

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**May 2, 2018**



**RORY McILROY**

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**SHARON SHIN:** I would like to welcome in the 2010 and 2015 champion of the Wells Fargo Championship, Rory McIlroy. Rory, obviously you won your first PGA TOUR event here and you're the only two-time winner of this event. It must be pretty special to come back here this year.

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, it is. It's always nice to come back to a golf course and an event where you've played well before and you have some really good memories. Luckily, this week is one of those weeks for me. I've always enjoyed the golf course through the different variations of it from 2010 all the way up until now. I've played it well. And yeah, it's one of those golf courses that sets up well for me. It fits my eye, I feel like I can play my game around here and that served me pretty well over the years. Hopefully, this week's another good week and it's the start of a pretty busy stretch for me and I'm looking forward to kicking that off in a positive fashion.

**SHARON SHIN:** Your first start since a T5 finish at the Masters. Your comments about your game and how you're feeling this week.

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I've practiced a good bit over the past sort of 10 days. I didn't really do much for a couple of weeks after Augusta and sort of just got back into it last week. So there will probably be a little rust in there tomorrow. There was definitely some rust out there in the pro-am today, so going to go to the range after this and work on a few things.

Yeah, I felt like going into the few weeks leading up to Augusta I was playing well. Obviously got myself in the final group, didn't play quite so well on the last day. But the game's feeling good and hopefully I can play my way into the tournament this week and hopefully play my way into contention on the weekend.

**Q. Rory, Justin just in here and he was asked would you rather play this golf course as the PGA venue with the different grasses and how it was set up versus the way it is this week. He said clearly the PGA venue. This one would you prefer?**

**RORY McILROY:** I like this one. Any time you can get it overseeded, I like that. Look, this golf course feels two to three shots easier this week than it was for the PGA just with we're using it -- there's a couple holes where we're not using the PGA tee boxes. The rough is way more predictable. You're not going to get the flyer, you basically know how it's going to come out and you can control your ball a little bit before out of the rye rough than you would out of bermuda, so I prefer it like this. It's a little easier, it sort of sets up a little better for me, I guess.

**Q. And also your birthday on Friday, can you reflect on what you've accomplished in your 20s?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah. Yeah, I guess if you had to ask me when I was turning 20, you know, what would you like to achieve in the next 10 years, I think I've basically done everything that I would have wanted to on that list, maybe even more than that.

But yeah, I can't believe I'm turning 29 in two days. It sort of goes so quickly. Yeah, I'm really happy. I think you're always going to look back and you're going to have things that you would have done differently, but at the end of the day if you look at it big picture-wise and things that I've accomplished and the things that I've learned over the last eight or nine years, it's been a pretty good run, and hopefully my -- still not quite into the my 30s, but hopefully the next 10 years are even better.

**Q. Rory, you mentioned your strong play at this event in the past. Other than just sort of it suits my eye, can you kind of break down why this course really fits your game?**

**RORY McILROY:** I think there's a lot of mid and long irons, that plays to my strength. There's one less par 5 now than there used to be, but the par 5s are very gettable. I think they have toughened the golf course up a lot even though it is playing a little easier than it was at the PGA. It used to be if you weren't sort of 1 or 2 under after six, you would be disappointed, where now if you're even par through six holes, you're pretty happy with that. The first six is a pretty tough stretch.

Then once you get through those, then you have some chances coming up. You've got the seventh hole, eighth hole, 10th hole, and then 14 and 15 as well. So tough start and then you sort of do your scoring in the middle and then hold on for the last three. But yeah, a lot of long irons and sort of mid irons and that suits me.

**Q. Rory, you and the other guys make the game look relatively easy. I know it's not. What do you find most difficult about this game, why is it so hard?**

**RORY McILROY:** I think having a consistent mindset the entire time. I think golf is a very mental game obviously and I think you're always reacting to things that happen. Sometimes that can take you off the path that you want to go down. So I think staying really consistent to what you're working on, what your beliefs are, what your routine is, I think the more you can be really, really dialed in with that, the better a player you're going to be. So I think that's one of the hardest things in golf, just trying to stick to that the entire time.

