

The Ryder Cup

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

Farmingdale, New York, USA

Bethpage Black Course

Team Europe

Captain Luke Donald

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: European Ryder Cup captain Luke Donald is with us now at the 2025 Ryder Cup. We'll jump right into questions.

Q. Luke, I think you and I have discussed this before, but I'm curious, you had a comedian do some heckling, I think, with your players in January. From what we hear, you've provided VR goggles to get guys acclimated to a number of things. You may have addressed this before, but how big of a factor are not just the opposing fans but New York fans?

LUKE DONALD: Well, I think my job as captain is to prepare the guys for every scenario. Obviously there's a bunch of us in our team that have experienced away crowds. Maybe not New York, but we have experienced away crowds before, and we've certainly talked about it as a group, what you've learned, what you think you might have done well, what you think you might have changed.

The crowd factor is certainly one aspect that I've been looking at, but I've been trying to look at this from a very different angle, and that's just one element of the preparation that's going into kind of making sure that these guys are ready for -- and to be prepared to be at their best because that's what they're going to need this week.

Q. I saw that cheeky post you had at Halloween last year. Whose idea was that?

LUKE DONALD: Well, my wife comes up with all the different scenarios. Again, we did an Italian theme when we were in Rome and we thought it would be appropriate to do a New York theme for this one. We want to embrace the places we go to, and I think that's the great thing about golf. We go to so many different places.

I think we have a huge respect for New York, what it represents. It's great to have a Ryder Cup here. It was just a fun way to add a little tip of the cap to New York.



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Q. Rory McIlroy arrives here as Grand Slam champion, the most experienced player in your team. Can you give me your assessment of how important he is to Europe, and even though he's had an unbelievable 2025, how motivated he is to finish it on another high?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I think Rory has talked about this many times. He loves what the Ryder Cup represents. You can see the emotion both ways. When he lost in Wisconsin the tears were flowing, how he felt like as the player he is, he's a leader for the team, that he needed to play better and he felt like he let himself down and the team. That's kind of the brotherhood we have in our team.

He sees himself as a leader but also just one of 12. We try and talk about that a lot. We all have an opportunity to contribute to the team. To have someone of his caliber, though, what he's achieved in the game is tremendous.

But for him, Ryder Cups are very, very important. He talked about how difficult it is to win an away Ryder Cup, and I think if he was able to be on this team, on a winning team, that would make this year even better than what he's already done.

Q. To dovetail with Jimmy's question, I saw some of your players signing autographs, engaging with the fans this morning. Is there kind of a kindness offensive that you've talked to your players about?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, we're the visitors. Again, we're trying to just be respectful to the crowd and just do whatever we can to be our best selves and play our best golf.

I'm very lucky as a captain; this isn't a team I've had to really try and form. But I feel like we have a bunch of really solid guys with good values. They're out there to be entertaining. They're out there to play great golf. They understand how important the fans are.

Q. Rory mentioned I think a week or two ago about these virtual reality headsets, which sounded incredible. It brought to mind you might have somebody in your team who's sitting there trying to



work out insults and abuse in your team. Is that kind of how it works?

LUKE DONALD: Again, when we came up with that idea, it was just one idea in a multitude of ideas to get these guys ready. At the beginning of a qualification, you expect there to be a bunch of rookies that have not played a Ryder Cup before.

Again, this was really aimed at some of those, maybe some that have never played an away Ryder Cup. But we actually in the end have a team that, one, has quite a lot of experience being together, and has played quite a few away Ryder Cups as well.

I think it was aimed at, again, just trying to give those rookies an experience and a feeling of what that first tee might feel like.

Q. You're quite close with Michael Jordan, and I was wondering if you could just touch upon your friendship, and secondly, the insight and influence he's had not only on your game but also on you as a leader on this team in Rome and today?

LUKE DONALD: Well, yeah, I've known Michael for a long time. I got to play some golf with him even at the end of my college career, so back in the early 2000s, with being in Chicago. We had some mutual friends. He loved to play golf with good players, and I was lucky enough to be put into the group and we formed a friendship. We live very close to each other in Florida now and remain good friends.

I think Michael is someone I've been very fortunate to get access to and pick his brain occasionally about what made him tick, what motivated him, how he was able to get the best out of himself. Michael is also very close to Keegan, and I'm sure Keegan has maybe leaned on MJ a little bit as well over the last year. He's not going to specifically give me advice this time around, but certainly my friendship over the years I've picked up many things. It's nice to have someone that is a legend of their sport, the greatest ever, quite arguably, to sit down occasionally and pick their brains.

I think he's here supporting, I believe, this week, but I think he will have a USA hat on as well this week.

