

ROUND 2 INTERVIEW
May 7, 2021

RORY McILROY (-4)



Q. That was your best strokes gained tee to green since 2019. How good did it feel?

RORY McILROY: Was it?

Q. Yeah.

RORY McILROY: I only hit five fairways. There you go. Take that, traditionalists.

Yeah, it was, it was better. The one thing that I was really happy about coming in here this week was my iron play, felt like I really found something last week. Maybe didn't show -- I didn't get a chance to show it yesterday because I wasn't finding the fairway very much, but today, just having some more opportunities to hit good iron shots and give myself birdie chances, I was able to show it a bit today and it was nice. Played the par 3s, I hit some really good shots into the par 3s and that's something that I haven't been doing for the last few months, so that was nice.

Q. You just talked about trying to commit to the cut with the driver. When did that decision happen? Was that the numbers, looking at the numbers?

RORY McILROY: Just more -- that's the most consistent shot that I hit with the driver. I think these modern drivers nowadays, it's harder to turn them over than it used to be, so I've had to adjust. I can't hit that big swinging draw that I used to hit. I mean, that was my bread and butter. I'd aim it down the middle of the fairway, I know if I made my normal swing it would start on the right edge and draw back to the middle. It just doesn't -- it doesn't quite happen anymore. So it's just being able to -- and that's how I've played most of my life, so it's committing to seeing a different way to hit tee shots and it's just, it's taking a while to get used to it.

Q. When did you realize that?

RORY McILROY: It's been for a while. It's probably been for the last, last couple years probably I've definitely noticed that the ball flight with the driver's more neutral and I just can't turn it over quite as much. So I just have to commit to going down the left side and trusting that it's going to come back.

Q. Whatever you're working on with Pete, where does the balance of technique and (inaudible)?

RORY McILROY: You work on technique when you're at home, but then the feelings that

you have to be playable and I think that's been the big thing with me. I can't -- there's been too many times over the past couple years where I went to tournaments and worked on stuff on the week off and I can't -- I can't get it out of my head, I can't play. So just to have some more playable feelings and not have the swing broken down into five or six parts has been very important, and that's sort of what I tried to develop is still some swing thoughts that are very simple and very playable.

Q. Throughout the process, have you had to convince yourself that maybe you're closer than maybe you are?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Golf is -- when you're playing bad, you feel so far away, and when you're playing good, you always think to yourself, how did I feel like I was so far away? It's such fine margins, especially out here when the difference between a good tee shot and an average tee shot is probably one shot.

Like even on 18 today I felt like I hit a really good drive. It ends up in the bunker on the face and I'm having to get up and down from 75 yards for par. That ball holds its line a touch more and you're hitting an 8-iron in and you've maybe got a chance for birdie. So it does make a difference.

But when you play the way I played sort of through that stretch in March and into April, you're going to get a little bit -- you're going to feel like you're not as close as you probably are. But I worked hard after Augusta, I put my head -- I took a week off and reset, which I needed, but then I put my head down and worked hard and at least felt better about everything coming in here.

Q. Given your sort of seeming comfort level here, is it easier when you get it going a little bit to sort of just let it happen and not feel like you're trying to force it?

RORY McILROY: Yeah. And especially I feel like I've birdied a lot of the hard holes this week, which is nice confidence, but knowing that even if you don't birdie a par-5 or you don't take advantage of the easier holes, that you're hitting it good enough that you can still make birdies on the tougher holes, I guess. So that probably makes it a touch easier that I am here and I'm somewhere that I am very comfortable. Like it is nice, you get it going, you know, you're 3 or 4 under and you get the crowd going with you and then that helps. Especially just having crowds back in general is good, but especially here in Charlotte where I've had some great success and I feed off that as well.

Q. Just talk through 14, Rory. That seemed a bit wacky there.

RORY McILROY: Again, it was me trying to hit draw with driver. I should have probably just hit 3-wood like I hit yesterday, but it was back into the wind a little bit more and I felt I wasn't able to get 3-wood close to the green. So I tried to hit draw, didn't commit to it. Came out of it. Actually, in the air I thought it was going probably going to go out of bounds. Stopped short, and then I just had those two Shotlink things in my way so I just got a drop from them,

and I got pretty lucky. I was trying to land it in that little swale and if it trundled up onto the green to 20 feet, that would have been a really good shot, and it just pitched on the corner of the green, so it was a bit of a bonus. That was probably the catalyst for birdieing the next hole and going on a nice little run.

Q. Rory, when you talked (inaudible), you mentioned that (reference to Bryson DeChambeau.)

RORY McILROY: Not -- he wasn't in my head, it was more the style of the game that he was playing, right? I'm not waking up thinking about Bryson DeChambeau or anything.

Yeah, it was more I think you saw everyone at the start of the year, everyone was experimenting with longer shots, lighter shots, less loft. It was just sort of a bit of a phase that I think everyone went through post U.S. Open.

Q. Are you mad that you did that or are you --

RORY McILROY: No.

Q. -- do you just understand --

RORY McILROY: I'm not mad that I did it. I maybe -- I probably found a little bit of speed that sort of stayed in there from what I did. But again, like adding -- you think about adding 15 yards to your drives, if they go offline, it's just 15 more yards into crap. It's not great. It's just being able to rein it in every now and again and controlling it. With how hard I was hitting it, it was just what it did to my swing, then that fed into the irons and the wedges and everything else, so I was just trying to get back out of that.

Q. What's been your favorite Saturday activity in the last few months?

RORY McILROY: Thanks, Doug.

Q. Does that seem weird to you?

RORY McILROY: Not really. Actually, I was saying we went to the Bahamas for four days after Augusta and I was saying to Stewart Cink I actually enjoyed watching him play Hilton Head. We would go to the beach in the morning and come back up at 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. and I would watch the back nine of the golf. I thought it was really cool just seeing him and Reagan win there. Trying to think if there's anything else. I've just been grinding.

Q. (Inaudible) like three or four tournaments since Bay Hill?

RORY McILROY: Match play, Augusta, PLAYERS. I don't know, I mean, I just -- I don't know. I really --

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: I will, yeah. Going to put it in the GPS in the Quail Hollow Club, yes, I'm gonna be here.

Q. Did anyone approach you about Seminole, GB&I (inaudible) Walker Cup?

RORY McILROY: Not really. Actually, I had dinner with Nathaniel Crosby a couple Fridays -- actually, there you go. I went to the dinner party a couple weekends ago with the U.S. Walker Cup captain.

Not really, I played Seminole with my dad last week and it was in really good condition. I heard a few of the boys are struggling with food poisoning at the minute, so hopefully they get over that. I think it's a wonderful experience. Even though we didn't win, it was a great experience, it was great to be a part of. Seminole's a pretty good place to play the Walker Cup.

Q. Are you a member there or is your dad?

RORY McILROY: Just my dad. I'm a member here, though.