

The Ryder Cup

Sunday, 1 October, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Team Europe

Luke Donald

Rory McIlroy

Shane Lowry

Tommy Fleetwood

Justin Rose

Jon Rahm

Tyrrell Hatton

Sepp Straka

Press Conference

LUKE DONALD: I'm just so happy for these 12 guys, they gave everything this week. They were a pleasure to be around. They made my life very easy and they played like superstars. Not many people gave us a chance, I don't think, especially two years ago.

Yeah, well, we proved them wrong.

RORY McILROY: Yes, we did (team cheering).

Q. Last night was a little interesting with the 3-1 American session and what happened with Rory and Cantlay, but curious, what was the mood of the team last night, and what did you say to them to maybe just sort of galvanise them? I know they had a big lead, but just to make sure that they got the job done today?

LUKE DONALD: They didn't need galvanising. They were 10 1/2 points to 5 1/2 UP. We were in a great place. We were in a perfect place. We knew it was in our hands. We stuck with the same plan we planned the whole week: Get off to fast starts. Play as a team. Use the crowd. Use their energy.

Yeah, the Ryder Cup, there's always lots of swings and emotions and changes. At one point I was looking at the



MARCO SIMONE
ROME, ITALY

board trying to figure out how we get to 14 1/2 points, but in the end we got there easily.

Q. Rory said earlier this week that the older you get, the more meaningful they become and the more emotional they become as well. Why do you think that is?

RORY McILROY: I think because you realise how bad it feels when you lose them. I think as time goes by, this is my seventh Ryder Cup; am I going to play in another seven? I don't know. I'm probably on the back nine of my Ryder Cup career, and every one that I get to play in from now on is very, very meaningful -- made the turn. Made the turn.

But sharing the week, sharing the course with these guys, having Fitz and Tommy as my partners this week, and just everything that we do as a team, it started -- I mean, it started probably a year ago when Luke took the captaincy. You know, the team started to take shape and we did that practise trip here a couple weeks ago, and everyone would probably agree with me but we sat around the fire pit that night and we chatted and we got to know each other really well.

And that was an amazing experience. I got to know things about these guys; that I thought I knew them for a long time, but I got to know something different about them.

I think that really galvanised us as a team, and I think just spending time with these guys is becoming more meaningful because I know I don't have that many left. To see guys like Ludvig come in here and be an absolute stud and take everything in stride, I wish I was in his position again, looking forward to playing in 15 or 20 Ryder Cups or whatever it is he's going to play in. But all the rookies that came in this year, everything, they have been absolutely amazing, and I'm just so proud to be a part of this team. It is, it's very, very meaningful.

Q. We saw what you said last night in the parking lot. Can you elaborate who you were speaking to? Looked like you were speaking to Bones but also kind of yelling --

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I text Bones this morning. He was the first American I saw after I got out of the locker room so he was the one that took the brunt of it. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. I text Bones this morning and apologized for that.

I was hot coming out of that yesterday. I was pretty angry. I didn't agree with what happened on 18, but I think I let it fuel the fire today and it focused me and I was able to go out there and get my point.

Q. Because we were watching that, we couldn't quite see -- so it was not Joe LaCava taking the brunt of your anger?

RORY McILROY: It was directed at Joe but said at Bones. But Joe wasn't there.

Q. You still seemed quite pumped about it when you finished your round on 17, you were still saying what happened last night was disgraceful and you still seemed quite animated by it. Could you expand a bit on that? And also, most importantly, are you annoyed that Shane ushered you into a car or quite relieved?

RORY McILROY: I was relieved. He took me down to the cold plunge in the hotel and let me cool off there for a few minutes, too. Yeah, very relieved.

We talked about it as a team last night. We felt like it was disrespectful, and it wasn't just disrespectful to Fitz and I. It was disrespectful to the whole team.

I get that we get the banter when we go over to the States and play, and you know, the same happens here. It's just the way it is. It the way the Ryder Cup goes. You have to have thick skin. That's just the way it is.

Q. And are you much of a car park scrapper?

RORY McILROY: No. But if I need to...

SHANE LOWRY: I had to do all the work. I was going to have to do all the work.

Q. Magnificent celebrations on the first tee there as well. I think it was Rory that started the chant, "Two more years." Is there any reason why you wouldn't, if offered, be captain again in two years' time?

LUKE DONALD: Listen, guys, I want to enjoy this moment right now with these guys --

(Off-camera) PLAYER: Come on.

LUKE DONALD: I haven't been asked yet.

