely honoured to be Ryder Cup Captain.

As Guy said, I've got a lot of knowledge and past performances in The Ryder Cup that have meant so much to me, being a part of six Ryder Cups, four playing and two as a vice captain, I've learnt a lot along the way, and some of my best experiences have been on golf courses at Ryder Cups.

Yeah, I'm excited. I've got 14 months ahead of me. This is day one on the job and I'm looking forward to getting going.

SCOTT CROCKETT: As Guy said, Italy is a country that you and Diane enjoy and you visit quite frequently, is it. Does that make your captaincy more special being in Italy?

LUKE DONALD: It does. I think Italy is a beautiful country. Obviously as you said, my wife and I have spent quite a lot of time in Rome specifically, walking around the streets and enjoying the culture there.

I think it's going to be an amazing backdrop for The Ryder Cup in 2023, and it's going to make my journey, our journey together, that much more special.

So we're excited to be in Rome and that will be really fun.

SCOTT CROCKETT: You played in last year's Italian Open at Marco Simone. What sort of a test do you think that golf course will present for 24 of the world's best players next September?

LUKE DONALD: Yes, I played last year and I'll be playing again this year.

I think it's going to be an amazing golf course, an amazing venue. Lots of great vantage points for crowds to watch the 24 best players in Europe and America go against each other.

Obviously I'll be meeting with my vice captains and The Ryder Cup Committee over the next few weeks and at The

Italian Open and thinking about how we can set up the course. But I think it's going to be a great venue.

SCOTT CROCKETT: Thanks, Luke. We'll move to some questions now.

Q. Congratulations, Luke. Obviously things have been moving very quickly over the last few days. Can you just outline the processes from your point of view, when you obviously heard about Stenson, Henrik losing the role, and you taking over?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, you know, I heard the announcement and after that, shortly after that, I was told that the committee would meet again and discuss who would replace Henrik, and I found out a few days ago that I was the man for the job.

I'm very, very excited, and it's a huge privilege and an honour and I can't wait to get started.

Q. Did you have any second thoughts taking up the role, obviously being second choice, if I can put it bluntly, I suppose but any second thoughts about taking on the task?

LUKE DONALD: No, not really. To be honest, I was disappointed I didn't get the nod back in March, but sometimes we're given second chances, and I'm thoroughly looking forward to making the most of it. So I'm very, very excited.

Q. Can I just ask what your position is personally as regards the guys that have gone to LIV Golf, and whether you think they should be selected or would their presence be divisive in your team?

LUKE DONALD: Well, obviously part of being a captain is to create a strong 12-man unified team, and I'll be working on that over the next 14 months.

I'm not here really to talk about LIV and whether they will be eligible or not. That's to be seen and kind of a hypothetical question. But certainly over the next few months, hopefully we'll have some clarity on that situation and we can start making some decisions about that when they become more clear.

Q. In terms of wildcards, any change to that? Are you going to do it your way or stick with what was in place?

LUKE DONALD: Again, this is day one for me on the job, so I'll be getting with my vice captains, Thomas and Edoardo and The Ryder Cup Committee, and going

through all the possible scenarios. Obviously I want to give us the best opportunity. Golf is a game of margins and if we can give us a little edge here and there, that's going to help with the overall result come September next year.

Q. Following on from the same theme, really, I'm afraid, did you not seek clarity about who you could pick before you took the job? Because it would seem to materially affect what you can do in the role if you're limited as to who you can select.

LUKE DONALD: As you know, there's a legal situation going on. I mean, Guy can answer that more than me. But I don't think that situation's going to get resolved any time soon. So until that does, I can't really comment on it because there's no real answer.

But you know, given the opportunity to be a Ryder Cup Captain is something -- one of the greatest honours I can have in my golfing career. I'm extremely excited about this opportunity, and I plan to make the most of it.

Q. Guy, could you answer that, please? What do you think the position will be regarding a lot of these players?

GUY KINNINGS: I mean, as Luke said, the position isn't clear. There are legal appeals ongoing, and until such time the players are entitled to play; and therefore, you know, The Ryder Cup qualification process when it does get announced, then that has to be something that Luke will be working on with us.

Then the points will run, but I suspect they will be much as they are with The PGA of America, listing players that are mentioned but subject to eligibility.

As we said, that's all to be seen in the coming weeks, and we'll work around whatever is needed to help Luke in the cause as he says.

Q. Before this happened, before the announcement was made and indeed I'm going to bring up the LIV thing, I'm just wondering how much you had dallied with LIV, whether they had expressed an in you, whether you had talked to them or whether you had shown them the door.

LUKE DONALD: Well, I mentioned this last week amongst some of the press guys in Detroit, and they reached out to me very early on in the process about being an announcer, which I quickly said I wasn't interested in. They have not reached out to me with a contract to play on the LIV Tour.