**Q. Rory, can you just talk about how you play the Green Mile, 16, 17, 18, and is there anything -- you've played here many times already, is there anything in your practice round that you do specifically to get ready for those holes?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I mean, it's a really tough stretch. You're not really expecting to

make many birdies on that stretch over the course of four days. If you make 12 pars, you're going to come off pretty happy. I guess especially 16 and 17. I think 18 is a little -- it's maybe not quite as difficult as the other two, but definitely 16 and 17 you're going to chip from some positions where you think you might miss the green, especially that right-hand bunker on 16 or even down in that little hollow on 17. It's a 225-yard shot to a narrow green over water.

There's going to be -- you know, at least ones or twice you're going to be under that right side and you're going to have to be pretty comfortable with the shot that you leave yourself, so practice that a little bit.

Yeah, just got to be prepared for anything and know that you're not going to hit every green every time that you go out there to play that stretch. As long as you know that going into it, then you can at least accept that I've got to chip and putt here, I've got to get it up and down. They're three really strong holes.

**Q. You mentioned you like the changes, the variations in the golf course over the years since you first won it. With the changes that you saw in the PGA Championship especially on the front nine, how does that impact how you guys map your way around through those first six because you mentioned even par through 6 is pretty good?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, exactly. Instead of a relatively easy par 5, which used to be the fifth hole, now you've got a tough par 3 and a tough par 4. As I said, even par through 6 is a pretty good score. Yeah, it's just about playing your way into the round. I think even if you are 1 or 2 over par after those six holes, you know you've got chances coming up. It doesn't feel like you're under as much pressure to get off to a fast start because it felt like if you're even par through 6 back at the way the golf course used to be, you had a little bit of catching up to do.

But it's a great golf course, you just have to hit solid shots and hit greens and give yourself chances. You know, you can't fake it around here, you've just got to stand up, hit good golf shots and you'll get rewarded for them.

**Q. Do you ever feel like you need to hit more fairways than you usually do, and if that required sacrificing some length off the tee, is that ever a trade-off you would want to make or no?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, definitely. I don't know why it flashed up on the screen today, driving accuracy statistics, and I saw Stenson was leading at like 76 percent. I was like, jeez, if I hit 76 percent of the fairways, the game would be pretty easy. If that means sacrificing a little bit of distance, 100 percent I would do that. But we grow up around this game not knowing how to hit an easy driver. You stand up with a driver and you hit it as hard as you can and you hope it's going to go in the fairway.

But yeah, certainly if it meant that I would only average -- "only" -- average 290 off the tee or 295 and I was going to hit 15 percent more of the fairways, yeah, I'd do that.

**Q. How long did the Masters Sunday sit with you?**

**RORY McILROY:** Probably about a week. I went back home and sort of decompressed, binge watched a couple of shows, read a couple of books, drank a few bottles of wine.

No, I don't mean like that. That sounds really bad, it wasn't that bad.

But yeah, it got to the point where Erica had to drag me out of the house and say, okay, we're going to go do something. I said okay. And once I got back in my sort of routine, I was fine. I was disappointed because I just didn't give a good account of myself the last day. I felt that I got lucky on Saturday. That 65 was as good as I could have played. I got lucky, I chipped in, there were a couple of balls that hit trees and came back into the fairways, hit it up in the azaleas, I got away with it. My game wasn't quite -- I was sort of holding it together. And then obviously under the pressure of Sunday trying to chase Patrick down, it just never quite clicked for me. So it was disappointing that's the way the week finished, but it was nowhere near as disappointing as the experience I had there a few years ago. At least I got myself in the final group, I gave myself a chance and that will ultimately make next year easier when I hopefully get myself back in that position.

**Q. When you were binge watching whatever you were binge watching, are you watching the screen but really your mind is replaying shots from Sunday? Is that how it stuck with you?**

**RORY McILROY:** No, I think it was more just the quiet moments you catch yourself -- I was trying to immerse myself in anything but golf at that point. I was binge watching Billions for a while and read a couple of good books. It was just the quiet moments when you're staring off into the distance and you're thinking about a certain shot or a certain putt and you're just like, yeah, it got to the point where I needed to see a bit of daylight and get outside and go for walks and start to do my usual thing. Then it sort of went away and then your mind starts to focus on what's coming up. I'm excited about the next few weeks, got some great events to look forward to, my game's in good shape. So I'm looking forward to hopefully having chances to win more tournament.

