

# Italian Open

Wednesday, 14 September, 2022

Rome, Italia

Marco Simone Golf & Country Club

## Luke Donald

### Press Conference



STEVE TODD: Good morning, everybody, I am very pleased to be joined by Luke Donald, of course, our European Ryder Cup Captain.

Luke, welcome to the DS Automobiles Italian Open here at Marco Simone, a course that's going to be very significant in your life across the next 12 months. I know you enjoy visiting Italy as a family. Just give us your thoughts on being here at Marco Simone in a professional capacity. You played last year, but some thoughts on the golf course and some of the changes that you've seen across that time.

LUKE DONALD: You know, obviously delighted to be back here. This is always a special place. My wife and I have been to Rome many times, and my second time playing The Italian Open here. Played last year.

Played a few holes yesterday and saw the golf course on Monday, too, and it's in tremendous golfing shape. Been hear a lot of praise from the players what amazing condition the golf course is in. I think it's going to be a great week.

We saw we had a good championship last year but very excited about all the players that have come to support me and the tournament this week. You know, Rory and Viktor and Francesco and Matt Fitzpatrick, and the list goes on and on. It's been a busy week for me, sitting in on lots and lots of meetings but very excited for the tournament to get started tomorrow.

STEVE TODD: The journey of The Ryder Cup already being underway for a little while for yourself behind the scenes, but in many ways was a real milestone last week with the start of the qualification campaign at the BMW PGA Championship. You must be delighted with the start that some of your players made, the top three in particular and obviously Francesco as well.

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, the road to The Ryder Cup to Marco Simone started last week at Wentworth, obviously a huge event for the DP World Tour. Couldn't be happier

with how the tournament finished. Shane Lowry, obviously coming out on top. Rory McIlroy having a chance on the 18th. Jon Rahm playing an amazing right now on Sunday.

I got to play with Francesco Thursday and Friday and was very impressed. His game seems good as ever. His tee shots were very straight and down the middle and it was great to see him have a good, solid week and a Top-10. He seems very focussed. His injury seems to be behind him and he's very focussed on his game.

Overall it was a very nice start to The Ryder Cup campaign.

**Q. First of all, can I just ask you a question about the Queen and the Queen's passing, and you've been such a high-profile athlete in the U.K., did you have any special memories with her that you can share with us?**

LUKE DONALD: I got to go to Buckingham Palace in 2004 after our first Ryder Cup victory in Detroit. I was in a room with her. I wouldn't say we had a one-on-one but she certainly passed through, and was able to be in her presence. Special lady. We saw the reaction from her sad passing.

But I think everyone on reflection saw her as an amazing lady that dedicated her life to serving her country and the duty, and I think that was shown in just the reaction from everyone who was there. It was a strange day on her passing but I think we'll look back on her life and celebrate what an amazing lady she was and how she ruled with such dignity and duty and selfless duty to our country.

**Q. Coming to Marco Simone, you played here last year and you did a few holes. What your feel about this course and how does it compare with other Ryder Cup courses that you've played both on this side of the Atlantic and on the other side?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, it's quite a big golf course. There are some long holes out there. You know, whether it's similar to, I mean, I heard a few players thought it was



somewhat similar to a Celtic Manor. Quite a few drivers off the tee but beautifully presented. When that fescue grass slows up, the different colourations between the fairways and the rough.

I think it has sort of a stadium feel a little bit like Paris, a little bit like Celtic Manor where you can create some great vistas for the fans. I think it's going to be a great experience for the people who come here and support Team Europe to get behind us and cheer us because they will have a great view of the golf.

**Q. Where do you see the key parts of this course as far as your team and what is the action going to be?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, the action is always throughout the whole course, really, but it has some interesting holes. 16 obviously is going to be a potentially drivable par 4. That's going to create some great options with fourball and foursomes, an exciting hole.

11 is another one that potentially some of the longer hitters could drive as well. We are looking at the golf course and we won't make too many changes. Home captain, you're always looking for advantages for your team and statistics and making the golf course if the our players better than their players.

**Q. Again, where are the changes going to come?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, I'm not going to give away much, between myself and Thomas Björn and Edoardo are definitely going to take a deep dive into the statistics. It's still early in the qualifications but we have a sense of what the Americans are good at, what we are good at, and you obviously try to shape the golf course to giving ourselves a small advantages. The teams will be very similar to be honest on paper but you try and get smaller advantages that can make a difference at the end.