Q. What about Rory, do you want him in two years' time?

RORY McILROY: I think everyone sitting here would be very happy to have him again.

Q. Rory, you said you took inspiration from Marcus Aurelius. Can you elaborate on what you read?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I've read Marcus Aurelius' meditations. I've studied Stoicism for a while and read a lot of those sort of books. I just thought as a former emperor of Rome and seeing that we are in Rome, I thought it would be a good time to revisit some of his thoughts, and I revisited them on the way to the course today.

Q. Has Joe apologised to you and do you want him to?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so we text. We haven't seen each other face-to-face, but we've text, and everything will be fine. But it's a point of contention and it still hurts, but time is a great healer and we'll all move on.

Q. The scenes on the last few holes, were you aware of the situation? What were your emotions when your tee shot on 16 hit the green and Rickie conceded the putt?

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Yeah, unfortunately I did see how tight it was getting. I think, yeah, I was probably more relieved than anything. I felt pretty comfortable all day. That was the thing. I was always kind of -- even though it was tight, I was really in control of the match. Just the occasion was very, very big. Rickie let me off. You never really want to see someone hit in the water, so I was not particularly pleased about that. But I still have to step up and hit. There's no point in me bailing out with the tee shot there, he could still make four, and he probably was still going to make four. I was just very happy to sort of tee the driver down. I was playing very, very well, put a swing on it and it set off straight and it wasn't moving, and I was happy to pick the tee up and move on.

And then the thing is with that green, you can't really see where the ball is landing with the sun. So you just wait for the crowd's reaction, and yeah, I was quite pleased when he gave me the putt.

Q. I was quite struck on Thursday, you referenced your late parents saying they would be watching over you, and I see you lost your father ten years ago, I

didn't know about your mother. I just wonder if they had been at the forefront of your mind and how they would feel about today.

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I had great parents. They were super supportive, but golf wasn't everything to them. They always really believed in me that -- to have a balanced life, enjoy golf but enjoy other things in life as well.

Yeah, they would be very proud of me. More for the fact, not that we won; more for the fact that -- just the way I kind of went about the captaincy, I suppose.

But yeah, that's a strange question. I've never had that one before. I've never thought about the answer. Yeah, I miss them. I miss them, of course. I would have loved to share this moment with them.

I think some of the things that we talked as a group was it's really, really important to not just play for each other but play for those that mean the most to you. I think that's super powerful. You know, I gave the guys some videos on Monday. Just some people that mean a lot to them, two-minute videos, really giving them encouragement.

I think that's why we always play this game. It's not just for ourselves. That's what makes the Ryder Cup so special is we play it for the people that mean so much to us. Certainly my parents meant a lot to me. Yeah, they would be very proud.

Q. Shane, that was a thrilling match you played with Jordan. What was it like to play those last few holes, and just the mad scenes that unfolded, what was it like to go through all that?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, it was an interesting day. Myself and Tommy and Bob were in the locker room before we went out and we joked about hoping that it wasn't going to come down to our matches, and I couldn't believe what we were seeing on the board, to be honest.

Those last couple of hours were probably two of the most stressful hours on the golf course I've had. But I felt like I was playing good golf and Jordan obviously got up early on me. I gave him maybe one or two holes, but I didn't give much away. He played pretty good today and then I fought hard. I just fought hard all day and I knew I just needed to keep fighting hard for my team. And once I did that, I knew I would be okay.

And then like the scenes coming down 18, I knew Tommy had gone -- I knew he was 1 UP playing 16, and I saw Rickie hit it in the water on 17, or on 16, and I thought if I could birdie 17, I was going to have a putt to win the Ryder

Cup. That's what I was thinking. So selfishly I was thinking, you know, I'm going to have a putt to win the Ryder Cup. This is going to be amazing. (Laughter).

Thankfully, thankfully Tommy -- thankfully, Tommy did it before me, and I was on the green on 17 and, I mean, I hit my putt and I holed it somehow, I have no idea how, and then 18 was just like I hit my drive, I didn't care where it went, and then I was walking down, right, I try and win my point, but it's like, whatever. I don't really care. I said at the start of the week in here, I said, I don't care if I make no points but as long as we win, it's -- that's not what matters to me. What matters to me is winning, and I'm very happy and very proud of the lads.

Q. You said many times how much you love Rome and Italy. Do you love them a little bit more after today?

LUKE DONALD: Absolutely. I think we all love it.

Q. And in the past press conference, many times when you speak, you tell the name of Dodo Molinari; we are working with Dodo statistics, Dodo here, Dodo there. How much his work has been important to you, and which are the parts of his analytics that you use more?