So again, that was then. I want to kind of keep moving

forward. This is now. We're in the present right now, and I've been gifted this opportunity to be Ryder Cup Captain.

So this is my only goal, my only interest and I'm certainly looking forward to the next 14 months.

Q. What do you think is going to be the hardest part of your job?

LUKE DONALD: Well, the hardest part for me will be to get these 12 guys into the team room in a very motivated, unified way -- I don't think that's even going to be the hardest part but I'm excited about this journey and I'm really going to make the most of it.

You know, there's obviously some distractions going on but there's been lots of captaincies in Ryder Cups where there's been issues. We saw that last year with Pádraig and Steve with COVID. We saw that with Sam Torrance and Curtis Strange had to deal with the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

You know, these things happen and we'll just go through them as we get them and deal with them in the best possible way.

Q. I've got two questions. One to you, guy, initially, which is what's more important to Ryder Cup Europe, is it to have the strongest possible team, or is it to protect the integrity of DP World Tour and obviously the issues that are being generated by the LIV rebels, if you like. And one to Luke, as well, which one runs the risk of a withering look from John Huggan, but Ryder Cup Captains in the past have sought counsel from other sports, and I just wonder whether Sarina Wiegman might be on your to-call list after the events of the weekend.

GUY KINNINGS: You go first.

LUKE DONALD: Well, I was flying back from Detroit yesterday, so I didn't watch the match. Obviously extremely proud of what the Lionesses did to win the Euros like that. Any time I can talk to someone who is able to have such a success around a team; I think you can see such comparisons between something like the Lionesses and The Ryder Cup. Those ladies made history yesterday, and they will inspire a generation. And that's what, really, inspires me about Ryder Cup and what gets me excited about it.

I certainly remember a lot of my shots in Ryder Cups much more than I do in individual tournaments, and because we are playing for something bigger than ourselves. I'm sure I'll be reaching out to many people who have had a lot of

success in that team environment, one being Sarina.

GUY KINNINGS: In answer to your first question, obviously we're here today, all about The Ryder Cup, and we are incredibly lucky to be custodians of the extraordinary event which continues to be such a dominant event in the sport.

And clearly from our perspective, the most important thing for us is to make sure that Luke has the best, most effective team to elicit best response and the best performance by that team, and if they succeed in doing that, that helps the DP World Tour immensely.

Luke will be a fantastic captain and he will also a brilliant figure head for the Tour and an ambassador for everyone involved with the Tour, whether that's the players or all the staff who are so excited that he is in this role.

So I think the two are linked, but the focus is to do everything we can to win the Cup back in Rome next year.

Q. Away from all the LIV stuff, as you say, two teams will turn up in September next year. Having been there at Whistling Straits, how would you sum up the size of the task on your hands on a purely playing perspective to get that trophy back?

LUKE DONALD: Well, I think The European Tour and The Ryder Cup Committee have a great template in place. We have had a lot of success over the years. We've won seven of the last ten, nine of the last 13. So certainly last year's defeat was very bitter. It was tough to swallow. It was the first time I was ever on a team, on a losing team, and it's not nice.

But sometimes failure can really motivate you, and I certainly know that the players will be motivated to win back that Cup, and I will be doing everything I can to get those guys in the right frame of mind to put us in a position.

We had some things going against us, obviously COVID, and not having the support that we usually do even at an away match. So hopefully this time will be a little bit easier in terms of having a great crowd support. I'm excited for it to be in Rome. The Italian fans are very passionate and yeah, again, I can't wait to get this process started and enjoy this journey.

Q. Have you spoken to the likes of Rory McIlroy, Jon Rahm, Viktor halve, etc., who will probably we all assume play a large part of your team next year?

LUKE DONALD: I've already received a new text messages from them. Obviously I'll be talking to a lot of

the players over the next coming days, and we'll start forming some plans.

Q. Going back to what you said a moment ago, you described this as one of the greatest honours you can have in your career. Apologise to go back to the LIV subject, but does it surprise that you it's become available in these kind of circumstances and that someone could effectively walk away from this role?

LUKE DONALD: I can only speak personally. Henrik has made his decisions and he's got his reasons for it, and I'm not really here to judge that.

I'm certainly excited about the opportunity, and when I found out I had a second chance, I grabbed at it to be honest with you. This is something I've always wanted to do. I've had amazing experiences in Ryder Cups, and this feels kind of like a Lifetime Achievement Award in a way; a kind of reward for everything I've done for The Ryder Cup and for golf, and to be a part of this is truly, truly very special.

Q. You've obviously played the majority of your golf in recent seasons on the other side of the Atlantic. How much of a challenge is going to be to get to know these young guys that are going to be the new era for Europe, and how much time will you spend on the DP World Tour?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, thanks, Martin, I certainly plan to be over in Europe more, more than I usually am, and meeting the guys and getting to know them better and getting to go to dinners and all that kind of stuff.