**Q. You mentioned you've been busy with meetings this week. Is this your first time here since you've been named captain?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, first time here.

**Q. And what have those meetings been and can you provide us any details, and what will you be looking at the rest of the week in terms of captain's duties?**

LUKE DONALD: We went through a walk-through on the golf course early Monday. I was at the team hotel Monday afternoon looking at the spaces. Obviously it's a big week with lots of different functions. Trying to create the best atmosphere for The Ryder Cup and both teams, where we

are staying, it's important for the guys to compete at the highest level. That was Monday.

Tuesday, I played a few holes and got a little practise in, and in the afternoon I met with Loro Piana going over the clothes. Again, very important to look good and feel good. I had dinner with some of the Italian Federation members and some of the key people from the golf course.

This morning I was going through this space here, where the locker rooms are going to be, how they are going to be dressed, all the facilities for the team rooms and all that kind of stuff. There's a lot of planning and things that go into creating The Ryder Cup. I certainly don't just turn up in 12 months and hope I have a good team and hope for the best. It's a lot of little details, and good job that I'm a detail-oriented person, so I'm enjoying the process.

**Q. Any information that was passed on from Henrik Stenson?**

LUKE DONALD: Obviously Henrik had had a couple meetings with Edoardo and Thomas and some of that was shared with me. But it was still pretty early in the process.

**Q. Inevitable question about eligibility in terms of the LIV players. Where does it stand at this point? Is it open to everybody?**

LUKE DONALD: Nothings that really changed since I was appointed back in August. We're still a little bit in limbo. We don't know what's going to happen with the lawsuit so I'm trying to not really put too much energy. Once we get a clearer picture, I can give you better answers.

**Q. What is your definition of legacy for young golfers who will be selected for The Ryder Cup, and what is your opinion about new The Hero Cup and the annoyance for the Ballesteros family about this?**

LUKE DONALD: First one, legacy about the young players, I think there's an opportunity every year for young players to come through and make the team. It would be my goal and an opportunity to try and make it clear how big of an event The Ryder Cup is.

I think my first Ryder Cup back in 2004, I understood it was a big event but once I got to play it, I didn't really understand the enormity of it; the impact it has on golf, impact it has on encouraging a new generation of players to take up the game, to create history. It's an event like nothing that we play week-in, week-out because we come together as a team and put our individual assets to the side and come together to create something that's bigger than just ourselves.

That will be my message to some of the young players who see a great opportunity to create that legacy. Obviously I got to play with a few the last few weeks. I get to play with Guido Migliozi tomorrow and Adrian Meronk, another guy that just won on The European Tour. I'm excited to see their games but I'll be keeping my eye on some of the younger, exciting talent to try to make this team.

The second part, The Hero Cup is an exciting new team event that is based off the Seve Trophy and EurAsia Cup. It's my understanding The European Tour have been in touch with the Ballesteros family and those conversations have been going, and we want to include them as much as possible in that event.

**Q. What do you think about Edoardo and you already work with him, and what do you think of his work with the stats?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, Edoardo played a Ryder Cup together in 2010 at Celtic Manor. I've always been friendly with Edoardo and his brother, Francesco, obviously, but gotten to know him better the last six weeks or.

So he's very hard-working and very diligent and he's had some success with his statistics and some of the players he's been working with, Matt Fitzpatrick, Viktor Hovland, some guys over here, John Smith, I believe, amongst a few other people. His work is great. I've certainly been leaning on him quite heavily. Again, he's very diligent. He comes back to me with answers straightaway and he's been a pleasure to work with.

**Q. You play lots of Ryder Cup, and also in the vice captain role. What kind of captain do you think you are?**

LUKE DONALD: I think I've tried to pick up things that I like from the captains that I've been under. I think you base your captaincy on the characteristics of yourself. I've always seen myself as someone that always does what he says he does. Has a lot of integrity.

Also, looking back on my personal career, I've had a lot of ambition. Some people probably wouldn't have thought looking at my game early on in my career as a professional that I would have been able to achieve what I achieved. I think that ambition of hard work, perseverance, trying to find little areas where you can improve, where you can always keep getting better, that's kind of the style that I'll be bringing to my captaincy.

I feel like I'm well-liked and trusted amongst the players. You know, again, I'm very excited to get going on this

journey and try and be a leader for them.

STEVE TODD: Luke, thank you for joining us. We wish you well both on and off the golf course this week.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports