

Luke works out the lag



Range finder: Luke Donald yesterday. Picture: Mike Keating

Mark Hayes
in Melbourne

THERE he was, plonked almost anonymously in the middle of the driving range.

Luke Donald, working studiously with long-time coach Pat Goss, less than two days after becoming the first player to win both American and European money lists in the same year, a feat many thought impossible.

But far from resting on his laurels, the world No.1 was down to work almost immedi-

ately he arrived in Melbourne for this week's JBWere Masters at Victoria Golf Club.

It's what separates the 34-year-old Englishman from the pack. The reason that, in his 29th week atop the world rankings, Donald sits behind only Tiger Woods and Greg Norman on the list of players to have held that perch in consecutive weeks.

And although he has tweeted that he can't wait for a break at the end of one of the all-time great seasons after this week, it tells you every-

thing you need to know about Donald who is hellbent on pushing for one more title.

"Obviously a lot has happened, but I'm still coming here to try to win the tournament," Donald said yesterday.

While far from creating the hysteria Tiger Woods has at the past two Masters, Donald quickly won a horde of new fans during his couple of hours on course yesterday afternoon.

While he didn't venture out to play any holes, he had a host of adoring fans with whom he happily posed for photos as he

walked between driving range, putting green and chipping facility at Victoria.

"It's easy to go and sit in the hotel and fall asleep and lose a day," he said. "I think that's probably the worst thing to do for jetlag. The best thing is to stay busy, get yourself exposed to some of the sunlight and get in a little bit of practice."

Flanked by Goss, his coach from college days at Northwestern University near Chicago, and mind guru Dave Alred — the man responsible for honing English World Cup

rugby hero Jonny Wilkinson — there is an air that nothing has been left to chance in winning more than \$13 million combined in the US and Europe this year.

He's also a keen student of the game, its history and course architecture.

"I've heard so much great stuff about all these courses in the Sandbelt area, including Royal Melbourne," he said.

TV: Fox Sports, Thurs to Sun, 12.30pm. Channel 9, Sat and Sun, 12.30pm

Jonny's lasting legacy

Julian Guyer

FORMER England coach Sir Clive Woodward praised Jonny Wilkinson as a "marvellous team man" after the fly-half announced his retirement from international rugby union.

It was Woodward who gave Wilkinson the first of his 91 England caps in 1998 and he was still in charge when the No.10 landed the extra-time drop goal that won the 2003 World Cup final against Australia in Sydney.

"He was a marvellous team man," Woodward said of the now 32-year-old Wilkinson, who plans to continue playing for French side Toulon.

"He set out to be the No.1 player in the world in his position but behind that his team ethic was fantastic and he was a real role model for that."

"I admired how he went about his business and how much work he did when no-one was around."

"He did a lot on his own, studied and learnt the game."

"It's a lesson to any young person about what has to happen. He took his game to a whole new level."

Wilkinson is England's record point-scorer and second in the all-time list behind New Zealand's Dan Carter.

His tally, including British and Irish Lions points, is 1246.

Following the 2003 World Cup final, injuries meant it was nearly four years before Wilkinson, who is renowned for his dedicated approach to training, returned to Test duty.

"Jonny redefined the standards for rugby players in his extraordinary international playing career," said Rugby Players' Association chief executive Damian Hopley. "He has left a lasting legacy."



Beaten: Investec Loyal was second in the Solas Big Boat Challenge. Picture: Brett Costello

Loyal supporter Crichton boosts Bell's race hopes

Amanda Lulham
Sailing

SUPERMAXI skipper Anthony Bell has revealed his Sydney to Hobart pre-race trump card in his quest for a maiden crown in the famous race — the only man to beat his rival Wild Oats in the famous Australian classic.

Veteran Sydney to Hobart campaigner Neville Crichton made an appearance on the docks at the

Cruising Yacht Club yesterday and then the deck of the 100-footer Loyal after working behind the scenes as a mentor for Bell ahead of the 69th race.

The Mark Richards-skipped Wild Oats is chasing a record sixth line honours win this year with Bell and his crew hoping to spoil the famous Australian supermaxi's party.

But on yesterday's evidence at the Solas Big Boat Challenge, they've still got a bit of work to do.

In a head-turning display of high speed on a tight and tricky course, Wild Oats claimed boasting rights.

Propelled by strong southerlies Richards revealed the 100-footer had hit a top speed of 23 knots — more than 40km/h — in around 20 knots of wind in the annual harbour race.

"That was fun," Richards said. "That's what today is about."

Crichton and his crew on Alfa Romeo — many of whom have now

joined Bell's campaign for the 2011 race — are the only team to have thwarted Wild Oats' race for glory since her launch in 2005.

The Alfa Romeo skipper beat Wild Oats to the line in 2009 but has been absent from the fleet since.

"We talk about the boat, getting it faster, what to expect out of a crew, leadership, everything. His advice has been invaluable to me," said Bell of his relationship with Crichton.

Seahawks keep their playoff hopes alive

MARSHAWN Lynch ran for 115 yards and a touchdown and Tarvaris Jackson threw for another to lead Seattle to a 30-13 win over St Louis in a match-up of NFL also-rans yesterday.

The Seahawks improved to 6-7 with their fourth victory in five games to boost their long-shot playoff hopes.

They must win every remaining game to have a winning season and any hope of their second trip in a row to the playoffs.

The Rams fell to 2-11, matching Minnesota for the NFL's second-worst record behind the winless Indianapolis.

Nine of top 10 women here

Tyson Otto
Tennis

THE hottest women's field outside of a grand slam will line up at the Apia International Sydney.

Event organisers yesterday said a record nine of the top 10 women in the world have signed to play at the Sydney Olympic Park event, to begin on January 8, starring Aussie Sam Stosur.

Russian Maria Sharapova is the only top-10 player not coming.

In fact, 17 of the world's top 20 will play in Sydney, including Aussie Sam Stosur and Danish world No.1 Caroline Wozniacki.

The men's field is also stronger than this year's tournament.

However it again will rely on Argentine 2009 US Open champion Juan Martin Del Potro to attract fans.

Aussie Lleyton Hewitt joins top-20 trio John Isner (US), Feliciano Lopez (Spain) and Richard Gasquet (France) in the field.



Starter: Stosur

Draft brings in Frost but options still open

GWS recruitment manager Stephen Silvagni says his job is far from done despite the AFL newcomers putting the final piece of the puzzle in place for their inaugural season.

The Giants grabbed 18-year-old Sam Frost from VFL club Sandringham with the first pick in yesterday's AFL rookie draft, but didn't use a single pick after the first round.

The former Carlton great said his club was thrilled to have picked up the 194cm tall Frost, but the Giants were mindful about keeping spots open on their senior list for uncontracted players from rival clubs and will add to their roster next year.