

The Ryder Cup

Monday, 4 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Team Europe

Luke Donald

Tommy Fleetwood

Sepp Straka

Shane Lowry

Justin Rose

Nicolai Højgaard

Ludvig Aberg

Media Conference

NICK DOUGHERTY: The Ryder Cup is almost upon us and Luke Donald is going to be here to deliver us his 12-man team that will face the United States at the end of September.

Certainly, you would say that the two-year race in between Ryder Cups is a long time for the fans to wait but for you you're always busy, but I imagine over the last 48 hours busier than most times, everything that took place on the mountain in Crans. How have you been through this period?

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: I've really tried to enjoy this journey as much as possible. It's been an amazing 13, 14 months or so.

As you said, it always comes down to those last two events, and you know, I think we had so many opportunities with certain guys playing so well last week, coming down to that last putt. It's amazing to witness that and see how much these guys really want to be a part of that team.

NICK DOUGHERTY: This is a huge role. We have half a team and we're looking for the other half, and you're the man to believe deliver it. How big of a duty is it upon you?

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: It is a duty, and I have some



MARCO SIMONE
ROME, ITALY

great contenders, you can make an argument for so many players. It's a tough choice and some people are going to be disappointed, we all know that, but I'm extremely happy with the 12 strong that we have. We are in a great position. We are a team of 12 now and I'm very excited to let you know who those are.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Your automatic six from the European rankings, how do you like how they line up?

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: What a group of superstars, some fearless golfers, and great to see Bob hold on to the last spot on the European points and great to see Matt play so well and get that last spot on the World Rankings. I'm extremely happy with those six. It's a great start.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Well, they need six teammates and you're going to start to deliver them right now so without further ado, please deliver us your first captain's pick.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: This will be his third Ryder Cup in Italy, he was part of the famous Mollywood partnership in Paris, my first pick is Tommy Fleetwood.

NICK DOUGHERTY: He's joining us right now from Dubai, Tommy great to see you. We've been lapping up at the feeling of Le Golf National, Mollywood, as well as your hair, congratulations on making a third Ryder Cup side. How is it feeling to you right now?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Very cool. Yeah, I think like playing a Ryder Cup is a lifelong goal for any of us that can play and have the opportunity, be it European or America. I've been lucky enough to play a couple but yeah, getting this one feels very, very special, and I think I was one of a group of players that stood on the last green at the last Ryder Cup and wanted the opportunity to come as soon as possible to make this team and go and try to get that Ryder Cup back.

It's been a great year trying to qualify for the team and to make the team, and for Luke to show his faith in me, I'm just excited to get with all my teammates now.

NICK DOUGHERTY: What does he bring to the side to



you?

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: He has experience, which is important but my nickname for Tommy is the "Flasher." He is a ball-striking machine. We have just seen that in some of his results, fifth at the U.S. Open, 10th at The Open Championship. I think he's the only man in the history of golf to have more than two 63s in the final round of a U.S. Open. We know his pedigree of golf, and obviously he's a very versatile player. He can play with anyone. He gets along with anyone and he's great in the team room.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Tommy, give us an idea, you mentioned obviously the idea to get back after what happened at Whistling Straits. How does that light the fire within you for what's going to come in Rome?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, of course it does. I think I look back, and there's a bunch of us that are on the team again, and I just think there was like a look about us that we all knew that we were in this together, and we wanted the opportunity again, and we were sort of planning on what we could do to do a better job of it in two years' time when we were on the flight back.

Still, I think this year, we have all tried so hard, so many of us have now been showing some really good form, very, very excited. Luke has been great throughout the journey and how communicative he's been and someone that we're all very close to.

This part has done, and now we have to get to roam and make it happen.

NICK DOUGHERTY: You were a perfect 4-for-4 in Mollywood in Le Golf National, everyone cheering your name; a different experience at Whistling Straits. How different is it from a player's perspective and the home vibe and with the home fans being there to push you along in Rome?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: The home crowd is the most amazing thing. It's the greatest atmosphere we can play in front of for sure.

