
Q. Rory, how much fun is it to play this course for you, in particular today and what you were able to do in the first round of this championship?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it is, it's a fun golf course. It's a golf course that I feel very comfortable on. I've got some great memories here. You know, it went through different iterations since we started coming here, but every time they tweak something here or there, you know, it's still sort of the same place and it really fits my eye. You know, every time I step onto this golf course, I feel like I have a chance to shoot a good score. I didn't play my best today, I sort of managed my game well, scrambled well, but it added up to a good number at the end of the day.

Q. A lot of great shots, but I want to go to the escape at No. 12 from the rough and the trees, and what we thought was jail was you hitting it to four feet away. Now, you didn't make it, but still that shot was amazing. Describe that one for us.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I probably didn't deserve to make the putt after the tee shot. It was probably -- anyways. Yeah, you know, I hit 3-wood off the tee trying to put it in position. Sometimes I hit driver on that line and you get away with it because you get past that first set of trees, but today obviously with the 3-wood I didn't. It was just one of those, I said to my caddie Harry before I hit it, "Is the left bunker okay? Is that an okay leave? Can I get it up and down from there? He said, "Yeah, it is." That's where I assumed it was going to go, but it came out perfectly, had a little more cut on it than I thought it was going to out of the rough, took a nice couple of hops and got up there very close.

Q. Rory, you talk about all the different iterations of this golf course. Do you ever come back and wonder if it's going to be the same golf course as much as it's changed?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, you know, I was really interested to see the different grass from 2014 to 2015 going from a pure bentgrass golf course to bermuda. That was going to be different, but in '15 I handled that okay.

And then coming back for the PGA, you know, morphing the first and second holes into the first hole and then putting the new par 3 in, but it still feels like the same course. It still has that feeling. I think it's the purest golf course we play all year in terms of preparation and how manicured it is. It just has a really nice feel about it. I've always felt comfortable here. I've obviously got good memories. You know, if I had to pick a favorite out of all the different variations we've played, I would say the first one is still my favorite, the first way we played back in 2010 when I came here, but doesn't mean it's still not a great golf course.

Q. As you look back on that first win for any level of success you had afterwards, obviously it was your first pro win.

RORY McILROY: Yeah.

Q. Maybe just the way you got it done or --

RORY McILROY: It was definitely one of the most enjoyable. It was, you know, winning on the PGA TOUR for the first time is a big deal. It's sort of a life changer. You really, you step up to one of the strongest fields. At the time I think there was like Angel Cabrera and Phil Mickelson up there on that leaderboard, and to win a golf tournament with those guys on the leaderboard felt pretty good.

Q. In your own words, Rory, what does it mean to manage your game?

RORY McILROY: Get the most out of your round, turn 70s in 66 is like I did today. Whatever, turn 75s into 71s.

Q. You played 70 today do you think?

RORY McILROY: I felt like I hit it like I should have shot sort of 1 or 2 under par. It wasn't -- I didn't feel like it was a round where -- not that I deserved to shoot 5 under, but I got the most out of it, which is nice if I'm able to continue to do that sort of stuff, which I've done this year. The reason my play's been so consistent is those mediocre rounds, still getting in the house under par, not making the big numbers. That's what I think is going to lead to much more consistency for me, which I've started to do.

Q. Have you ever thought that's a strength of you game at all?

RORY McILROY: It started to become a strength of my game over the last couple years, for sure.

Q. You talked about your schedule the other day. How's it going to change for the majors in July? What does that leave for August?

RORY McILROY: You've got FedExCup Playoffs, so that's all going to be there and obviously there's a lot to play for in those. That's every year the FedExCup is getting bigger and bigger and it's more of a target on all the guys' radar, so there's a lot to play for in August obviously.

The regular season with the Wyndham Rewards, that's guys trying to win the regular season as well. And then going forward from there, it allows the guys to have an offseason. If they want to take September, October, November off, they can unless you're a member of a few tours and you've got to go over and play somewhere else. It at least gives guys the flexibility

to have an offseason if they want it, which I think is great.

Q. Would you make a run at the regular season title going to Greensboro?

RORY McILROY: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Q. Are you going to Kapalua next year?

RORY McILROY: I am, yes. I'll see you there. It's nice to say that in May.

Q. Obviously it wasn't your home course, but would you have played Portrush a lot as a kid? Was it difficult to go there?

RORY McILROY: I actually -- so my dad took me to play for my 10th birthday. That's the first time I met Darren Clarke around the chipping green at Royal Portrush. So twenty years ago and a couple day's time is the first time I played it. I played it a little bit growing up, and then the North of Ireland Amateur was there that I played. It was maybe a course that I played three or four times a year. It wasn't that regular.

Q. Would it have been difficult or was it routine to be able to go there to play?

RORY McILROY: You know, so one of the most influential people at Royal Portrush is Wilma Erskine, who basically was one of the key people in getting The Open back to Portrush. We developed a good relationship with Wilma and she said to me anytime you want to come up and play, you're more than welcome. So they were very nice to me in that regard.

Q. What'd you shoot that first time?

RORY McILROY: Probably still better than you.

Q. First round since the Masters, what were you hoping to get out of this day?

RORY McILROY: Just to see some good shots, I guess, make some good swings. You know, I played pretty well in the practice rounds here and felt like what I was trying to do over the last couple weeks with my swing, I felt like it was bedded in pretty well.

I felt sort of scrappy today. I made the most of what I have and made some good putts coming down the stretch, managed my game well and ended up being a good score.

Q. What do you feel like you need to tighten up going forward?

RORY McILROY: Driving. I don't feel I particularly drove the ball that well. I might have hit (inaudible), but the strike wasn't there or the shots weren't coming out the way I envisioned them coming out. The last three tee shots were a little bit better. Just a little bit of that,

maybe just a little more dialed in with the irons. The iron play was actually pretty good, but I felt like I hung in there. My short game was pretty good, I holed some good putts and that's what you're going to have to do around here especially as the course gets firmer.

Q. The Green Mile is such a scorecard wrecker, but you seemed to handle it with such ease. What is your strategy on those final three holes here?

RORY McILROY: Yeah. Well, I think 16's changed over the years, but this variation of it, I can get it past that fairway bunker, which is a big advantage. Instead of some guys being at the top of that hill hitting 6-iron or 5-iron into that green, I was chipping a little 9-iron, which makes it a lot easier. That helps. Length is a bit of an advantage. No. 17 wasn't playing too difficult today, which is nice. On 18, that was the best drive I hit all day and I hit sand wedge in there. May have to rethink the club I hit off the tee going forward there. Yeah, it was good to see some good shots coming down the stretch, especially on difficult holes like this.

Q. You rolled in that six-footer for birdie and it looked to have put a little spring in your step going to the next hole. How much was that birdie important to what you did on the back nine?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, definitely. I said to my caddie Harry going up the 9th, if we can get to 2 under par playing the 14th, the short par 4, then we'll have a good chance to make a couple shots up coming in, and that's exactly what I did. A good birdie on 10, I hit it out of position off the tee and hit a good second shot to get back into position. No. 11, that was a good birdie, and probably should have birdied 12 as well, but I feel like I got the most out of my round today. It was a sort of 69, 70 round that I turned into a 66, so that was nice to do.

Q. You mentioned the driver just a moment ago. Usually we're talking about you leading everybody in strokes gained off the tee, today it was strokes gained approach. How good were the irons?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, they were good. They were much better. I've done a little bit of work on my swing over the last two weeks and it still doesn't feel quite natural, but it's started to bed in. It felt pretty good in the practice rounds around here and I had a decent warm-up today and I carried that into the play on the course.