

Horizon Irish Open

Wednesday, 6 September, 2023

Straffan, County Kildare, Ireland

The K Club, Ryder Course

Luke Donald

Press Conference

TOM CARLISLE: Delighted to be joined by European Ryder Cup Captain Luke Donald here in the media center at the Horizon Irish Open. Returning to The K Club, obviously some amazing memories, not least the 2006 Ryder Cup here when we had that amazing result under Ian Woosnam.

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I just got finished playing nine holes in the Pro-Am. Brought back a lot of memories, my caddie, Rafa and I, I reminisced on quite a few of the stories and Casey making that hole-in-one on 14 and telling the conversation that myself and Sergio had on 17 tee. All those things come rushing back. It's nice to come back to a place that you go to the locker room and see all those pictures.

Obviously in my situation, to see that success, is a great thing, and yeah, enjoy this lovely Irish weather, as well. It's been a good morning.

TOM CARLISLE: That was Ryder Cup past, and we're focused on The Ryder Cup future, going to Marco Simone, how excited are you as you finalise the team and we've got a few of the guys here as well.

LUKE DONALD: It's a long build up trying to get the best four guys that you think are going to be ready to take on that challenge, and I'm excited where we are with the team. I think it's a very strong team.

Excited for this practise trip to come up to get everyone together in a team room. Start that process of coming together as a team. We are always stronger as a team, and yeah, the days are ticking away. Some last-minute preparation stuff but we are in a great spot.

Q. On that trip, the week before Wentworth, how important was that to you to get everybody together?

LUKE DONALD: Well, it's the first time we've ever done it as a team. It was something that I certainly wanted. I was very adamant that whoever was on that team was going to be there. I didn't want anyone to kind of skip out on it



unless they had specific reasons for that.

I think it's a great opportunity for us to come together. It's different to two years ago. We obviously only had one week between qualifying and now, and part of the reason to have qualifying early was to have that opportunity to go see Rome. There's a couple players who had not played the course; that's important.

But any time you can get the guys together and start thinking about pairings, you can start creating that unity in the team room, I think is really, really important.

Q. Seven days later, you lose Rory to a stag do in Mykonos. How concerned are you, if at all? Have you spoken to him about it?

LUKE DONALD: We spoke at his house maybe ten days ago, just catching up with him and it did come up. Rory, it's not like Rory is 22 or 21. He understands. There's nothing wrong in going out and have some fun with your friends. But I think he's got wise enough shoulders to know that he won't go crazy, so no concerns there.

Q. You obviously picked Shane and Pádraig was gushing about Shane yesterday. What exactly does Shane bring to The Ryder Cup team on and off the course?

LUKE DONALD: Well, he's very passionate. He loves those team atmospheres. I think he grew up around team sports when he was younger. You know, you never walk into a room and see Shane on his own. He's always got people around him. He's got good chat. He's got good energy, good passion.

And then golf-wise, he's proven himself in many big occasions, championship winner at Wentworth, he won the WGC. The biggest moments, he's able to deliver. And we saw some of that obviously at Whistling Straits with that passion, holing putts when he needed to.

Part of the process of having six picks, some of them you have to pick on just knowing that they have been there and you know that they have been in those situations. Shane



certainly fits into that category.

Q. Is Rory expected to take a main leadership role this time around?

LUKE DONALD: I talked to Rory about this and how he feels his role should be. Personally, I want him to lead with his golf clubs and I want him to lead with the focus he shows for The Ryder Cup. If he win, can go out there, and if he's playing four or five matches and win three or four of those; I think lead by example and lead with his golf clubs.

Q. In terms of the partnerships, are you looking to kind of partner more experienced guys with the rookies or might we see a couple of rookies go out together at some stage?

LUKE DONALD: Again, I've still got three weeks to finalise those and think about those. The practise trip will obviously be important for that. I've obviously had lots of thoughts over the last 12 months with people that I think and thought would be on that team. Some are in that team and some aren't.

The process really starts now. I'll be sitting down with my vice captains this week to figure out some of those partnerships but yeah, in general, it's a big moment for a rookie. Sometimes to have some experience next to you, is comforting and that can be very important. Whether two rookies go out together, that's certainly a possibility as well.

I think these days, the young guys seem fearless. They seem to go out there and are able to compete at the highest level no matter how much or how little experience they have.

Again these decisions are still kind of ongoing but it could go either way.

Q. Just wondering, Seamus Power, obviously injured this week and cannot play. Is he one of the players you spoke with?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I called Seamus on Sunday. He appreciated the call. Seamus understands that his form hasn't been as good lately.

Obviously got off to a great hot start. Loved his commitment coming all the way from Maui all the way to Hero Cup and got to know him a little bit better that week, and saw some of the talent that he has that led him to so much success last year in the fall.

He's obviously a great talent, and you know, he understood that he had not played well enough and had some injury

issues. Obviously I spent the week with him in The Scottish Open, we were in the same house, and devastating that he had a hip injury. Felt something there and couldn't play.

But then looked like he was okay for a span before The Open and played there, but obviously there's some ongoing problems. Hopefully he sorts those out. I told him then, you're definitely good enough to be in the next Ryder Cup Team, so that should be your goal.

Q. Harrington said yesterday he got a call from you as well. Could you just explain that call?

LUKE DONALD: I mean, he was my last captain. There was certainly at times this year where he was showing so much form and being up there, he maybe didn't finish off the events as he would have liked, but I think what he's been doing at his age, competing with a lot of the guys that are on the team, is very, very impressive.

I think he understood as a captain the high performance level you need to obviously get -- for him to warrant a pick. He knew that he didn't do enough. But out of respect as my captain, I wanted to tell him that there were times I considered him to be on that team because of his play.

Q. And the other thing, when Shane was in here, he mentioned the fact that Whistling Straits was pretty much a rallying cry of what happened there. Is that something that you will focus on or will you even talk about the past?

LUKE DONALD: I think it's important to learn from the past. Certainly as a team, you saw a lot of reactions, Rory and Shane and Poults and they took it hard. That stays with us. That hurt is there. It certainly will come up a little bit. It's certainly not a focus, but we want to regain the Cup, and we know we're up against it with a very strong team. We understood how we were beaten pretty heavily two years ago, and it's my job and the 12 guys and the vice captains to try and turn that around.

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