Yeah, honestly I enjoy both experiences. I felt like in an away Ryder Cup, you get so close to your teammates and everybody that's involved in Team Europe, and I actually love that side of it. But there's nothing like a home crowd like lifting you on the shoulders and carrying you along. I can't wait to play in front of them all.

NICK DOUGHERTY: We look forward to seeing you in Rome and congratulations once more, Tommy.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Thanks, Luke.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Cheers, Tommy.

NICK DOUGHERTY: There we have it, our first pick of the six today.

So it's a really strong start, let's move straight into our second pick.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Okay. This is someone who will be making his very first appearance in a Ryder Cup. He showed great pedigree in finishing tied for second at this year's Open Championship. He will be the second Austrian only to play in the matches, my second pick is Sepp Straka.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Joining us from Alabama, I believe, Birmingham, Alabama, great to see you, huge congratulations.

Did you see this in your future when you started this season?

SEPP STRAKA: It was a definite goal to make the team but it always seemed so far away. So I just played some good golf and showed some form in the summer and held on to that and very honoured and happy to be here.

NICK DOUGHERTY: A rookie on the side, as well, what is the challenge for the players? Sepp's makeup, how do you think his personality is going to fit that role, a first-time experience in a Ryder Cup?

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Sepp was great in his commitment to play in the hero up cup beginning of the year, flew all the way from Maui as a champion on the PGA TOUR and flew all the way from there to Abu Dhabi, and made that commitment to come and play. I saw how much he loved that team environment. He really lapped it up, and obviously he's been on some great form of late.

Winning at the John Deere, second at The Open Championship, he would have finished sixth individually at East Lake and he's had two strong years on the PGA TOUR and couldn't leave him off.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Sepp, growing up, I'm sure you had aspirations to be able to play in a Ryder Cup, it's going to happen right now and it's because of the hard work that Luke has just talked about, the second place in The Open was pivotal as well.

What is it about your game, though, that you think has elevated you to where you are right now, a guy that

finished in the Top 15 this season on the FedExCup?

SEPP STRAKA: I think the consistency of ball-striking has been so much better over the last few years, giving myself more chances on Sunday just by the work I've done on Thursday through Saturday.

Yeah, I think consistency has been huge to kind of cap off a few more bigger finishes and the ball-striking has gotten a lot better to give myself chances at bigger venues like majors.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Huge congratulations, we also look forward to seeing you alongside Tommy and the automatic six that are going to be teeing up for Team Europe. Congratulations.

SEPP STRAKA: Thank you, see you all there.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Two picks down, Tommy Fleetwood joined by Sepp Straka who will be a rookie on the side for Team Europe.

It's going really well, Luke. It's going really, really well. You've got another winner in there as well and a guy that's a closer, when he gets a chance, he seems to deliver.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Strong start, two out of the last three majors were Top 10s. He's a great driver of the golf ball, too, which really fits Marco Simone.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Let's keep that going, pick No. 3 who is it going to be?

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: This is someone with a wealth of experience, he was a winner on the PGA TOUR this year, someone who will be playing his sixth Ryder Cup, my third pick is Justin Rose.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Justin, good to see you, huge congratulations, a sixth appearance for you. Did you see another one coming your way?

JUSTIN ROSE: Hey, Nick, hi, Luke, how you guys going, thanks for having me. Yeah, this has been a huge motivation for me.

Yeah, No. 6, makes it sound all quite smooth like I had been coming along at a decent pace but the last one definitely hurt not being a part of it and obviously my form wasn't great around that time and you can never take it for granted.

But just watching back the video there of all those amazing experiences, that's exactly why I want to be a part of this

team is to feel that again. There's nothing like being in that Ryder Cup with and being in that team room with great friends of mine and new friends and an amazing blend of a team. I'm just so excited to be part of that.

Luke was very kind in introducing me with a wealth of experience, also known as the veteran of the team, I suppose. Coming at it with a slightly different angle this year maybe about, but delighted to be part of the team, so I appreciate the faith.

