



**Luke Donald**  
Press Conference

LUKE DONALD

JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Luke Donald into the interview room after a 5-under par 66 in the first round of the RBC Heritage.

Luke, three runner up finishes in this event, two third place finishes, and you're off to another great start. What is it about this place that you love so much?

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, I do like this golf course. I think it's one of those very classic golf courses where we just have to position it around here. It's not obviously a bomber's paradise. It's a positional golf course, a classic golf course, small greens. You have to scramble well.

I have some good memories and good mojo here. So it's nice to continue that with a very solid round today.

JOHN BUSH: Just one bogey on the card. Just take us through the round, if you can.

LUKE DONALD: Yes, started on the front nine. I birdied No. 2, hit it just off the left edge of the green, and two-putted from the fringe for birdie there.

Again, holed another putt from just off the fringe from about 15 feet on 3 to get to 2-under.

6 I hit it to three feet and made a birdie.

8 was my only a bogey, I missed about a 5-, 6-footer for par there.

And I made birdie on 11, holing a 20-foot putt, maybe, for birdie.

13 I hit it pretty close to about seven feet and made birdie there.

And then on 17 I hit it close again, hit it to about five, six feet on 17 and made a 2 there.

Hit a lot of greens, a lot of fairways. I felt that way I didn't have to work too hard to scramble, which at times you can around this place. But it was one of those good, solid rounds.

**Q. You posted on Instagram about your blood**

**boiling, missing the Masters for the first time since 2004. You were tweeting it around the entire day. Did that provide motivation this week?**

LUKE DONALD: Absolutely. I think just in general it's been a tough couple of years for me. I haven't been playing as well as I would like. I certainly feel like my game isn't very far away, but the results certainly haven't matched what I think I'm capable of. And obviously I feel like I've got a few good years ahead of me. I don't want to be sitting at home watching the majors on TV yet. That's the first one I missed in 11 years. I worked very hard on my game this whole year, but especially last week, and it's nice to see it come through today.

**Q. You've also played a lot of good rounds around this golf course, but given the conditions today, what would you rank that 66?**

LUKE DONALD: It was pretty simple 66, in the end. I didn't have to scramble very hard. I just put it in great positions. I think there was some breeze out there. We've certainly felt a very similar breeze the last couple of years from what I remember, similar direction. It seems to have blown quite hard here the last couple of years. And I think forecast tomorrow is to be even stronger.

But it didn't feel like too taxing a round. I felt very solid. I put it in the right positions. This course can get to you quickly. But today I just really put it in the right positions and didn't have to work too hard for that 66.

So it was nice to be in the lead or close to the lead, whatever I am right now. But it was pretty straight forward.

**Q. Going back to the early two thousands, your first three times here weren't very good, a couple of missed cuts, and way back in the back. Then you took four years off, came back, and obviously you own this place, winning since. What made you decide to come back here and play, and what all of a sudden after bad starts here, what finally clicked for you?**

LUKE DONALD: It's hard to put my finger on it. My rookie year and my first few years said it was going to be a perfect golf course for me, I hit it straight and decent around the greens is the model for playing well around here.

But for some reason I didn't play very well the first few years, and I took a break. It didn't seem to fit my eye, and I wasn't able to be successful around here.

But I came back because I still felt like it should be a good golf course for me. For whatever reason something clicked, I started seeing shots better. And it's a golf course that should suit my game, and I kind of proved that over the last six or seven years I've been playing it.

**Q. The greens have been redone. Do they putt well for you?**

LUKE DONALD: There's definitely a little more roll out. A little firmer, I think very typical for new greens. They're releasing a little bit more. They do run a little bit faster than I remember, maybe a foot faster. They're in great shape. You can hardly tell that they've been redone, other than the fact that they're a little bit firmer. For the most part they seem very similar. A couple of holes to the eye looks like they've had a few tweaks here and there.

But for the most part the breaks are very similar and they've done a magnificent job getting them ready. They're in great shape.

**Q. What part of your game has led to the lack of results in the last couple of years? Whatever part that is, do you feel you're making progress on?**

LUKE DONALD: I would say most definitely scrambling and putting. I haven't looked statistically at my putting, but it's probably outside the top 100 right now. For five straight years I was No. 1. That's a big difference, those shots add up quickly. Getting those back will hopefully see me playing a little bit better and get my name up in those leaderboards.

