

# DP World India Championship

Tuesday, 14 October, 2025

New Delhi, Delhi, India

Delhi GC

## Luke Donald

### Press Conference



**DP WORLD**  
**INDIA CHAMPIONSHIP**

THE MODERATOR: We're delighted to welcome to the media centre here at the DP World India Championship Luke Donald, victorious European Ryder Cup captain. It's your first time playing here in India. You're back to your day job. How does it feel moving from that Ryder Cup arena and playing golf again?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, a different feel. Obviously the last few years has been a lot of Ryder Cup and especially the last few weeks. What we did in New York was amazing, but yeah, back to the day job now a little bit, and excited to be here in India for the first time. I've travelled around the world quite a lot with golf but never been to India. When I had the opportunity to come, it seemed like a great opportunity, a couple weeks after the Ryder Cup, to come experience this wonderful country.

**Q. You arrived here this morning; you've not had too much time to look around --**

LUKE DONALD: No, we had a few travel delays getting here, so we were meant to get in last night and ended up getting in this morning.

Just did some practice for a few hours. I haven't seen the course yet. I've seen pictures. My caddie walked around and sent me some pictures yesterday. Obviously a very unique golf course. It's very close to the centre of town and unique in terms of how narrow it is. It's an interesting, very old-school kind of golf course in terms of it's not just stand up there and hit drivers. A lot of the guys won't bring their driver out of the bag this week, I'm sure.

A very unique sort of challenge this week, which again, I think for someone my age and how far I hit it, maybe that's a good thing.

**Q. After all the highs of the Ryder Cup, how much time did it take for you to transform your mindset towards playing tournament golf? What's the process that you had to go through for that?**

LUKE DONALD: To be honest, I'm not sure if I have. Yeah, it happened after Rome, and it's kind of the same

with this one.

The captaincy really does -- the lead-up to the Ryder Cup, you're spending five or six weeks just thinking about all kinds of different things, partnerships, pairings, the golf course, the gifting. There's just so much that goes into it that your mind is kind of clogged. I've had many nights where I've woken up with Ryder Cup dreams and things where I had forgotten my radio one night and there's still one game out on the course and I was panicking and I was trying to get to the game. Just things like that. It just takes a little bit of time for you to settle down.

I think actually coming here, playing a tournament will actually help. It will get my mind more back on what I need to do this week.

It's a fun problem to have after a win in the Ryder Cup, but I'm excited to get back to playing.

**Q. If I could also ask you, this course is absolutely suited like someone like you, a great iron player and you don't need to take out driver on any of the holes. Could you just talk about that part of it, how this golf course could be what you are looking for as a player?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I think modern-day golf, you don't think about course management too much these days. You're just trying to hit the ball as far as you can and hope you can get as close to the green as you can and that gives you a better statistical option to make birdies, whereas this course, the penalty for missing the fairways -- I haven't been out there, but I've been told it's quite severe. It really makes you think.

So you're having to dial back and hit clubs that will give you a better chance to hit the fairways, some long irons, rescues, less than driver. Again, I think it creates a little bit more thought process, a little bit more course management. You've got to plot your way around a course like this, and again, going back to my good days playing, those are the courses I really loved, the Hilton Heads, the places like that.

Again, excited to go out and play it tomorrow in the



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morning in the pro-am. I'm pretty sure -- I haven't played it yet, but I have a good sense of what it's going to feel like.

**Q. It's been quite a while since you really won. Are you now past the stage in your career that winning or losing is not that important and it's just go out and have fun and play the Tour as long as you can before you move on to the Senior Tour or whatever? Does that come into your thinking?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I always still believe in the back of my mind that I can put four rounds together and have a chance to win. I think in the last few years, looking at my results, my expectations have definitely changed. But I still like to work at it. I like to see if I can improve. I like to put myself in those situations where you have good rounds and you feel those tensions, the energy flowing again, and it's just nice to kind of experience that.

Yeah, it's always going to be hard for me to win. I certainly haven't put enough time in individually in my game in the last six months, especially leading up to New York. But yeah, I still feel like there's some good stuff in there, and you never know, especially around a course like this.

**Q. Also, you have been leading for the last four years a group of really talented players and interacting with them. At this stage, do you still think you can learn from these guys, things that they bring to the table as players? Is there anything you can add to your repertoire of golf?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, definitely watching them -- you watch a lot of golf as a captain during the matches, and it's impressive how good these players are from both sides. You hope you learn a little bit from just being around great players like that, but it also makes you a little bit envious that maybe they have shots that I don't have anymore.

But I think even when at the height of my career I was able to win tournaments even when I didn't have my best and be very smart about my golf and how I practised. I think there's still some benefit to having that experience, and maybe around a course like this, that might come into play a little bit more this week.

**Q. I wanted to ask you, there's a perception that your style is very calm, buttoned up, cerebral may I say, but every athlete has moments where tensions get to them on the course, the emotions take over. Can you think of the last case where you were genuinely frustrated?**

LUKE DONALD: Every day I get frustrated on the golf course. I feel like I should be hitting shots, and then a bad one will come out and I just don't know where it comes

from.

Yeah, I get frustrated on the golf course all the time. Yeah, maybe don't outwardly project it as much as some other players, but there's a lot of tension and a lot of -- there's still that willingness and wanting to play well and hit good shots always.