NICK DOUGHERTY: I think a lot of us know what Justin might bring to the team, Luke, but from your point of view, how pivotal a role will he play not just with his own golf but what he can provide for the rest of the players.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: He's been performing great obviously and I think with my picks, you want a real balance of some experience but you want some rookies in there as well. What Justin brings, you know. You know what he has. He's been there before. He's holed those putts under pressure. He's been in those moments and delivered.

So you have that with Justin, and I could keep going on and on about his game but it was great to see him play so well and a very, very deserved pick.

NICK DOUGHERTY: We saw some great moments in those images across your career as a Ryder Cup, and also No. 1 player like Luke and major champ on as well. Give us an idea when it's happening, playing for others, where The Ryder Cup sits in terms of the experiences you've had?

JUSTIN ROSE: Winning as an individual is very rewarding, and it's generally how our mindset is programmed and we kind of build a team around ourselves to try to give yourself that buffer and that support but everyone is focused on you.

I feel like when you get into The Ryder Cup, you're focused on obviously yourself because you have to go and deliver but you're doing it for something that's bigger than yourself.

I always felt like when you put on the shirt and you have the crest on your chest, it inspires you to be the best version of yourself to trust everything you've learned through the years and sort of share those moments in a wider team.

It's just a very different mindset for an individual sport player and it's something that's incredible. I've always said, I think winning as a team is the most fun thing you can experience, there's no doubt. And the Sunday nights



we have had when won The Ryder Cup are some of the most fun I've ever had in my life. That's obviously the goal for Rome but to get to that point on a Sunday it's a lot of hard work and I guess for me that starts right now.

I'm incredibly motivated. Making the team is one thing and turning up and playing great and earning the points is what it's all about now.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Luke was nodding in approval.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Great Sunday nights on the back of a victory. Wish you all the best in pursuit of another one. Congratulations, Justin.

JUSTIN ROSE: Thanks, everybody, appreciate it.

NICK DOUGHERTY: We will done, Justin. Three of the six picks, starts with Tommy Fleetwood, rookie appearance for Sepp and sixth appearance coming for Justin Rose.

I can see why you're getting excited at the start about your 12 strong team and now you're letting us in on it and we're getting that vibe as well.

Let's move straight on to pick No. 4, Luke.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Well, this is someone who is made for the big occasions in golf. He showed that by winning The Open in 2019 at Portrush, making his second appearance in Italy, my fourth pick is Shane Lowry.

NICK DOUGHERTY: So it's an Open Champion that joins the other three as the fourth pick for captain Luke Donald and it is Shane Lowry ginning us from Dublin and hopefully not in a pub Shane, right now, celebrating being on The Ryder Cup Team once again. Immense congratulations to you. What does it mean to be back on the side?

SHANE LOWRY: Thanks, Nick, no, I'm not in a pub actually, I'm in a golf club.

I'm obviously incredibly proud, grateful, all of the above, very excited for Rome. You know, the last one hurt a little bit and I'm excited for a home Ryder Cup, and like I said, very grateful that Luke is giving me the opportunity to go there and show what I can do again.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Shane is obviously a high octane player that's delivered on the bigger stage in major championships. How much does that go into when you weigh all these decisions for picks.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: It is. Again, you want that balance, and we saw in Whistling Straits, we saw the

passion and we saw the videos of him fist-pumping those putts. We know he's a big time player, won an Open Championship, WGCs, won at Wentworth, the list goes on and on. The big occasions against the very best players, he turns up in those moments.

There's nothing quite like a Ryder Cup. This is one of the biggest moments. We saw his passion two years ago, and obviously super excited to have him part of the team because he is great in the team room as well.

NICK DOUGHERTY: I see you liking that pep talk from Luke Donald, he has a lot of kind words and we have kind words for you as well. You were a ray of sunshine in the defeat at Whistling Straits, and you spoke about it as being the best experience of your life, and, in fact, it was even difficult going back to regular golf on the back of it.

What is it about The Ryder Cup that you believe will elevate you to bring your best stuff in Rome?

SHANE LOWRY: Look we don't get to do it that often, play team golf and I grew up in a family of team sports and it's what I love. You know, the experience that I had at Whistling Straits, even though we got beaten quite heavily was creditable and something that I'll remember forever.