I obviously know a lot of the players that have played in Ryder Cups and have experience but it will be important for me to get over a little bit more and catch up with these younger guys and really get them in the right frame of mind that this could be a new opportunity for a new generation to step up and make this team. I'll be trying to really persuade them to be stepping up their schedules and playing some good golf.

Q. You obviously have talents there in the Højgaard brothers, and Adrian Meronk and Guido Migliozzi?

LUKE DONALD: I think there's a lot of talent. We've obviously got a lot of guys who played last year. We have some experienced players like Thomas Pieters that has played before; Thorbjørn Olesen won earlier in the year, and some younger guys, the Højgaard twins and the people that you mentioned, too. Obviously I would love Francesco to play and make that team. To be in Italy, that would be an amazing thing for himself and for me.

Q. If you could think back to being at Whistling Straits, was there any part of you that was looking at that team and wondering if -- and this is before all the LIV stuff came out -- but wondering if this was Europe in a time of transition, looking at the experience and the age of some of the players, and going forward; that may be a challenging but exciting time to see kind of fresh blood come through?

LUKE DONALD: Well, I think there's always shifts in Ryder Cups. We saw that with the American side last year, certainly more younger guys who are coming into the mix and certain players that have been there and had a lot of experience were not on that team.

You know, I think that's just a natural shift that happens in Ryder Cup teams. And certainly we had a lot of experience in Wisconsin and certainly I'm sure they still feel like they are capable of making teams.

I think this is a great opportunity, as those players that are getting older, that newer guys can come in and have a chance to qualify. I think that's just the natural kind of shift of how it works in Ryder Cup.

So if I was The European Tour, I would be very excited about the opportunity to show how good I am and if what I've got is good enough to make that Ryder Cup Team.

Q. Given the chain of events that's happened over the last week or, so you have a shorter turnaround time than you would have if you had been announced when Henrik was announced. How are you feeling about that, and what's the first thing on the to-do list?

LUKE DONALD: Well, yeah, it's still 14 months, so I think we have plenty of time to get everything in order. There's obviously some unknowns right now and I'll have to just deal with those as those comes.

I think first and foremost, I need to sit down with the vice captains and really figure out the best qualification system going forward that will give us the best opportunity to be successful in Rome. I'll certainly be working with The Ryder Cup committee and Thomas and Edoardo on those things pretty straightaway.

Q. Straight to the point: Can a losing captain consider himself to have been successful in any situation, do you think?

LUKE DONALD: I think the captaincy will always live with you no matter what, and that's a great honour to carry and to serve and be a part of history. And I think that's what

the Ryder Cup is so special, it has a hundred years of history. Obviously every captain would like to win, but I don't think captains are really looked down upon if they lose.

Certainly, I have high expectations; I always have in my career, of being as good as we can be and being as successful as I can be, and I will try to lead this team to victory in Rome.

Q. Given how the job came your way, have you signed something like a loyalty contract to make sure to give the DP World Tour some reassurance on that? And given what happened with Henrik and how he almost seemed to be targeted on the back of being Ryder Cup Captain, can you give an unequivocal statement that whatever happens, however much money is wafted in front of you, you're going to see this out and do the job?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, well, I have signed a contract, and I intend to see that through. Yeah, I'm giving you my word that I will be here for the next 14 months. I'm excited about this opportunity, I really am. The Ryder Cup means so much to me and I'm not going to take this lightly, so I will see new Rome.

Q. Given had you Henrik played over the weekend and some of your comments you made last week, maybe you didn't mean them that way but maybe were interpreted as a swipe. I just wondered if you spoke to him personally, and what you make of how he played given the sort of circumstances going around that LIV event?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, we have spoken. Everything is totally fine between us. We're friends. And next time I see him I'll congratulate him. He obviously played great yesterday and fair play to him.

Again, I'm concentrating now on being captain, moving forward, not looking back on the past, and again, I'm excited about that opportunity.

Q. Hypothetical question, if the Ryder Cup was played next month, this coming September, you look at the players who have left and joined LIV, do you see both teams if they were to tee up next month in Rome, would they be even? Once again, it's hypothetical, do you think Europe's lost more with the players that have joined LIV, or the States have lost more?

LUKE DONALD: Well, it's hard to answer those hypothetical questions. I think our top guys against their top guys match out pretty well to be honest.

You know, I think there's room for some great young generational players to show form over the next year, and I'm glad we do have a year to find those players.

To be honest Ryder Cup has always come down to pretty close decisions. I know last year wasn't that close. Felt like the matches probably didn't show quite what the result was. They were closer than the result showed.

But Ryder Cups are always close no matter where the players are in the rankings, where they are on paper, and we'll certainly be ready come 14 months' time.

Q. Small question on the back of your answer. How much attention will you be paying to The Presidents Cup that takes place in the situation we have at the moment?

LUKE DONALD: I had a quick chat with Trevor last week, and we'll certainly be in touch. I know he's lost a few players. Again, that situation is ongoing, too.

You know, I'll be in touch with Trevor. I'm always looking to learn, and as he's filled this role of captain the last year or so as Presidents Cup captain, he'll be someone good to talk to.

Q. Guy, given what Henrik said and what Henrik signed, do you guys feel a bit letdown by him because he put you in a very difficult position a few months on.

GUY KINNINGS: We're disappointed but Henrik made his decision and we respect that.

You know, we are now focused on the future. As I mentioned earlier, we have a great team who work hard the whole time; from the moment we finish a Ryder Cup, we are immediately looking at ways we can improve and do things better. That process has been ongoing. We are now just excited to get behind Luke. Things happen for a reason. We have now got a great captain. We will get behind him and do everything to be ready to win next year.

Q. You didn't explain, not this time, anyway, you may have done in Detroit, why the idea of being an announcer didn't appeal to you. I would have thought that knowing the way you are and the way you talk and the kind of analytical approach that you have, you would have done that very well. Why didn't it appeal to you?

LUKE DONALD: Well, to be honest with you, I wouldn't have thought I would be a captain at age 45. As an individual player, you always have aspirations of playing at

the highest level. My golf has not been as good as I would have liked the last few years.

But, you know, if you asked me after Medinah whether that would be my last Ryder Cup, I would have said you were crazy. That's how fickle this game is.

I still have aspirations of competing and doing well and playing at the highest level. So you know, for me to take an announcer's role would kind of be a slight on that. That's why it wasn't appealing to me.

Q. Just on a personal level, I wonder if you can speak to your strongest memory of the six Ryder Cups you've been involved?

LUKE DONALD: Well, yeah, again, I've been fortunate to be a part of five of those have been on winning teams. The celebrations at the end are always fun. I got to play Oakland Hills last week for a corporate thing, and that was my first Ryder Cup in 2004. I remember the party in the Irish bar afterwards. That probably wasn't the highlight, but those kind of stick in your memory.

From a personal playing standpoint, maybe the 7-iron into the 17th at Medinah against Tiger and Stricker when I was playing with Sergio. Maybe the bunker shot on 17 at Medinah, too, against Bubba, and putting that first point on the board leading out Europe.

Those kind of things always stick in your mind. I've said this a couple times today, but the memories you have from Ryder Cup seem to stay with you longer than some of the individual ones. So again, I think that's just a tip of the cap to how special The Ryder Cup is and how the team aspect, how while playing for something bigger than yourself and that's why I absolutely love this event.

Q. I'm not going to take the time to look this up and I'll probably get it wrong, anyway. My recollection of Oakland Hills, seems like there was a lot of newcomers to that squad: Poulter, Casey, yourself. Do you remember how much some of the youngsters were kind of itching to get going and how Bernhard handled it all?

LUKE DONALD: Well, I always enjoyed having my first Ryder Cup under Captain Langer. He certainly crossed all the t's and dotted all the i's. I felt like I always knew where I was with him. He was very detail orientated, and I think a lot of the players, including the rookies, were very motivated to play under him.

We obviously had a very successful week that week. It wasn't very close in the end and I certainly enjoyed my

rookie experience going out my first match in fourballs with Paul McGinley and playing a couple matches. I think with Sergio and then ended up losing my singles.

But it was just a fun week. I always remember sitting next to Darren Clarke in the Opening Ceremony. He just looked over to me and said, "Once you play in one, you'll never want to miss another."

He was right. It's that kind of amazing feeling, that amazing atmosphere that the Ryder Cup brings and the history that it brings that's important, and I think, again, it's that history that will inspire a new generation of players and grow this game.

Q. Of the six captains you've either played under or served under, who do you most closely resemble, personality-wise, not looks, obviously. Not to pick on Monty.

LUKE DONALD: I suppose somewhere between a Langer and a Olazábal. I think I'm a detail-oriented person. I like to figure things out in my head without blurting them out. José was certainly more of a quiet leader, and I think that will be kind of my stance. That's my characteristics.

Between those two, I'm guessing I'll be on the phone to both of them and getting some ideas for my captaincy.

SCOTT CROCKETT: We don't seem to have anymore hands now and Luke has a couple more television requirements around the corner, so if there are no more questions, I will thank everyone for joining us today for taking the time to join Luke Donald, our new Ryder Cup Captain, and Guy Kinnings, our Ryder Cup Director.

Luke, it goes without saying, you've been involved in six Ryder Cups, and everyone on this call wishes you that it's a magnificent seven when you get to roam next year.

Thanks, everybody, very much, and we'll see you soon.

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