

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**May 1, 2019**

**RORY McILROY**



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**Q. Rory, thank you for taking the time to join us today. Two-time champion of the Wells Fargo Championship. If you can just make an opening comment on getting ready to play here in 2019.**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, excited. It's always a place that I look forward to coming to every year. The golf course is probably as good as it has been since all of the changes back in '15 and '16 and sort of getting ready for the PGA a couple years ago. So all the changes have sort of bedded in nicely and the course is in great shape. So yeah, I'm excited to be playing again after a couple weeks off. Got a busy stretch coming up and hopefully start off with a good tournament this week.

**Q. I think you mentioned at Augusta it was the driving that maybe let you down. Such an important part of your game. Do you have a protocol when you have some time off to sort of dial that back in, and what is that?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I noticed a few -- I guess one of the good things about having two weeks off is you have time to delve into a couple of things. The Masters, that was actually really good because you could see basically every shot that you hit, right? So going back, I struggled -- there's a few particular shots that I struggled with that week. The second shot into 11 and the tee shot on 17, I struggled with both of those shots throughout the four days. So I just went back and looked at those and looked at the swings that I made and sort of noticed a couple things in my swing that were sort of getting off.

Even throughout the course of this year things that I've been able to manage, but you just let it go a little bit too long and then you're faced with shots that you're a little uncomfortable with, and then those bad habits are going to rear their heads whenever you don't want them to; more difficult golf shots or pressure situations or whatever.

So just basically had to go back and I had a good few days with my coach, Michael Bannon, last week and we worked on a few things. Really just trying to neutralize my ball flight a little bit. I felt like going into Augusta, if I wanted to shape one, I would shape it a lot right to left or I would shape it a lot left to right where you're aiming so far in either direction you're playing for a big curve or a big miss and that's never really been my game. So just sort of delved into that a little bit and worked on a couple mechanics and feel a bit better about it coming into this week.

**Q. I think it was Justin Rose who said yesterday that in the old days, which was last year, you finished the Masters and you had like a month, two months where you didn't have to think about a major championship at all and then you gear up for the U.S.**

**Open. Is it weird right now to get used to this, to still be forgetting about the Masters and the PGA's right on top of you?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, but I mean, no, I'm just playing tournaments, I'm just sort of going through my schedule. I'm playing here, I'm playing up at Bethpage. I guess it's nice because -- I think it would be a little different if you were going straight from the Masters into the U.S. Open because they're two completely different tests. I would assume Bethpage is going to feel like a normal PGA TOUR setup, you're not really going to have to do anything differently. I don't know if guys are going to go up early and look at the course or not. I'm not planning to. I've never done that for a PGA before and I've done pretty well at them. Just treating it like any other event.

And then after that I'm playing Memorial, Canada, U.S. Open. I've been pathetic at the U.S. Open so I've changed that up, I'm going to make that my third week in a row. Three missed cuts in a row. It is pathetic. You could do that. (Laughing.)

So I sort of view it -- I don't view it as just this big week or this big week, it's a stretch of golf coming up and I'm excited about that.

**Q. Rory, you guys often talk about trying to have your games peak four times a year. Is it possible to peak four times a year, and if so, how?**

**RORY McILROY:** If anyone's come up with a formula, I would love to hear it. I would rather just have my game at a high level for as much of the year as I possibly can. If you're playing good enough, you're going to get yourself into contention more times than not and you just hope that some of those weeks are the bigger weeks.

But I think there are certain things that you can do. I mean, if I look back through all the success that I've had winning tournaments, whether it be a major or not, I always go back to the fact that, oh, yeah, I was in a really good place that week.

What does that mean? How do you quantify that? How do you get yourself back in that place more often? And that's not necessarily hitting golf balls. It's doing other stuff and getting your mind in the right place. So that's why I've been quite, you know, outspoken about that because I think that's what will help me ultimately win more majors, is being in the right place mentally.

**Q. What are some of the technical things you said you've been working on?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, so I thought my posture had sort of gotten a little bit slack. I didn't have a lot of hip hinge, so like my belt line was getting sort of quite flat, there wasn't quite as much like tilt. Because of that, my shoulder plane had got very flat. Club and sort of arms were getting behind me early in the golf swing, and then from there the club has to travel such a long way to get back down in front of me.

