

ROUND 3 INTERVIEW
May 5, 2018



RORY McILROY (-3)

Q. With the guy who's won this event twice, you made a nice move on Saturday, a 10-shot improvement from Friday to Saturday, 76 to 66. What was the big change?

RORY McILROY: I just played a bit better, putting the ball in play, putted better as well. Still don't feel all that comfortable with my game, to be honest. Sort of working on a few things. But yeah, it was a good round and it gives me half a chance going into tomorrow.

Q. What's the big thing that you want to try and tweak going in the final round?

RORY McILROY: Sort of everything. I'm just not that comfortable with anything right now. I'm sort of -- I'm trying really hard to hit it in the fairway and then trying really hard to get my irons on line. It's all just a little bit of a struggle. So trying to piece it together, but if I can do a little bit of practice this afternoon, yeah, hold it together tomorrow and then try and make some improvements before next week.

Q. What was better?

RORY McILROY: The course was easier; maybe not quite 10 shots easier but it was a few shots easier. Just greens are a little softer, the humidity in the air, the moisture, it's just sort of held a bit more. There's a few up tees. So yeah, I mean, it was a bit easier out there. I played a little bit better, got the ball in the fairway more, holed some more putts. But yeah, sort of still hanging in there, sort of just trying to get it around, I guess.

Q. Is it reminiscent at all of 2010 when it was really hard those first two days, you were able to make a run on the weekend?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, yeah. It seems that way. But I think -- I'm not sure what the lead's going to be by the end of the day, but the leaders are going to have it pretty similar to what we had it this morning. Not much wind out there. As I said, with the humidity, there's still a bit of moisture on the greens, so I can definitely see someone getting to double digits under par by the end of the day.

Q. After yesterday, having a day like this, how important is that for you?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's nice. Again, I didn't play that well. It's not as if -- I mean, the score sort of flatters me a little bit even with the bogey at the last. But yeah, it's there. Tomorrow's another chance to try and make some improvements going into next week. I don't know if I'll be -- if I'll be close enough to make a run at it, but hopefully another day like this tomorrow will give me a bit of confidence going into Jacksonville.

Q. Do you look forward to next week?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, yeah, I do look forward to it.

Q. Why?

RORY McILROY: I've learnt to love it. I hated it the first --

Q. Love?

RORY McILROY: Well, like. Learnt to like.

Q. Why?

RORY McILROY: I felt like it handcuffed me. I felt like I was just being stubborn and sort of not -- you know, trying to hit driver where there's no point in hitting driver. So I've learnt to take it for what it is, very positional golf course. You've just got to plot your way around, and sort of pars aren't so bad around there most of the time. Just got to get yourself in the right frame of mind to go out and do that.

Q. We were talking to Peter Uihlein. How much respect do you have for him? He kind of took a different path from a lot of the other guys here.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, coming over to play in Europe. Yeah, look, he did it his own way. It's probably made him -- I don't necessarily know if it's made him a better golfer if he would have tried to do it in the States, but it's probably made him a more well-rounded person, just different cultures and traveling. You learn a bit about yourself when you're in faraway countries and no one speaks English and you're sort of on your own. So I respect him for that. It's probably made him a more well-rounded, better person. But I think if he hadn't taken the European route or the American route, he still would have gotten to where he wanted to be. He's a good player.

Q. Would you recommend more Americans do that?

RORY McILROY: Honestly, no. I mean, everything's here, everything's in America. If you're good enough, play the Web.com for a year, get straight onto the PGA TOUR, which is the best tour in the world. I don't see any reason to do anything else.

Q. What part of your game are you most frustrated with right now?

RORY McILROY: Everything. Starting it left off the tee. My driving -- yeah, driving. Yeah, I mean, I usually drive the ball so well and it's something I'm really struggling with. I'm having to think really hard over the ball, a few key thoughts or whatever. Yeah, need to drive the ball better and hopefully the rest of the game sort of matches up from there.

Q. Just the ebbs and flows of golf right now for you, is this kind of what --

RORY McILROY: Yeah, exactly. You go through it. You have bad days like yesterday, you have better days like today, and it's all about managing your game. You're not going to be on every week and just making those little improvements. Think you need to be an eternal optimist in golf and keep looking ahead and looking forward and looking forward to the next week. Treat every round as a bit of a -- you know, hopefully you learn something and you move on, you can put it into practice the next day. And that's sort of the way I've treated today and how I'll treat tomorrow going into next week.

Q. How's his 62 compare to your 61?

RORY McILROY: My 61 was way better (laughs.) It's a different golf course. I mean, 9 under around this place is really good.

Q. Was it overcast, was it soft?

RORY McILROY: No, it was sort of sunny and it was sort of -- wasn't much wind, similar conditions to today. I don't know. I mean, I guess you could go back and see what my strokes gained against the field was compared to his and that's a good way to compare.

Q. Rory, why do you think you turned the corner at Sawgrass? You have had a bunch of top-10s there.

RORY McILROY: The first year I made the cut -- I mean, the first year I made the cut, I top-10ed it, and the first three times I went I didn't play the weekend. I went that fourth time thinking, okay, I'm going to have a different mindset here and play a bit more conservatively and play the way Pete Dye wants you to play this golf course, and it ended up working out okay. So probably then, which was 2012 maybe I think, or 2013.

Q. Are there specific holes there you get to and you want to do one thing and you just have to, like, no, no, no?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I would love to hit driver on the first and take it over all that stuff on the right and give myself a flip wedge in, but you hit it down the left and you hit your 9-iron onto the green. So it's just a matter of being really mature about it and just playing the right way.

Q. Is there a lesson there for anywhere else for you, or has there been?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, loads of places. Not every golf course you can get driver in your hand on most holes and bombs away. You've got -- I don't play Hilton Head, but Hilton Head's a golf course where you just have to do that. Yeah, a lot of U.S. Open venues. Shinnecock this year, I know it's a bit bigger and a bit wider, but still you're going to have to

plot your way along and do the right thing and not take too much of the golf course on, I guess. I mean, it applies most places.