

RBC Heritage

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

Luke Donald

Press Conference



SHARON SHIN: Please help me welcome in Luke Donald to the interview room. Luke, you hold a pretty impressive record here, seven top-three finishes, five times runner-up. What makes you play so well, and what do you love about this course.

LUKE DONALD: Yes, it's been a good run around here, for sure. I guess the simple answer is I think it really suits the way I play. Obviously very small greens. It's tough to hit a lot of greens. You have to be very good around the greens, which is a strong part of my game. It's a fiddlely golf course, you're not going to always have straight forward shots to the greens. I think it takes some imagination, some creativity around this course. Again, that's something I've always been known for. And, yeah, those things, and obviously just having a good feel when I come here, has resulted in my playing very well here.

Q. You turned 40 in December. I was just wondering how you celebrated that and how your health is. You had a little bit of a health scare in the last year?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, obviously -- yeah, I did turn 40 in December. Just went with a few friends, actually down in Barbados for a few days and just had a good time with a few of my close friends. And that was fun.

But, yeah, it's been a frustrating year in terms of some injuries. Obviously I had the scare at Sea Island, which in the end had nothing to do with my heart. I think it was some kind of remnants of some stomach flu that my kids had. Health-wise, heart-wise, all that kind of stuff I'm say hundred percent healthy. I've had a few little issues, a couple of tournaments I didn't play this year that I would have liked to have played just through some other injuries. But in terms of my overall health it's very good.

Q. What were the other injuries?

LUKE DONALD: I wanted to play Jackson, and I had a little bit of an issue with my intercostal, that's gone away. And then obviously Sea Island, I had to pull out with that weird scenario. And I wanted to play Houston, as well. I've had some issues with my low back that I've been dealing with for a couple of months. But I think they're under control at the moment. It's been a little bit of a tough schedule. It's been a bit more choppy than I would have liked to, I haven't really gotten that consistency that I would have liked to in

terms of my schedule. It's been a great year so far, but hopefully coming to a nice place like this I'll get it kick started.

Q. When you turned 40 you had a lot of sort of big picture thoughts. You've done a lot. You've been No. 1. You've got five victories on the PGA Tour, you've been in four Ryder Cups. Do you sit back and say, okay, I'm 40, I've been out here a long time, what else am I going to do here, what are my goals for the next few years?

LUKE DONALD: Those things always cross your mind, you could sort of disappear into the shadows and not really play again and live off what I've made on the golf course over the last few years. But that's not really my style. I'm still very competitive. I want to be out here. I want to compete.

I've seen lots of my peers go through struggles, as well and tough times and slip down rankings and come back. And those kind of players and experiences give me heart that I can do the same.

Q. To that end, Luke, where is your game? How do you feel about your game coming to this great place for you otherwise?

LUKE DONALD: Again, I feel the injuries have made me not be able to hit as many balls as I would have liked to. But I actually feel like my game is a lot closer than the results are showing. I've been up to work pretty hard this week on my game in preparation for this week. And, again, I think it's more about just going out there and trusting it more than anything. Off weeks, playing with buddies, everything looks pretty good. It's just trusting under competition, under the gun. And trying to get back into contention.

Q. How close do you feel -- you were No. 1 at the top of your game, how close do you feel to being close to that, you know what I mean?

LUKE DONALD: From a physical standpoint, not very far away. I think just more of trusting myself, going out there and seeing the results, seeing good shots, putting strings of good rounds together, and just kind of getting the momentum going. Physically I think my game, if you compared my swings from 2011 to now, there's not really a big difference. I often look at videos and compare and try and see if there's any difference, there really isn't a ton of difference. It's more about just

going out there and trusting it and doing it, really.

Q. We talked to you a bunch over the years. And is there a line between the appreciation of how well you played here over the years and maybe a little disappointment in not being able to convert one of these into a Plaid Jacket?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I mean it's not really too much use looking back. I come here this week really knowing that obviously I played well here, using that as a positive to really feel good about my chances of playing well and putting myself into contention.

But obviously looking back isn't really a lot of help, just the fact that it's a place I know that I can put myself in position to win and hopefully I'll do the same again this year.

Q. Is it just because it's such a good fit for your game, is that what keeps you coming back, despite the second place finishes?

LUKE DONALD: You always want to come back to places you play well. There's no real place I've played better than this place. So it would be silly of me not to put this one on my schedule.

Q. How much confidence would you gain if you did win it?

LUKE DONALD: I think a lot. Obviously it's been a tough couple of years on the course. I haven't had the consistency that I had a few years back. Sometimes it only takes one tournament or a couple of rounds to kind of get that going again. And certainly it would be nice to finally put that Plaid Jacket on.

Q. You've had years where maybe your results coming into here haven't been all that great, but then you get to Harbour Town and it's another top three type finish. Is this some comfort level once you drive through that gate about Harbour Town that never goes away?

LUKE DONALD: Well, I think so. I never feel like I have played my best golf, even with the great finishes here. And for that reason I think it just is a course that really does suit the way I play. It's a course that it's still even despite some really good finishes, you never really feel that comfortable on. There's a lot of shots that you really have to stand up and hit good shots. There's a lot of danger out there. There's a lot of tight tee shots. There's a lot of areas where it can go wrong. But I think I've always performed my best when I do feel under the gun and when I've put myself in those positions. So I kind of -- I enjoy the challenge of this golf course. I think it's a great design. Again, I'm looking forward to playing again this week and hopefully getting something kick started.

Q. Do you have any plaid in your wardrobe anywhere? You've been waiting for the jacket. Is there a plaid shirt?

LUKE DONALD: When I was with Lexus I think I had some plaid pants, but I don't think I have them anymore.

Q. You mentioned that you've taken some inspiration from some guys who had maybe slipped a little bit in the World Rankings and had won recently, are you referring to the other 40-something Englishman who won on the PGA Tour?

LUKE DONALD: Yes, Ian is an example, Henrik Stenson, Lee Westwood, all these guys have gone through tough patches in their career and come back. And I feel like Ian -- we've had some similar careers, to all those three guys. If they can do it, why can't I?

Q. Of all the close calls you've had, is there any one roll of the ball that stands out or one moment that stands out where you just think, that was the closest? Looks like it's close every year, but something that sticks out?

LUKE DONALD: I think the one that probably hurt the most was with Kuch, holing the bunker shot and shooting 63 or 4, and coming from a lot behind. I think I played a pretty solid round, maybe shot a couple under. I think I heard that roar all the way from about 15. That was probably the toughest one.

Q. I think your last four putts rolled over edges of putts?

LUKE DONALD: I don't remember.

Q. The opportunity to play against Dustin Johnson, obviously No. 1 in the world, how excited are you to play against him?

LUKE DONALD: Well, I'm really playing against the course this week, not Dustin Johnson. Obviously it's nice to see Dustin here. I know he's a new member to the RBC team. They do a great job for golf. And obviously they sponsor a lot of really good players. And it strengthens the field and brings a little bit more interest to the tournament. So that's great. But, again, I'll be playing against the course, rather than Dustin.

SHARON SHIN: Thank you for your time and good luck this week.