Like I said, I'm looking forward to a home Ryder Cup and looking forward to creating more memories. A lot of my big, big goals this year were getting to Rome and trying to win that Ryder Cup back, and everything over these next few weeks is going to be put into doing that and hopefully we can come out on top.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Congratulations, Shane, we are looking forward to seeing you. Well done.

SHANE LOWRY: Thanks, guys.

NICK DOUGHERTY: There we go, Shane Lowry also part of the side looking for redemption after Whistling Straits, we have four: Fleetwood, Straka, Rose and Lawrie.

Some real experience, and again another player that's delivered on the big stage, a powerhouse that will look for some redemption after what happened obviously in white willing straits when we are away to the United States.

Let's move on to pick No. 5.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Okay. This is again someone who will be making his Ryder Cup debut. I would say is one of the most in-form players in the world right now, carrying on an amazing contribution he made to the Hero Cup back in January, my fifth pick is Nicolai Højgaard.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Great form from Nicolai through the last four starts, three of them were a top six as Luke was saying, delighted he's joining us now.

Nicolai, great to see you, congratulations, how does that feel, a rookie on The Ryder Cup side for Luke Donald?

NICOLAI HØJGAARD: It feels amazing. It's hard to put into words at the moment. When Luke called me yesterday, I was a little frustrated after my finish in Crans-Montana, and that phone call lit my eyes, and yeah, I can't describe how excited I am. It's been a goal of mine and to be on a team with guys I've looked up to my whole life is amazing. I can't wait to be with them in Rome.

NICK DOUGHERTY: It feels like also a great investment for the future. We are still yet to see where the ceiling might be for Nicolai. For you what's he capable of on this team?

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Well, he's a young superstar. The world is his oyster when it comes to golf. We're seeing the beginning of stuff he's already accomplished at such a young age.

Nicolai, obviously part of my having six picks was I wanted some very in-form players, and what he did the last two weeks was very, very special.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Give us an idea, Nicolai, about how much you are looking forward; have you even thought about what that first tee shot might be like?

NICOLAI HØJGAARD: Yeah, I mean, I'm almost getting nervous now thinking about it. But it's a challenge I look forward to.

Again, I can't think Luke enough and the team around to putt the trust in me, and so yeah, I'm really excited. I can't wait to be on the first tee and battle it out with the teammates.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Well, we look forward to seeing you there on that first tee in Rome in a few weeks' time. Congratulations, Nicolai.

A lot of thank-yous for Luke at the moment. There you go, five: Nicolai joins Shane, Justin, Sepp and Tommy.

Last, but most definitely not least, let's do the final pick to make up the 12 that will go to Rome.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: Final pick. This is someone, again, who will be making his Ryder Cup debut. He is the

latest winner on the DP World Tour and showed yesterday in Crans that he has the potential to be one of golf's superstars. My sixth and final pick is Ludvig Aberg.

NICK DOUGHERTY: So there you have it, Ludvig joining the team as well. It's about time as well. He turned pro in June; joining us fresh off the victory yesterday, fresh off the mountain in Crans-sur-Sierre, congratulations to that and being congratulations on being part of Team Europe to head to Rome how does that feel?

LUDVIG ABERG: First of all, thank you so much. It's been quite a lot these last couple of months but it's been so exciting and I can't wait. I can't wait for Rome.

NICK DOUGHERTY: When you look at Ludvig, that's a big call for you as well, because he's just arrived but what went into that decision of what you think Ludvig can deliver on this stage.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: We obviously knew what he was doing on the college scene. You look at what he did those four years. The only comparables, are really with Viktor Hovland and Jon Rahm, what he was doing. We were obviously keeping an eye on him.

And I played with him in Detroit and was blown away by his game. He continued to progress and I challenged him to come over to Europe and play a couple weeks. He finished fifth in Czech and obviously we know what he did yesterday, four birdies in the last five holes, it was like a walk in the park for him, and obviously for someone that's so inexperienced, it just so, so impressive.