**Q. A little more of a fun one: If let's say Rory were to take your crown someday, maybe be the next captain of the Ryder Cup, what qualities do you think would make him such a good fit possibly?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, just the fact that he loves the Ryder Cup more than anything. He made it quite evident that winning an away Ryder Cup would really be the icing on an amazing year that he had this year.

Yeah, he loves what it represents. You've seen the emotion from losing to winning. Anyone that has that passion for a Ryder Cup I think would make a good captain.

**Q. This question probably you would have answered many, many times in your career, but I'm just curious to know what your answer would be at this stage of your life and career. World No. 1, never a major, what would your answer to that be?**

LUKE DONALD: Would I switch it?

**Q. How would you summarise it?**

LUKE DONALD: How would I summarise it? Yeah, obviously I worked very hard in my career to try and win majors. Again, I came very close quite a few times, many top 10s and had some chances but never got it done. Yeah, certainly disappointing.

Also to be able to say that I was one of the best golfers -- the best golfer in the world for over a year -- I think being World No. 1 there's an amount of consistency needed to get there. It's a body of work for two or three years of really consistent results, and I think yes, disappointed not to have won a major, but to get to World No. 1, that's a high level of consistency, and I think a lot of players value consistency as well. Certainly it's something I'm very proud of.

**Q. How do you react to the term when you are called the greatest captain of Europe? Also, will you be there for the 2027 edition of the Ryder Cup as well?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, I'm trying to still enjoy this one, whether it be a captain or whether I'm not a captain. If I'm

not a captain in two years' time and the captain wants me to be there, then I'm sure I would be happy to help him in any way he wanted.

Yeah, it's pretty humbling when someone says you're the greatest captain. Maybe it's a little bit of a reaction in the present moment, but I certainly -- I've given a lot to it. I'm very happy with the results that came with it, but you need those 12 players. You need the back room teams. You need the vice captains. You need so many others to make that happen.

Certainly I play a role, but I play a small role in terms of a larger picture. I certainly couldn't do it without the amazing support we have behind me.

**Q. Can you walk us through your process of preparation? Are you comfortable at a place you've never played at before, and the challenge that presents, especially if that process has changed over the years from when you were at your peak to now finding new ways to win? What's that like if you can share some insights?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I don't think -- the preparation doesn't change too much. It's just the amount of time that I put in is probably a little bit less than when I was at my peak. Again, my focus has been really the Ryder Cup for the last three and a half years.

Yeah, you look at a golf course and you see what the demands are and you try and work on certain things, so I hit more long irons on the range last week, a little bit more rescues, having an understanding that you're going to hit those off the tee a little bit more.

But my preparation, again, I try and be very diligent about what I'm doing in terms of all parts of my game. I don't practise as much, but I try and practise very efficiently. I go to the course or the range with a plan, and I stick to that plan and really try and figure out what the course demands and how I can get the best and most out of myself.

**Q. You're an experienced campaigner with the Ryder Cup; there's a focus now on promoting golf in emerging markets. India post-COVID especially has picked up a lot of leagues. Do you think that there is a place on the calendar for a Ryder Cup, something similar along those lines, where a lot of emerging markets outside of the U.S. and Europe can show up and prove their place in the world?**

LUKE DONALD: Have that as a venue for the Ryder Cup; is that what you're asking?

**Q. Players outside of Europe and the U.S. in emerging markets have a Ryder Cup style of play or a Ryder Cup style of tournament, something like the EurAsia Cup?**

LUKE DONALD: The EurAsia Cup, yeah, we've had some of those events before. I think the fans and the golfers love match play. I think it's unique, and to have something similar to the Ryder Cup, the Presidents Cup that included maybe a little bit more Asia-centric could have some great value.

It would take some time. It would take some time. I think the Ryder Cup is considered one of the greatest team sporting events because of the history. But certainly I think have the fan base, have the opportunity to do something like that, yes.

**Q. Luke, having had an amazing set of talent at your disposal for the past two Ryder Cups, you still had to kind of instill that winning mentality. As a captain you needed to motivate them. I'm sure many Indian junior golfers as well as those in the region around Asia would like to hear from you as to how do you produce a winner?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, I disagree a little bit. I don't think my job is to motivate them. These are highly motivated players. The Ryder Cup means a lot, and my job is to kind of create a little bit of cohesion, make sure we bring all these players together under a common theme and get them inspired to make them want to win.

We talk a lot about our history. We talk a lot about the players that came before us. We talk about our role as ambassadors of the game to inspire the next generations.

I think the Ryder Cup has very deep meaning for a lot of these players, and it brings out the best in them. So that's my job, really, is to kind of create that culture, that environment, where they feel that they can compete at a very high level because of what's at stake.

**Q. Talk about the possibility of junior programmes in the other parts of the world; can that be done somehow?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I hope all the juniors watching Ryder Cups were inspired. I think that's our role, obviously, to inspire those juniors to someone that might not have thought about golf, maybe was more into cricket and suddenly watched the Ryder Cup and thought, maybe I could do some golf as well.

Obviously we would love -- we love those stories, those stories of where how people who have watched the Ryder

Cup, watched the emotion, watched the energy, that's what inspired them to get into the game.

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