**Q. What did you read?**

**RORY McILROY:** I read a book called The Chimp Paradox and I read a book called Essentialism.

**Q. Obviously there's been so much attention going into the Masters these last few years. If you just had four majors but they were two and two and it wasn't trying to complete the career Grand Slam, would this not be as big of a deal?**

**RORY McILROY:** I don't think so because the Masters has now become the biggest golf tournament in the world, and I'm comfortable saying that. I don't care about the U.S. Open or The Open Championship. It is the biggest tournament in the world, the most amount of eyeballs, the most amount of hype. The most amount of everything is at Augusta.

For me, it's the most special tournament that we play and it's the one that everyone desperately wants to win, but even if I was going for my first major, it's tough, it's tough to win. I thought Patrick did a fantastic job on Sunday holding it together because he didn't have his best stuff, but he made a couple key putts coming in which helped him.

So no, I don't think the Grand Slam, that's not really what I think about. I just think about trying to win the Masters and what that means and being able to go and use the champions locker room, just all the cool stuff that comes along with it.

**Q. Rory, I think it was the 5-iron, that great pass you made on the shot into 15 years ago when you won here, was that the greatest -- was that your purest shot you ever hit, and if so, what do you remember about it? Do you relive it, what did it feel like when you hit that ball?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, the drive that preceded it was pretty good, too.

I don't know. I mean, I remember a lot about it. I remember it was probably like a two- or three-yard fade. It was one of those times where you get in the zone and you're very aware of everything. Your senses, all your senses are just a little more heightened, I guess.

That 5-iron was a great shot. Yeah, it's nice. I'm thinking about a handful of shots that I've hit here over the years where I would say were one of the best shots I've hit. No one will remember this. I hit a 6-iron into the 13th hole on Saturday in 2015 when I won. It went to maybe 10 feet, but it was just one of the purest golf shots I've ever hit. No one would really know about that, but it was those sort of shots that stand out in my mind. But 15 with that 5-iron with a chance to win on Sunday, that was pretty special, too.

**Q. I just wanted to follow up with a couple of those Masters questions, not about the Masters but about your mindset. I work with junior high and high school students who talk all the time about being afraid to fail and how you handle adversity, and you have had both success and adversity in your career. First of all, how do you handle it and how do you tell young people to do it?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I think that's the most important thing, you can't be afraid of failure because you have to be willing to fail to succeed, I guess. You have to be willing to take the risks and put yourself out there knowing that if you don't win, it's going to hurt, but if you do win, it's going to be that much better. So I think that's the first thing is not being afraid of losing. There's no shame in that as long as you learn from it. You know, everything's a learning opportunity. As long as you learn and you move forward and you put what you've learned into practice the next time, you're going to be better for it. So that's what I would tell

them.

**Q. The evening before the final round you sort of insinuated that a lot of the pressure was going to be on Patrick Reed. Did you underestimate the pressure that you were going to face trying to complete the career Grand Slam?**

**RORY McILROY:** No. Look, I knew that I was going to go into Sunday and feel it. If I didn't feel it, I think I would be asking questions about myself. But yeah, I didn't underestimate -- I underestimated -- you know, I got onto the first tee and it was like, wow, this is pretty cool, it feels like there's a lot of people rooting for me here. Even the guys on the first tee at Augusta, the members are saying, "We would love to have dinner with you tonight," and that stuff. I was like, "Oh, this is sort of -- it's nice, but don't be ordering me anything just yet."

So yeah, there's a lot of pressure that comes with it, but I was just -- I think sleeping on a lead is more pressure than trying to chase it. I feel like I just -- I maybe put myself under too much pressure to get close to him. Even though I did get quite close, I just could never quite get my game in shape to keep it close enough where I had a chance on the back nine.

**Q. And how badly do you want a piece of Patrick Reed at the Ryder Cup?**

**RORY McILROY:** Look, I'm one of 12, and as long as you win the Ryder Cup, I'm very happy.

**SHARON SHIN:** I would like to thank Rory McIlroy for his time and good luck this week. Thank you.

**RORY MCILROY:** Thank you.