NICK DOUGHERTY: We know about your billing as an amateur, you were the No. 1 player in the World Amateur rankings when you turned professional, you were top of the university rankings, won everything from the Haskins Award to the Nicklaus award, did you it all, but did you believe this soon into your career as a professional you would be getting that phone call from Luke Donald yesterday?

LUDVIG ABERG: Probably not. If you would have told me a couple of months ago that I was going to be in these conversations, I probably would not have believed you. But obviously super, super fortunate to be in this position and I can't thank the captains and the vice captains enough.

Huge congratulations, monumental rise in the game to be part of the European side and looking forward to seeing you in Rome, Ludvig.

There we have the six, Tommy Fleetwood, Sepp Straka,



Justin Rose, Shane Lowry, Nicolai Højgaard and Ludvig Aberg.

So there we have it, Luke, there's your 12 strong team. Give us a little idea about what you're feeling about the makeup when you put them all together.

CAPTAIN LUKE DONALD: 12 is complete. I'm very excited about the next few weeks. We are all stronger when we are together. We know the 12. The plan is to putt in a great plan of action for success. They obviously know why they are going to win and the options I'm going to give them to have the best opportunity to win.

So I'm so excited, a mixture of some great talents, some experience, some rookies that will be there for the first time. It's really a great makeup for the team. I couldn't be happier.

NICK DOUGHERTY: The wait is over and I know the 12 Europeans that will face the 12 Americans when we go to Rome. Thank very much, Luke, for those picks.

Let's just remind everyone at home what the 12 players look like, from your point of view, an idea about the thought processes that go behind the picks and how they might organize in your mind, not just for the team but also for the golf course they are facing.

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, of course, I've said this from day one. There's lots of criteria that goes into making these selections. You want some experience, you want some rookies, you want people that obviously are playing in form, you want people that match up well to the golf course and that are good in the team room.

There's a lot that goes into these decisions. But I couldn't be happier with these 12 gentlemen.

NICK DOUGHERTY: It's the side that will face the strong American side in Rome. Obviously with the elation that we just saw from those six players that you've announced as well, making their way on to the side, in equal measure with despair for the ones that just missed out.

How challenging was that in terms of delivering some of the harder news to players who are going to miss out this time?

LUKE DONALD: It's extremely challenging. There's certainly a number of players that you can make a good argument to be on that team that are not on that team. Those are tough decisions. That's part of the job, unfortunately. I've been in that position myself, and I know what it feels like. It's gut-wrenching, and you feel so

disappointed.

But I spoke to them all and they took it all very well, like true gentlemen that they are that I would expect them to take it and they wished me support and good luck.

It's obviously never easy but they handled it with class.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Obviously the back end of that team is where some of the people were thinking those things might come around. It feels like there's the opportunity for an injection going forward as well, some of the youth, it has felt like a changing of the guard and in no relation to the way that golf is going in recent times, some of those older players may be getting towards the end of their career, and Ludvig, who has just arrived. Give us an idea about how easy or tough that decision was to pick a guy that when he look on paper, turned pro in June, that's a big shout.

LUKE DONALD: I really do have a lot of faith and belief in Ludvig. I think he's a generational player. He's going to be around a long time. He's going to do amazing things. If he wasn't going to play this one, he's going to play the next eight Ryder Cups. That's how good I think he is. He proved to us on Sunday with such great and determination, and he's just so cool, he goes about his business so easily. Doesn't take much time. He has a great way about him. Just he hits some of the most amazing shots. If you look at even just statistics this year, he would be the No. 1 driver in the world ahead of Rory McIlroy and Scottie Scheffler. That's pretty high standards for someone that's just come out of college.

NICK DOUGHERTY: This is how he closed it out at the top of the mountain yesterday on his way to winning on the DP World Tour, four birdies in a row.

LUKE DONALD: Just him and his caddie, Jack, they just go about their business. It looks like just another shot. Doesn't look like he's under any tension or strain, and even -- I felt like he missed some shots over the four days, and he still came out tough. He has such an array of good golf.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Without giving you too much of a pat on the back as well you did see this coming and you said to me in Detroit after playing with him the guy is going to be a superstar and certainly in that quality, delivering a win in a short space of time.