**Q. Are you making progress on it?**

LUKE DONALD: I do. It's been a big focus on my practice, to get back to my strengths, which is from a hundred yards and in. It's starting to see it with some of my mid-irons. I think strokes game tee to green from a hundred to 150 yards I think I'm right up there right now. I haven't quite seen it yet on the greens, but certainly some rounds where I'm feeling like I'm making more putts, hitting better putts. And saw more going in today, so just keep plugging away.

**Q. Given your record here and is there a part of you that wishes there were more of these type of courses on the PGA Tour?**

LUKE DONALD: Well, I think, as I said, I've said this before, this is a great classic -- even though it's not typically an old course, but it's been around 30, 40 years, probably now. It's a classic Pete Dye, I would

say, one of his earlier Pete Dye's. Not very long, small greens. You get some wind here. Anywhere from 10 to 14 on the winds here. He had a blank canvas to work on, Whistling Straits, 8000 yards, bunkers everywhere, and what does Jason Day shoot? It's built to be a major championship and he shoots 20-under.

I just love the fact that you don't have to -- this course sort of stands the test of time. It's a course that doesn't demand a lot of length off the tee, but it makes you think. And I think that's why I certainly enjoy playing it.

**Q. You know what happened to Jordan last week, do you think that maybe your failure at times in majors forced you to make changes in your own game that didn't work out for you, is that true? And is that why you focused on the things you did so well?**

LUKE DONALD: Yeah, certainly the focus to change was to become a little bit better driver of the golf ball. I felt to win major, my short game, inside a hundred yards was good enough. Putting was obviously good enough. I didn't feel like I hit it in the fairway enough with how long I hit it. That was impetus to change, and it didn't work. I didn't really hit further, and I didn't hit it straighter. So I wasn't able to change my golfing DNA in the time I was working with Chuck Cook, as he wanted me to.

So I went back and obviously throughout that period lost a bit of confidence and I'm still working to get that back. But I don't see Jordan falling into that trap. He's come very close before and come back doesn't done extremely well. Very close to winning The Open at St. Andrews, and still had a good chance at the PGA and next major. So he's got a great head on his shoulders. We all know how professional he is and able to take losses. And I think in any sport you use those losses as motivation.

**Q. On 16, 17 and 18 you finished with putts of five feet, five feet and seven feet. And short missed putt today was 13 feet. Is there any specific thing you can work on with your putting?**

LUKE DONALD: I've always continued to work on very similar things in my putting. I work very much on my fundamentals. I think putting is such a short stroke, you can't make adjustments like you can on regular swings.

I work on fundamentals, my aim, strike, controlling speed. Same things I've worked on for a long time, just making sure I'm diligent about it. Again, it's nice to make those putts. You miss those three-putts and suddenly I'm 2-under, and it's a totally different feel coming off 18.

So those are the momentum making putts that build confidence and certainly it was nice to hole three coming in like that.

**Q. Talk about your putting, did you make a lot of changes, equipment-wise, were you working on different things? Did your putting actually get bad or did it just go from excellent to kind of mediocre? Just kind of describe where it went and if you experimented with clubs?**

LUKE DONALD: Somewhere in the last year or so I definitely have lost a bit of confidence through both the swing change tee to green, it manifested around the greens. I think I spent a little bit more time on the range. And it's more just a confidence issue, more than anything. I don't feel that my stroke really changed too much, just having the confidence in not seeing the ball go in quite as much had an impact on my putting.

I have not changed my putter for a long time until the last couple of weeks. I've got the same head on my putter, but just a different shaft. It's a center shaft. I just wanted a little bit different look. It's pretty much the same putter, just has a different neck on it, it's a center shaft, rather than a normal neck. Same head, same everything, except the way it works, the shaft goes in. I just wanted a little bit different look. The putter I've been using the last couple of years I just felt like I hadn't seen the ball go in, so I just wanted something different to look at.

JOHN BUSH: Luke, thanks for your time. Best of luck this week.

LUKE DONALD: Thank you.