Q. This I think is the only sports event I can think of where the entire team comes in for the post-tournament press conference, win or lose. I wonder if you can give me your thoughts on that tradition, what it's like to be a part of that experience when you're on the win being side and perhaps what it

might be like to have to come in and face the music when it might not have gone so well?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I was a vice captain in Wisconsin at Whistling Straits so I was part of a losing one there. I think that's one of the reasons why you want to win is because losing feels so much worse. It really hurts. You prepare and you practice hard and you try and put together a plan, and it's disappointing when it doesn't work out.

But golf is a little bit like that. It's hard to control the result. You can only control your preparation. For me from a personal standpoint, I'm very focused on what I've done the last 21 months. I feel like we're a team that's in a good spot. Hopefully things will work out. But if not, we'll take it with grace and we'll try and learn from it and we'll try and move on.

Q. As a follow-up, a lot of the American players have spoken very positively about President Donald Trump coming here this week. Others might see it as a distraction or an inconvenience for the organizers from a security perspective. Do you have a view on that?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I think anytime a sitting president wants to come to an event, it just shows how big the Ryder Cup is. You've got to see that as a mark of respect. President Trump is obviously a big supporter of golf and he knows a lot of the players this week and has met them before. I think you see it as that, as a mark of respect, that a sitting President wants to support an event when he has a very busy schedule. To find time for that shows something.

Q. You've been an ambassador, a great ambassador for the game for a long time, and in your time in golf the support has grown tremendously. Can you talk about how golf has never been more popular, more people playing than ever before, we're here in Bethpage, one of the most prominent courses in the United States, can you talk a little bit about your feelings about that and what you think is driving the growth of the game and why it's so exciting and why so many more people are playing these days?

LUKE DONALD: I think golf is unique. It's unique in the fact that people from different levels can play together and play for fun and have a match and spend time away from the hustle and bustle of modern-day life, get away, be off your phone, just chum it up with your friends and spend some time; where if someone is a 2 handicapper and someone is a 28 handicapper, they can still have a good game. You can't do that very often in other sports.



Obviously it seemed to boom through the COVID period. It was a sport you could be outside and not too close to each other. I think a lot of people fell in love with it because of that. It was a great distraction in a strange time for us.

It's just nice to see the game booming. It's obviously a game that's very well-supported by corporate -- the corporate world as well. They can do great entertaining. People love the fact that, again, amateurs or corporate people can play with the professionals and be there. You can't really do that on an NBA court or NFL pitch or a soccer pitch. It just doesn't work. But with golf you can.

Q. You talked a little bit earlier about making things easier for your rookies and it realize it applies more to the U.S. with four rookies, but what would be the greatest piece of advice you would give to a first-time Ryder Cup player?

LUKE DONALD: Well, you've got to embrace the week as much as possible. You never know when it's going to be your last. Even for me looking back at 2012 at Medinah, I was 2 or 3 in the world at that point, had the honor of going out No. 1 singles, and that was my last time ever playing as a Ryder Cup player. I never thought that was going to be the case.

The game is very fickle, so I think, again, sitting in 2004, my first Ryder Cup, I was sitting in the opening ceremony next to Darren Clarke and he just gave me a little nudge into the side and he goes, once you play one, you'll never want to miss another.

I think, again, it just goes back to embracing the moment, embracing the week. It's a crazy week. It's something that we don't ever get to experience very often. It comes every two years. It's a little bit like our Olympics. You prepare, you fight all year long to try and make these teams. You've got to enjoy that chance.

I'd also tell the rookies that being here is great, but it's your opportunity to contribute now. It's one thing to qualify, but you're here to help the team.

Q. I just wanted to follow up quickly on Michael Jordan. I wondered if you could give a bit of insight on what that was like for a young kid at college playing some rounds of golf, what memories you have of those early rounds, and also maybe if you could give some examples of the things you've picked up from him on maybe leadership or just his ritual, his work ethic, that you've been able to apply?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I think very surreal for me. I grew up in England so I wasn't that exposed to how big he was,

but I came to college in Chicago in '97, sort of the end of his major run, and all you hear about is people talking about him. So you understand, start watching more games and understanding the influence he had.

I think all of us watched that Last Dance documentary when it came out. Again, at the beginning of COVID and we had nothing else to do but sit at home and watch great documentaries.

The thing I learned about MJ and I think it came through in that documentary, is that he was never going to do anything he didn't ask his teammates to do. He set the example. He led from the front. He was very passionate about it, and he was very good at breaking down things into smaller manageable goals.

One example was he wanted to win the scoring title, and he needed to average something like 38 points a game or something like that, but he just broke it down into quarters and made it simple.

I think it's a good analogy about what that represents.

But he also taught me that -- I think he won four or five scoring titles before he won an NBA championship. You need your teammates around you. You can be a team of champions but not a championship team. You always need the people around you. You're always stronger being a collective.

I think that's something that I certainly took from him, and I've tried to implant on my teams the last two times, that we're always stronger together. Those are strong values that we try and live up to.

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