



Q. With Rory McIlroy, I know you're not happy with the finish, but overall how do you feel?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, overall (inaudible). We had a good chance on 16 for birdie, (inaudible) 17 and then missed (inaudible) 18. So I feel like I'm in a great position.

Q. The way you are, (inaudible) what were your expectations coming off a long layoff coming into this week?

RORY McILROY: I mean, I tried to approach this week with low expectations but just to see how it went, just take each day as it came. For the first two days I played well, I'm in a good position. My body feels good, which is the important thing I think. If I continue to play (inaudible) I've got a great chance this week.

Q. Rory, let's start with 14, what a great second shot. Give us the number and what were you thinking when you saw it.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I had like 156 uphill into the wind off the left a little bit, and these greens are so spongy that anything that hits the green pin high with a little bit of slope is going to come back straight at you. So I took a 9-iron, just tried to hit it really soft and cut it in there to take a bit of distance off it. I just saw the replay of it there, it pitched a little further left than I wanted it to, but it was a nice break, kicked right and went straight in the hole, so that was obviously a big bonus.

Q. Yeah, you got some momentum going there, of course a couple short misses at the end, but that happens here on these Poa greens. How do you feel going into the weekend now?

RORY McILROY: I feel good. I would have taken a 65 starting today and I definitely would have taken a two-shot lead going into the weekend, so I'm in a great position.

I'm kicking myself because I missed a couple of short ones coming in, but overall I'm in a good spot and looking forward to being in contention over the weekend.

Q. And you feel good, the stomach thing is gone?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, the stomach thing is pretty much gone. I think it was just a 24-hour thing. I sort of stayed in bed for about 14 hours last night and woke up this morning and felt brand new, so that was good. And then obviously the rib feels good and everything. Yeah, physically, I'm happy with where I'm at.

Q. Rory, a very nice scorecard. A lot of birdies and that eagle. When you look back on this day, what do you take away?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean I played really solid. I basically hit the ball where I was looking for the most part. I think my wedge play was really good. I had some really good wedges and short irons and that's really, if you can do that around here you're going to score well.

A little disappointed with the couple of misses coming in, but it can happen late in the day on these greens. Yeah, a couple of misreads, that was really it. I felt like I made two good strokes on those last two holes, but these things happen. But I'm still, I'm two-ahead going in the weekend, so I'm in a good spot.

Q. When we talked yesterday you said you were a little conservative because your stomach was upset. Today you felt better when you came to the golf course. Did that ramp up the aggressiveness in your opinion?

RORY McILROY: A little bit. I definitely made a few more committed swings and I just felt like I had a bit more energy. I had a bit more pep in my step. I wasn't just trying to get through the round today, I was trying to build on the score that I had and it was nice to feel like that again.

Q. Finally, you come here after not playing for a little more than six weeks, you had the rib injury, but right now you're on the top of the leaderboard. Have you at least at the halfway point met or exceeded expectations?

RORY McILROY: Oh, exceeded expectations, way exceeded expectations. I came here not with low expectations but I didn't really know what to expect. It's my first competitive week back after seven weeks, an injury. I was just trying to take it each day as it came. I've got through two days and I'm in a pretty good spot and hopefully the next two days go just as well. Definitely exceeded expectations up until this point.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I felt a little bit better today. Yeah, like I was just trying to get through the day yesterday and I felt like I did really well. Today I woke up with a little more energy and felt a bit better and just trying to build on the score that I made yesterday. Yeah, I got off to a good start and sort of kept it going. A little bit disappointed with the way I finished, but overall if you had told me at the start of the week that I would be leading by two going into the weekend, I definitely would have taken it.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: I mean, I guess there's -- I've always been a pretty fast starter. I've

started my season usually in the Middle East for the last sort of decade. This year it was in South Africa. But I've always played well, it's always been either a top-5 or top-3 or competing for a win. So I've always felt like I've played well coming off a bit of a layoff, but it's different when you come off a layoff with an injury.

So I really didn't know what to expect but physically I feel really good. 36 holes, it's not the most physically demanding golf course. Obviously the altitude takes a little bit out of you but I feel great. Yeah, I mean, I think I've exceeded my expectations coming into the week. I would have -- I would have liked to have said coming in here yeah, I'm going to just get straight back at it and contend for the win or whatever, but I'm sort of a bit more realistic than that. Coming in here this week I definitely would have taken a top-10, it would have been a great start to come back, but I'm in a great position and I can think about trying to win this thing.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: Yeah, no, it was a nice bounce-back after the bogey on 12. Yeah, no, it was good. It was nice to bounce back with the birdie on 13 and then it was a bonus on 14. Anytime you hole a shot, it's part skill but there's a lot of luck involved with that as well. And the birdie on 15 was nice, too. Had a couple of good chances coming in also but didn't quite capitalize, but yeah, it was a nice little run.

Q. Sounds like there's a little bit of surprise that you're playing this well, and secondly, is there a certain level of comfort you have on this golf course? It seems like you've sort of figured it out.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think so. I don't want to jinx it, but yeah, I'm surprised that the scoring isn't better. Obviously there's a lot to adjust to with altitude and the greens and whatever, but I guess it is tricky if you miss it in the wrong spots but I haven't really put myself out of position at all and that's probably why I'm a couple ahead right now.

Q. (Question about No 14.)

RORY McILROY: 14, I hit 3-wood off the tee. It wasn't playing quite as much into the wind as yesterday, so I wanted to lay it up short of that bunker on the right. I had like 156 yards to the pin, uphill into the wind a little bit. I could have got a wedge there easy but just because of how spongy the greens are, if anything it would have landed up by that pin and just would have spun right back to the front of the green. So I tried to saw off a little 9-iron trying to cut it a little bit. It didn't cut quite as much as I wanted it to, but it took a nice little bounce right off the fringe and went in.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: I don't know. I felt good with my golf game. Like I felt like I didn't have much energy yesterday and I was feeling a little bit rough, but I felt much better today just

energy wise and I felt like I could concentrate a little bit more and it paid off.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think we're fortunate that we got in today. No, I mean I'll just try and keep to the same game plan, try and keep doing the same things. It's worked so far so hopefully it will work the next two days as well.

Q. Is this a bit of a confidence boost? It sounded like some uncertainty coming in because you haven't competed in so long?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it is. Anytime you're up at the top of the leaderboard at a World Golf Championship with the best players in the world around you, your confidence has to be pretty high. Again, to be at the top of the leaderboard and going into the weekend, yeah, it is a bit of a confidence boost. There's still a lot of golf left to play, but I'm really happy with how the last two days have went.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, I probably won't get the 12 hours sleep that I got last night again, but I feel good. Yeah, as I said, I have a little more energy today. I'll get a good bit of rest tonight and I'll hopefully be ready to go again tomorrow.