

# PGA Championship

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Rochester, New York, USA

Oak Hill Country Club

## Luke Donald

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: European Ryder Cup captain, Luke Donald, joining us now at the 105th PGA Championship. Luke, welcome to Oak Hill and your 15th PGA Championship.

You're wearing two hats this week, competitor and of course European captain. What's kind of that been like for you?

LUKE DONALD: Well, the journey as captain has been very fulfilling. It's been something I've embraced and enjoyed.

It's a little bit of a juggling experience to try and do both, to try and play full-time. I've been playing quite a lot, too. I think it gives me much more value to be out at the tournaments playing, understanding the golf courses, being around the players.

It's busy juggling both jobs, but I'm certainly enjoying the role.

**Q. How are things shaping up at Marco Simone? Looks like the first tee is shaping up nicely.**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, so I was there two weeks ago for the Italian Open, my third trip, third Italian Open; a year to go event back in October, as well.

So I've spent quite a bit of time there over the last couple years, and yeah, it's shaping up nicely. The course is growing in well. There's been very minor changes, but those are in good position for the matches in September.

**Q. Obviously the sands of LIV seem to shift weekly. Recently we've had the situation with the resignations. I noticed in your interview with the Telegraph you were talking about that giving you a bit of extra clarity, which is quite a nice thing. Can I have your thoughts on that? And secondly, it's a different situation with the PGA players. There's obviously a way in for those guys. Would there be a scope for a gentlemen's agreement between you and Zach about who you can**

**pick?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, as I said a couple weeks ago, yeah, it's a shame that there were some resignations. A lot of these guys have built their legacy around DP World Tour members and their participation and everything with the Ryder Cup.

But ultimately that was their decision, and unfortunately they're off the table now for selection purposes for myself.

As I said, I've always tried to concentrate on looking at all the players that week in, week out are committed to try and make that Ryder Cup, and that hasn't changed. My situation is what it is. I've got to always take what I have in front of me and kind of go forward.

I'm still excited about all the players we have on offer, both rookies and established players, and I think our team will be very good.

I think in terms of what Zach is doing and his options, I think that's kind of his call. Whether LIV players play on his team, again, I haven't really talked to him much about it as a captains' agreement, as you said.

And let's not forget there's still LIV players that can still play on my team. They're still eligible if they're members of the Tour and were born in Europe. That is still a possibility for some guys.

**Q. Would you plan to speak to Zach about it? Again, like you said, obviously there's still European players who can make it in. Theoretically it would feel like an advantage to the Americans if they're able to call on DJ and Brooks, for example. But would you be looking to have a conversation in that direction?**

LUKE DONALD: To be honest, I think that the team selections should be pretty separate. I'm in charge of the European team and what's best for us, and he's in charge of the U.S. Team and what's best for him. I think that's just how it should be.

**Q. You just mentioned rookies. Do you have an idea**



**in your mind of what the right balance is going to be? Because there is some transition that your team is going to experience. Will you lean on experience for the sake of experience if push comes to shove with a player or two, or will you just take it on the merits of each player regardless of the level of experience and the match?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, I think there's lots of different factors when it will come to selection process. I think it's current form, I think these guys, whether they're rookie or have experience, whether they match the golf course, their games.

There's certain profiles that will match better to Marco Simone than others, whether some of those rookies and their games will match the six qualifiers, automatic qualifiers.

Experience does come into play, certainly, because Ryder Cups are different, but everyone has to be given an opportunity at some point. I was given an opportunity in 2004.

I was a pick by Bernhard Langer. I think there was only two picks, two wildcards that year and I was a bit of a gamble. I was a little bit of an unknown in 2004. I had won once in my rookie year on the PGA TOUR, I had won once at the Scandinavian Masters, but I was showing a lot of consistency in the U.S., and he thought my game really suited very well to Oakland Hills, and that's why he said he picked me.

Again, I think there's a lot of different factors that go into it, but we'll have to see what the makeup is. But I'm sure there will be some rookies on that team.