So I was relying a lot on timing, I was relying a lot on sort of upper body rotation, just sort of out of sync a little bit. So trying to get a little bit steeper in my shoulder plane, which started with posture and staying in my posture. I was sort of coming up out of my posture and sort of falling back on my heels. I went back to swings from a few years ago and I almost used to go the other way where I would lose height in the backswing and then I'd come back up, where this year it's almost like getting tight in the backswing and then have to come down. So just a little bit of that and out of sequence, so just trying to stay in the ground a little more in the backswing and sort of sync it up a little bit.

**Q. How long did it take?**

**RORY McILROY:** There's still some shots I get over this week and I'm a little uncomfortable and I'm just really trying to make some good rehearsals. But it felt -- I could see the compression on the golf ball and the shapes I was hitting on the range last week were much better, much more -- if I wanted to hit a two- or three-yard draw I could do it instead of having to aim 15 yards right and really rely on hands to turn the golf ball over, or the other way.

**Q. Rory, when you congratulated Tiger after the Masters, you referenced most people had no idea how low he had gotten. Were you referencing at all your own playing with him maybe when he was at his worst or when he was really struggling? Is there anything you personally remember from that that you thought -- that you're talking about that we would not have seen or known?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I mean, I had lunch with him in Jupiter just over two years ago. It was March 2017, coming off the back of another surgery or whatever. All he was thinking about was quality of life, watching his kids grow up, being able to play soccer in the backyard. So his mind wasn't even on golf, which sort of told me he's sort of thinking about this could be it. I think from stories that I've heard of the Champions dinner at Augusta that year, he was sort of saying the same things.

So I think that's not low in terms of -- but just maybe not playing competitive golf again. So to think in two years of what's happened, it's incredible. I feel like the surgeon or whoever it was, I don't think anybody's interviewed him, have they? It's a big deal to come back from what he has. I don't think people quite appreciate what has went into it, but it just shows he's gritty, he's determined. It's always been one of his best qualities and it was awesome to see. For everyone in golf, you know, all of us, whether you're a player, whether you're in the media, it's just great for our game in general. I think it was a great day.

**Q. Do you think in any way the younger guys are getting kind of a taste of what Tiger used to do, or is it just not the same?**

**RORY McILROY:** No, it's not the same. Look, it's not -- maybe, but, you know, Pebble Beach in 2000, I think that's a once-in-a-lifetime sort of performance. I don't think something like that's going to happen again. But he's competitive and he's going to be up there. The

Masters is such a good one for him to -- you know, he doesn't -- only certain people are allowed inside the ropes. He doesn't have to deal with what he has to deal with week in and week out. It's almost like a little sanctuary for him, right? I think that obviously played into his hands there.

Going forward, he knows that he can win on the biggest stage again. Not that he didn't know; like he obviously does. Yeah, it's just a great story.

**Q. Do you think that his Masters win puts 19 back in the playbook?**

**RORY McILROY:** I mean, I would certainly think so. It rejuvenates, reenergizes that narrative. That's still another four -- I guess the thing is as well, like a lot of people were comparing it to Jack in '86 and everyone knew that was going to be Jack's last major championship. Like Tiger could be competitive at Augusta for the next 10 years if his body holds up. So, I mean, yeah, yeah.

**Q. Is 30 just a number to you? It's good if it's on your scorecard?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, if you shoot 30 on a nine, you're doing okay. I think so, yeah. I played a practice round with Sam Saunders yesterday and he's 31 but he's got two kids, one at 10 and one at 5. I'm not quite at that stage yet, but this life, it makes you grow up quickly. Like I don't feel -- it's funny, I still feel like I'm one of the younger guys, but in my mind I'm not 30, either. It's a weird -- I don't know, I don't know what age I really am. It's sort of I was here when I was 20 and winning at Quail Hollow and that was sort of -- but it doesn't, it doesn't feel like 10 years ago. It's a weird -- I don't know.