LUKE DONALD: Well, of course, Dodo's extremely important. I think the game of golf has really become dominated with statistics, but you know, all my vice captains were immense and literally got so much from Thomas, our past captain. He's been there before, winning captain.

José María was extremely inspirational. He doesn't speak much, José, but when he does, we all listen. There's a deathly silence in the room, in our team room when he speaks, and it was amazing. Nicolas Colsaerts, he has the biggest heart I know, and this Ryder Cup means so much to him. Francesco, as well. Every single one of them meant so much to me and were a big help.

But obviously Dodo, I probably spent a little bit more time just because of the statistics, because of trying to figure out ways to tell all my guys why they were going to win; give them the confidence that when they stepped on that tee on Friday that they expected to win, and these are the reasons, and this is why you play and this is why we are going to be successful by the end of this week. Obviously Dodo is a big part of that.

Q. How much self-confidence does it give you to have a strategic game plan set up for you? It felt the whole week you were always very certain about the pairings and about the way you were going to head into the

game, especially on those first holes here at Marco Simone?

RORY McILROY: We just winged it, really.

JUSTIN ROSE: Well, listen, I think with started on the practise trip, didn't it, lads. We started to play in four-balls. We started to play with guys that we potentially were going to play with. We were paired at Wentworth in specific pairings, again, that kind of started the whole bonding process, and also the comfort process of us all kind of understanding each other's games and dynamics.

You know, nothing was left to chance on that front. Every opportunity that we could have, could take to get forward and get more prepared, we took. And I think when you give people clarity, you know, they can kind of sink their teeth into something. When things are reactive, I don't know, feels like you're kind of hoping for something to change versus when there's a plan, it's just about execution then. And I think players, we spent our whole lives practising to execute.

So if you give us a plan, something I'll say to my caddie, if you have good information, there's a good chance we're going to hit a good shot. We got a lot of good information this week ahead of time, so kind of kept us all pretty calm. I think it just came down to the execution which these lads are a pretty decent set of golfers.

Then the statistics come into play, and statistics only mean something if the players step up and keep their level, and I think that the captains and the vice captains kept us calm enough and kept the noise away from us where we kept our level, and then all the planning can mean something.

Q. Two years ago, we all saw you in tears. What is the moment that sticks out to you as the part that hurt most from that week, and how long did it take you to get over that?

RORY McILROY: The score line, 19-9. That hurt. It really did.

Look, personally for me, I didn't feel like I gave my best performance, and I didn't feel like I did my part for the team. And you know, there was a few of us up here that were on that team that wanted to come back, and everyone at the start of the week was talking about, oh, do you want to get revenge, do you want to get revenge on the U.S. Team, and this wasn't about revenge. This was about redemption and showing what we could do.

As Rosey said, this has been a process. There's been a plan in place. You know, we've known months in advance,

basically, what the game plan was, how we were going to execute it, and then it just comes down to everyone getting on the golf course and being themselves and playing the way they know that they can play. And this is the result, which is amazing.

But you know, I've luckily been a part of a few winning Ryder Cup teams and it feels amazing, but at the same time, being part of a losing Ryder Cup Team sucks, it really does. I'm much happier sitting up here and talking to you guys today than I was two years ago at Whistling Straits.

Q. Not to take anything away from what you've accomplished today, but eight of the last nine winners have been the home team. Is there too much to home-field advantage --

RORY McILROY: So I've said this for the last probably six or seven years to anyone that will listen: I think one of the biggest accomplishments in golf right now is winning an away Ryder Cup. And that's what we're going to do at Bethpage.

Q. You've each played in a bunch of Ryder Cups. You never know, as you just said, like when the last one might be. Americans are United by borders, by a flag, by a language; you guys are not. What unites the European Ryder Cup Team?

JUSTIN ROSE: Well, I was just thinking there before you asked that question, we are united by a culture and we are united by a generation of players that have come before us. This is our time. Luke has been very clear on that message, this is our time to shine, not because this is our stage, we are just taking care of it because of the amazing role models that we've had before us that have shown us how to do it.

There's a really strong culture on the European Team. A good pairing on the European Team doesn't mean playing with your best mate. You know, it means about representing something bigger than yourself, and I feel like that's, for me, what being a European Ryder Cup player is all about.

RORY McILROY: For me, I think culture is huge. We take the piss out of each other. We have a sense of humour. We don't take ourselves too seriously. I think that's a big part of it, too. We feel like we can be ourselves. I can tell Tyrrell to do whatever and I can -- you know, whatever it may be, I'm just trying to look at people around me.

