

The Ryder Cup

Saturday, 30 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Team Europe

Luke Donald

Press Conference

BRIONY CARLYON: Luke, it's a long day out on the golf course, but Team Europe have a 10 1/2 to 5 1/2 lead right now heading into Sunday. Give us your assessment of today's play.

LUKE DONALD: Listen, we are in a great position, five points ahead going into the singles at home. I like where we are. I like the feelings in the locker room. Patrick obviously made some great putts and flipped.

Listen, we are in a great position, five points ahead going into the singles at home. I like where we are. I like the feelings in the locker room. Patrick obviously made some great putts and flipped that match at the end but to be honest, we've had a lot of momentum going our way, so we are in a good position.

Q. Have to go straight in on events at the end of the match today because it seemed there was some confrontation going on between McIlroy, between Patrick Cantlay's caddie involving hat waving and putting him off, and it seems to have spilled over into the car park as well. I know you were definitely there at the 18th. I wonder if you can give us your impressions of that, clear up exactly what happened and what you think, because it seemed like that McIlroy and some of the other European players were quite upset by the caddie's behaviour.

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, obviously I was there on 18. I saw it unfold when Patrick made that putt, Joe was waving his hat. Obviously there was some hat waving going on throughout the day from the crowd for our players.

Talked to Rory. He politely asked Joe to move aside. He was in his line of vision. He stood there and didn't move for a while and continued to wave the hat, so I think Rory was upset about that.

Q. Just as a follow-up on that. We have seen video footage since from the car park of Rory clearly angry,



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pointing at somebody, and Shane Lowry comes over and appears to guide him into the back of the car. Wonder if you were aware of that or whether you were planning to speak to Rory about this?

LUKE DONALD: I was aware of it -- we all are in this event.

Q. Just wanted to know what happened on 18, in the car park, does that change your thinking where you might put Rory?

LUKE DONALD: Absolutely not. We'll go out there as 12 strong. I'm excited about my lineup, and you know, I'm not going to strategize upon those things, to be honest. That's not in my thought whatsoever. I'm going to put out the lineup that I think will be able to win back the Cup tomorrow.

Q. Does this change the dynamic of tomorrow at all? Maybe a level of aggression that we haven't seen till now, do you think it changes the nature of the event?

LUKE DONALD: Ryder Cup is always passionate. We've seen that many times over the past -- again, I will address all 12 of my guys tomorrow. I'll give them the right messaging, and they will be ready to play.

Q. Luke, I just checked the computer to make sure my memory was right, but you were in the match ahead of Ian Poulter the Saturday night at Medinah, and I'm not trying to invoke the demons or anything, but did it remind you what Patrick Cantlay did today, that late charge on a Saturday night when things look a little bit hopeless?

LUKE DONALD: Certainly they grabbed some momentum at the end. I'm not going to say they didn't. Certainly what Patrick did, holing those putts was impressive, 16, 17, and then a long one pretty much in the dark to win that match, yeah, that will give their team some hope, I suppose.

But again, we are five points up. We are in a great position. I've watched these guys over the last couple days compete with heart, with unity. They are all playing pretty



good golf, to be honest. I really like our chances.

Q. Going back to the original theme, if I may. Wonder what your opinion is of the caddie's behaviour on 18, waving his hat and refusing to move, as you say, and what you think of Rory's subsequent behaviour, just your opinion, please.

LUKE DONALD: Listen, I'll talk with Rory when I get back. I didn't see the incident personally. I saw the one on 18. Yeah, I think we always -- as I said in my speech, we always try and play with passion, play with energy, but play with respect. That will certainly be my message to the players.

Q. Just on what happened on the green at 18, do you feel that a line was crossed there with behaviour that shouldn't be crossed in golf, and is it something that you would perhaps talk to Zach Johnson about?

LUKE DONALD: Listen, we're all competitors. We all want to win, but we want to do it in the right way. You know, from what Rory told me, he did ask Joe to move. He took a long time to move. It was a little off-putting because he still had to putt. And so Rory got upset, and I understand that.

Q. Given what unfolded in the last half-hour, 45 minutes of the day, do you think you need to calm your players down or fire them up ahead of tomorrow?

LUKE DONALD: We'll get the right messaging to them. Yeah, all week, we've had a -- what happened today won't change that.

Q. A more general question, a story which was developing throughout the day. I think I know the answer to this, but I'll ask it regardless. What are your thoughts on whether players should be paid to play in the Ryder Cup?

LUKE DONALD: Absolutely not.

Q. Just as a follow-up to that question, what gives you that belief that players shouldn't be paid?

LUKE DONALD: What the Ryder Cup represents. It represents true sport. You saw it with some of the passion at the end there. It's a passionate event. It's about pride. It's about representing your country. It's about coming together as a team.

It's exactly -- it's the purest form of competition we have, and I think because of that, the fans love it. There's no extrinsic motivation involved. It's purely, purely sport.

That's what makes it so special.

Q. Can I ask you about Bob MacIntyre this afternoon, in particular --

LUKE DONALD: A golf question.

Q. -- yesterday he looked a bit dejected, even though he had half a point with Justin. How much did you have to lift the rest of the guys? It was pretty obvious that Justin took him under his wing this afternoon. In the end, it certainly worked out, didn't it?

LUKE DONALD: You know, the plan for Bob and Justin has been more than a couple days. It's been a longer one, and I've got to give full credit to what Justin has done. Really did take him under his wing.

It's important for someone with as much experience as Justin to do what he did with such a young rookie. Bob was disappointed yesterday, he was, because he believes in himself. He struggled on the greens, and he struggled a bit early on in this match, too, especially through the first 12 holes. And then he got going and made that birdie putt on 13, amazing up-and-down on 15.

Q. Birdied the first hole the last two days?

LUKE DONALD: Birdied the first hole, that's true. A lot of world-class players have missed that fairway, and Bob has hit the fairway twice under extreme pressure as a rookie. Very proud of Bob.

Q. Do you notice a difference in him?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, he had more of a smile on his face. Certainly in the practise days, he didn't feel very comfortable with his game. You could tell he was searching a little bit. But he's gotten more and more comfortable every day, and he's certainly come into his element and really helped the team out this afternoon.

Q. Taking you back to the 18th scenes, as McIlroy got into the car, he's reported as saying, "This can't happen, this can't happen, it's a disgrace," amongst some other colourful language. Would you agree with him in those comments, and will you support McIlroy going into tomorrow's first tee?

LUKE DONALD: Look, we love this event because of the passion, but we want to do it the right way. Obviously Rory felt like the line was crossed on the 18th green. Again, I will address it with him when I see him. I wasn't there personally in the car park, but when I get back I will talk

with him.

Q. There was quite a heated exchange between Shane Lowry and Justin Rose with Joe LaCava after the incident on 18th green. Is there any part of you that's pleased to see your players backing each other up?

LUKE DONALD: Of course they have their backs. Again, we are a big family this week. We support each other.

Q. This event has occasionally boiled over like this. Have you talked to anyone about how to handle that from a captain's perspective, maybe past captains?

LUKE DONALD: Well, I have two past captains as vice captains, so their knowledge, their help this week has been invaluable, and leading up to this event, I talked to a lot of past captains as well, not necessarily on what you're talking about, but they have been a big help throughout this whole process.

BRIONY CARLYON: Thank you, Luke, for your time.

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