Let's share with everyone else how good he was on his way to this point, 12 years of age, World Amateur No. 1 when he turned professional in June, winning the Ben Hogan Award on two occasions, matching Jon Rahm, Arnold Palmer Cup, he obviously won the Jack Nicklaus Award, he won the Haskins Award as well in the United

States and turned pro in June.

When you look at someone like this, and we've had this conversation before, but when you see a player like this, do you see this as the potential start of a very special journey for a player like Ludvig.

LUKE DONALD: I do. Even I think it's fine to have rookies in a Ryder Cup. Look, my first one 2004, you always want that chance to shine. I think 2004 we had five rookies and you know how that result ended. It's nothing wrong in having these young, fresh guys going in there to battle. They are a strong pedigree of golfers, him, himself, Nicolai, these are the future of European golf, and you know, I couldn't be happier to have Ludvig, and he showed his metal by coming over here, he committed to coming over here the last two weeks. If he didn't perform very well, it would have been a different story but he did, he performed when he needed to.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Indeed, talking about a man who has been performing when he needed to, Viktor Hovland, another Scandinavian would very much fit that bill. How about this to close out the FedExCup the last two weeks?

LUKE DONALD: What he did at BMW, what did he shoot, 28 on the back nine. He's the FedExCup Champion. He just kept hitting down shots, making birdies in East Lake. I mean, what more can you say about Viktor. He's a big-time player.

Just fearless. That's how I see him. He just takes on every pin. He's improved his short game to no end, and you know, arguably he is one of the best players in the world.

NICK DOUGHERTY: A bit like yourself, actually, you're a baby-faced assassin some might say in golf in a sense. He looks so kind yet he's so ruthless. What kind of role do you think he'll play on the side?

LUKE DONALD: I think he is an assassin. You need your top players to make points for you for sure and he's one of our top players, of course.

I think he was a part of the losing team, he understands the hurt and the frustration from that and he'll, along with the other 11 guys, will want to avenge that. We'll be on a mission to do just.

NICK DOUGHERTY: We know the American side, they have strength, they have depth but Europe has been an absolute fortress in 30 years and success on home soil goes back even further than that.

The whole of Europe waits with baited breath for you to deliver us another one; that's what Europe is hoping for. Why do you think there's been such success when the players have been at home on European soil?

LUKE DONALD: Well, that home advantage is certainly paramount. We feed off the crowd. They are kind of our 13th man. We generally play golf courses that we're familiar with, too, that we hold DP World events on.

All those things really help with obviously the opportunity to give yourself a better chance to win. It's always small margins, we always know that but those things really help.

NICK DOUGHERTY: What's your take on the lineup for the American side?

LUKE DONALD: They are going to be very strong, they always are. They are always stronger than us on paper and in World Rankings, and obviously they had a pretty convincing win two years ago. We certainly don't underestimate them. They are going to be extremely tough opponents, but we'll be ready. We'll be ready for them.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Do you think there's an element of they have seen how successful Europe have been at coming together and creating that atmosphere within the team? Because once upon a team they had these iconic players that stood out like Tiger Woods that Phil Mickelson but didn't always manage to take that golf they played individually to the team room. Do you think they have come along in that sense?

LUKE DONALD: They certainly figured something out a couple years ago. Wasn't fun to be a part of that one.

But yeah, they have a lot of great, very strong partnerships, people that get along well with each other and that makes their team a little bit more unified than maybe some of the past, I'm just guessing.

Q. As a team we have not lost on European soil for 30 years and we have got three of the four top players in the world on our team. Does that make us favourites in your opinion?

LUKE DONALD: That's a good question. I think obviously if you look at betting forecasts, we would be the underdogs and we're fine with that. Americans are very strong. Obviously they are coming off an amazing win two years ago, but I have full faith in our team.

I'm not going to look at betting forecasts. I have full faith that we have a great strong team. There will be 12 very unified guys on a mission to kind of write our own history

as part of this Ryder Cup, and I couldn't be more proud of the team that I get to lead.

NICK DOUGHERTY: That underdog mentality is something that served you well across the years in terms of elevating their games. How do you breed that into-team room in terms of the mentality that you all want going into this Ryder Cup?

LUKE DONALD: Look, we are coming off our worst defeat ever two years ago. So you just can't be complacent. We know the Americans are very strong. We just don't ever take that for granted because they are always going to have very, very strong players.

But we'll have a good plan in place. I'll try and paint a good picture of what our advantages are and why we have a good chance of winning, and then it's up to the guys to go out there and perform. You know, I'm excited for what's to come in the next three weeks.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Linda painted us a very gritty picture of what the top of the World Rankings looks like, three of the top four Europeans are on this side. Success for us is always going to be the big stars delivering and lifting their weight. How do you look at that from the European standpoint, how important of those big stars?

LUKE DONALD: I think it always comes down to that, but the message to the team, you know, you've made the team, no matter whether you're a rookie or a superstar and you've played quite a few rookies. Making the team is great but you've got to perform and contribute. I think that will be the message to all of them.

Yeah, of course, you want your stars to step up. If they have a good Ryder Cup and win more points than they lose, you're going to have a great chance to win back The Ryder Cup.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Certainly it will be spearheaded, you think Jon Rahm obviously there, Rory McIlroy, a wealth of experience in The Ryder Cup, and for all his great moments he's had as an individual, he has transferred it to the team room and from it once upon a time being said that he thought it might be an exhibition, once he felt it was a very different thing.

Going back to 2010, first of all, at Celtic Manor and Graeme McDowell was alongside him for much of this and he was up for every moment.

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, there's nothing like The Ryder Cup when what you're playing for -- it's the true spirit of the game, it's true sport and that's why the players and the

fans love it so much.

Rory obviously figured out pretty quickly that it wasn't an exhibition; that it was something so special to be a part of.

NICK DOUGHERTY: 2012, the miracle at Medinah the year the clock stopped for Rory on his way to the course, a little late getting out but delivered points.

LUKE DONALD: You see passion that you wouldn't see out of players usually and that's what the Ryder Cup brings. You see elation and you see disappointment, too. I'm sure we'll see that later on.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Le Golf National, Poulter as his partner.

LUKE DONALD: That's the talent of the guy. He can hit shots like that. He's a freak of nature.

Him, Jon, Viktor, Tyrrell, a lot of these stars that have been playing so well and they are up there week-in, week-out, I mean, they are of course very pivotal towards this journey of ours.

NICK DOUGHERTY: We talked about all these magical moments for Rory McIlroy and the wonderful times he's had but to find out what the Ryder Cup really means to him and how difficult dealing with defeat and spurring it on, we can see everything he did on the back of losing.

Incredible to see a player that's done what Rory has done in the game of golf feel so emotively about it. I feel like you know, having been there and been a part of it, is it something that forms the rest of your career with your band of brothers as we see in this interview after having won his singles match against Xander Schauffele but the team being defeated.

LUKE DONALD: It gets me teary-eyed just looking at that. We talk about why The Ryder Cup is special, for those moments because it means so much. We are not playing for money. We are playing for pride. We are playing for our country. We are playing for our families, things that are really important. Especially when it brings out these emotions and people leave that week having the best week of their lives because of it.

NICK DOUGHERTY: The Americans tails are in the air after what happened at Whistling Straits, but certainly we'll be looking for players like Rory to deliver along with the rest of them. The Americans, a record win over a European side. What do you need from your team to deliver the outcome that you're looking for? What are you looking for in terms of performance there in Rome?

LUKE DONALD: I just want them to be unified to come together as a team. They are all successful individuals and they all bring that individuality to their games and to the golf course. But I'm just trying to create a culture for them to be successful. I think I have the 12 guys to do that. Actually, I know I have the 11 guys to do that. I couldn't be more excited.

NICK DOUGHERTY: Loving your positivity, Luke, going to wish you all the best.

LUKE DONALD: Cheers, Nick.

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