**Q. Do you understand the kind of mutual or spectator's viewpoint that the Ryder Cup spectacle will be harmed by Lee, Ian, and Sergio not being -- not necessarily being players -- but not being part of the Ryder Cup thing at all? Do you think that's a fair viewpoint and that they would have lost that?**

LUKE DONALD: Again, I understand the public's view. A couple years ago if you'd asked me that none of these guys would play a further role in the Ryder Cup, I would have questioned why.

But again, these things have all happened in a series of events that ultimately, I guess, were their decisions.

I think we all knew when LIV came about and it was approached to a lot of us that if you did that, there were these opportunities, there were these chances that stuff

like this could happen, and you could put your potential future in jeopardy.

I think everyone knew that.

**Q. A lot of the young guys that have been here talking about the East Course had never seen the before-and-after photos as you have. What were your impressions on what you've seen this week, and do you feel as a test it's consistent in what it asks of you as a player?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, it's a really good test. It's a big golf course. Just that beautiful grand clubhouse. I love what has been done here with the restoration. It looks amazing, like visually. They've really used the land beautifully.

The greens have a lot of flow to them, a lot of slope, but not so much where it's impossible to create a good challenge with it being a fair challenge, as well.

I think it's a good test. Some of the par-3s -- a couple of the par-3s are a little bit obnoxiously long for some of the size of the greens, but again, that's a major championship test.

Certainly the rough is thick. The fairway bunkers, the greenside bunkers are very penal. They can move tees around to kind of make it very fun, this golf course. Playing earlier in the year with it being a little cooler, some high winds forecast today, there's some very, very strong holes out there.

**Q. What kinds of clubs do you find yourself hitting into longer par-3s?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I hit a rescue into the third hole and 11 yesterday, two shortish par-3s, as well, which is nice. But yeah, 3rd green is really the size of a green that you think you should be hitting an 8-iron in and I was hitting a rescue in, so it's going to be a test.

**Q. I'll ask you in your captain's role as you talk to some of these new faces that haven't experienced the Ryder Cup, how do you describe it to them?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, I describe it as hopefully going to be the best week of their lives, because it certainly was for me when I was a player. I was fortunate to play on four, and all being winning teams, I think that's helps. The goal is to go there and win, because that really does create a better week for the players.

There's just nothing like it we have in our sport, where we get to come together as a team. We play such an



individual sport, and to come together like that and to play for other people I think is very rewarding.

It's kind of the essence of what -- the right kind of motivation that gives you the most pleasure, and I think that's what the Ryder Cup represents.

**Q. You mentioned some of the criteria for your wildcard picks. How important is it, the way potential rookies or potential wildcards perform in a U.S. major, especially like this week, or would you like to give any names you're particularly looking at this week?**

LUKE DONALD: I probably won't go into names, but I think it's always good to see how rookies, potential rookies do in major championships. It takes a different kind of mindset, a different kind of nerve.

The challenge obviously is totally different to what you'd be playing week in, week out. Obviously a very strong field this week. So again, a good performance here at a major can go a long way.

**Q. I was going to ask about how much emphasis you would put on the remaining three majors as part of your criteria. Could you maybe expound on what you --**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, certainly, as I said, the majors do offer different challenges to what they play week in, week out, but there's been lots of very good rookies and Ryder Cup players who maybe haven't had the best major record, as well.

It's not everything, but certainly I'll be keeping a close eye on the scoring.

**Q. I'll ask you about the guys who left for LIV. Just from a personal standpoint, being their friends and playing golf with them, playing Ryder Cups, did you have some personal disappointment in seeing them go? Not necessarily any animosity or anything, but just disappointed that you wouldn't maybe see them as much and play golf with them?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, I certainly haven't seen them as much, and it's always harder to keep those relationships going because of that. But no, I'm not disappointed in anything. They have to make the choice which they feel is best for them.

Again, I'm in this role where I'm trying to make the choices that I have available to me, and this is where we are right now.

Again, as you said earlier, probably some of this happening five months out is a little bit better than happening a few weeks out. It gives me a little bit more clarity of what I have to work with, and that can only be a good thing.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time today, Luke. We appreciate it.

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