JUSTIN ROSE: The boys are calling him Rocky McIlroy --

RORY McILROY: He's the swear guy, not me (turning to

Tyrrell Hatton). But if you ask Bones, he may say differently.

But I just think we don't take ourselves too seriously. There is, there's a real good sense of humour in the team. Luke and the team have put together some amazing videos for us this week.

You know, sometimes it's hard because you're within a group, and they are making fun of you, but you're getting made fun of in a good way and it's appreciated and everyone has been good sports.

But as Rosey said, Seve, Ollie, the legends of the Ryder Cup that have come before us, you know, we're caretakers of this European jersey right now, and we're hopefully going to pass it on in the future in a better spot than where we found it. I think that's really what we are right now.

Q. Jon, do you have any thoughts on that question? What does it mean to be a European Ryder Cupper?

JON RAHM: Oh, sorry.

Q. I know you had not gotten any questions.

JON RAHM: Let me come back real quick.

SHANE LOWRY: I didn't know Rahmbo was there.

RORY McILROY: Only the best player in the world.

TYRRELL HATTON: Luke and Rory press conference.

JON RAHM: Obviously I don't have as much experience in Ryder Cups as Rosey and Rory have but I think they mailed it. It's the ability to walk through those gates and those doors and forget about who you are outside of this week, what you have done or what you may do afterwards, really truly doesn't matter.

In my case, obviously the Spaniards have a legacy to live up to. It's certainly not easy, right. The three main figures before me, Seve, Ollie and Sergio, are three guys that if I'm not mistaken, all three of them have earned 20 points in the Ryder Cup; three out of nine are Spanish.

So it's a lot to live up to and it's something that really inspires me, especially when José is around, right. He always tells me little things to inspire me in that sense. So following in their footsteps and how they try to make the team better is the way I've approached it as well. I try to do my part in the team room.

But I think Rory said it best, is the fact that we can go in

there and make fun of each other and nobody really cares, right. We all laugh, and that's about it. I mean, you need to be able to make fun of yourself and it's a truly humbling experience to be part of this team.

Q. Were you aware of the situation that you could be possible -- to win the Ryder Cup, what were your feelings?

JON RAHM: Yes, they all know they had a putt to win the Ryder Cup, we knew.

Q. What did you think with you saw Tommy Fleetwood making the putt?

SEPP STRAKA: The feeling was pure joy. He did rob me of my moment, a chance of my moment I guess, but no, I was ecstatic. When he closed it out, I was on 18 green.

Q. Were you aware of the situation?

SEPP STRAKA: Oh, yeah, I knew exactly that it was -- yeah, I was very nervous, but yeah, when he closed it out on 16, it was a fun place to be on 18 green because the crowd went crazy. And yeah, we had won the Ryder Cup, so it was just pure joy.

Q. Boring last question, sorry. But Luke, I wonder if you could explain for me setup angle and a strategic angle, why you guys were so successful on the first hole?

SHANE LOWRY: Dodo? Where's Dodo?

JON RAHM: Where's the number cruncher?

LUKE DONALD: What was our success rate?

Q. In the first three sessions you won it 5-0 and I think the final was 10-4.

JUSTIN ROSE: It's called playing for a hundred bucks in practise.

LUKE DONALD: As a team we knew getting off to a fast start was important.

JUSTIN ROSE: Rory still hasn't paid me by the way -- sorry, Luke.

TOMMY FLEETWOOD: Rory actually never pays. Can I just say that? Rory never pays.

RORY McILROY: I didn't win the FedExCup this year.

SHANE LOWRY: He's waiting to pip him -- (laughter).

LUKE DONALD: I guess the guys who were ready, they were ready on the first tee. What more can you say? They obviously had a clear plan for what they needed to do on the first. It wasn't really a strategy thing in terms of setting up the hole. The hole was very similar to what we played in the first three Italian Opens. The fairways were pinched in a little on the left. Statistically, we're pretty similar in accuracy off the tee to the U.S.; we're slightly longer, but as a team, we talked about it, and we talked about getting off to fast starts. I think mentally, they were just ready for it.

Q. Any difference in club selection? Was there any unified team philosophy?

LUKE DONALD: No, I didn't tell them one time what club to hit.

JUSTIN ROSE: The strategy is tee up the driver that's got the biggest head on it. That's the strategy, first tee, Ryder Cup, is the easiest club to hit. Send it.

STEVE TODD: Thanks guys, we'll let you go. Congratulations.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports