

PGA Championship

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Quail Hollow Club

Luke Donald

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Luke Donald is with us at the 107th PGA Championship. A nice 67 for you on day one. How would you summarize your performance?

LUKE DONALD: Obviously very pleased with the score, bogey-free in a major. Someone just told me it was the lowest first round in a major I've had since 2004 or something. So you know, obviously I've been trending with all the missed cuts coming into this week.

But no, it was a pleasant surprise. I got off to a really nice, steady start. I hit a bunch of fairways on the front nine which always makes me feel good about my game.

I didn't hit a ton of greens today but my putter was really good. The greens surprise -- not surprisingly but they were infinitely quicker this morning first group out than they were the last few days.

But I adjusted very well to them, and I made a lot of good, solid putts out there.

Q. What's it like to go through a press conference like yesterday when question after question is about Jon Rahm's game or LIV players' game or anybody's game but your game?

LUKE DONALD: Well, that's what I signed up to. You know, as I said, I'm here only because I'm captain of the European Ryder Cup Team. I wouldn't be in this field otherwise. It's a nice invitation and a perk that the Ryder Cup Captain gets.

I understand that. I understand that my game isn't where it used to be, and that is the focus. So it really doesn't bother me one bit.

Q. I want to know how much fun you were having out there on the course today, and what's it like maintaining a healthy balance between keeping an eye on potential Ryder Cup players, and of course, your own game, as well, which is looking really good at the moment?

LUKE DONALD: Well, it's always fun, bogey-free in a major championship on a course that you wouldn't have thought would be ideal for me.

Yeah, it was. It was nice. I feel like I've putted reasonably well the tournaments I've played this year but not seen much go in. And to see them go in, dropping, was a lot of fun.

But the balancing thing, yeah, I don't find it -- I found it more tricky the first go around for the captaincy for Rome. I had less time to prepare for that captaincy.

This time, I've had a longer time, and obviously second go-around, I'm sort of familiar with what's going on and what I need to do and the time frames and all that stuff. I've been able to balance it quite well. It's been nice to play a minimized schedule. I still love competing. I love being a competitor. But still giving myself plenty of time to be prepared for New York.

Q. Not sure if you checked the leaderboard, but Keegan is 3-under. Are you turning this into your own Ryder Cup preview duel here?

LUKE DONALD: If it's tied 14-14, are you talking a playoff? I'll grab the trophy and go back to Europe.

Keegan is top 20 in the world. He can have one good week out here, win, which he's very capable of, and he's absolutely in the conversation of being a playing captain.

I don't think that's quite in my future, but Keegan, we live very close together. I see where he practices, and he practices very hard. He's still one of the top players in the world.

Q. A bit of a nuts-and-bolts question here. When you're approaching a green, knowing there's a good chance that you may miss it and have a chip, how are you setting yourself up to have a good chip upcoming, and trying to get up-and-down on some of these holes?



LUKE DONALD: I think in terms of this course, the greens, as I said, they got quite quick today. Much quicker than they were, and they have a lot of slope.

So your aim points from the fairway -- depends if you're attacking it from the fairway or the rough. But you know, if you're out of position, then you're really trying to put yourself into a place where you feel like you can get up-and-down, more so here than you would most places because of the severity of the greens.

So I think I did a good job of that. I just kept it sort of where the up-and-downs were very manageable. But you know, if you're in the fairway, then you're just trying to make pretty good, aggressive swings to the right sides of the holes.

Q. What in your mind is a manageable up-and-down? How do you define that?

LUKE DONALD: I was disappointed on 18 to hit in the right bunker. I thought that was a bad miss but wasn't as bad as I thought. Had a little bit of breeze into me but I still needed to hole an 8-, 9-footer for par.

You're not trying to think too much over the ball on your second shots about, oh, I just don't want to be here. You're trying to be as specific is what you're trying to do and where you're trying to hit it. I think more so when you're out of position off the tee, that's when you start thinking about, okay two, three shots ahead: This pin is here; if I can get it to the right side of the green, I'm chipping up the hill. Something like that. And that's going to give me an opportunity to get up-and-down.

Q. When was the last time you played as well as that?

LUKE DONALD: Testing my memory. Can hardly remember what I did last week let alone this week.

You know, again, I only hit nine greens today. So I wouldn't say it was amazing but there was definitely highlights today that were an improvement on previous events. More fairways. A bit better driving. Iron play was decent.

But the putting, obviously, was very key and the short game. I got up-and-down and made good putts when I needed to, and that was sort of the key to my round today.

Q. There's already a few complaints about mud balls and the decision not to lift, clean and place. Where do you stand on that?

LUKE DONALD: I didn't have any mud balls, per se.

When it starts to dry out even more, you could get some this afternoon. It was tricky. I was a little bit surprised yesterday when I heard the news yesterday evening just because of how wet it was, but it had dried out quite well, to be honest.

Two times I had to take casual relief from the fairway, which helped. You know, you can clean it. The rest of the time, it was just sort of a watery, muddy residue on it, at times. It wasn't really lumps of mud, which that's when it gets very dicey.

Q. To go back to the playing captain, just generally speaking, when we talk about Keegan possibly doing it, what are the demands of doing both of those jobs, which seem really hard?

LUKE DONALD: I think it's more the demands during the week. If you're playing yourself, you're going to be on the golf course and so you're going to, you're going to have to give the choice-making, the decision-making, to someone else.

You know, then obviously you have to instruct, I guess, that person, you know, what to look for, what you're trying to accomplish. And if you're trying to play as well, that's a little bit distracting, I suppose.

I don't think there would be much distraction up until the Ryder Cup. It's just the week of. It's just you're not watching the guys. But you do have assistant captains, vice captains, to do all that and relay that message to you. It's just, yeah, an extra step in what you wouldn't usually have to deal with.

Q. As a man of a certain age, you were probably up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom anyway, but if not, what time did you have to set the alarm for the 7:00 tee time?

LUKE DONALD: I think I made it through the night last night.

But I was -- 4:40 this morning my alarm went off.

Q. How did you feel about being first off? Are you okay with that?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I was in the first group last year. Got a solid pairing with two major champions. I suppose it's a nice little honor to hit the first tee shot to get the tournament underway. I was good with that. The greens were very nice the first nine holes, and the pace of play was quite nice, too.

Q. This clearly is an unusual way for you to prepare for a major championship, but is there anything that might have helped you play today, the way you played today, in the fact that you were not able to prepare as you would have wanted to?

LUKE DONALD: Playing last week. Probably the first time this year I had two weeks in a row. Playing a minimized schedule sounds nice but it's quite difficult to get in a competitive mode. So you know, playing one week, three weeks off, one week, you know, all that stuff, hasn't been very easy for me. It's like stop, start.

It's nicer to play two, three weeks in a row and kind of get a rhythm. That's always what I enjoyed when I was at the top of my game, as well. So I think just having, yeah, consecutive weeks playing was helpful.

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