

**ROUND 3 INTERVIEW**  
**May 8, 2021**

**RORY McILROY (-7)**



**Q. You told us about the lack of buzz when there were no fans here and today you were making birdies, they were going crazy. Did it feel big again?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, it did. I said it on the ninth tee, it was buzzy, that atmosphere. But there was certainly a buzz, especially I got it going there on the front nine. And even Scott, who I was playing with, made a couple birdies as well and we were sort of feeding off one another. But just so cool to play in an atmosphere like that again. I've missed it. I didn't think I would miss it as much as I did, but I really have. So to be in contention, to have the fans back, I really enjoyed it out there today and I'm excited about tomorrow.

**Q. I think you gained over three shots putting today. I know you've been working on your swing, but have you found some time to also practice with the flat stick?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I've obviously worked on it a little bit. Saw Fax a couple of times when I was home. Even Pete gave me a couple of little things to think about, which sort of takes my mind off the result of the putt and just sort of going through the process of it a little bit better.

Yeah, I've putted well all week. Historically I've putted these greens well and I just -- even though they've changed from bent greens when I first came here to bermuda, I've always been able to see the lines. So I've been comfortable with that. Then it's just a matter of trusting that I'm putting good strokes on them. I think more than anything today, my speed was good and that was -- you know, when the greens get tricky and there's wind and there's tough reads, speed's almost more important than anything else. My speed was good today and probably part of the reason why I was able to hole a few.

**Q. Rory, what do you expect tomorrow? With crowds coming back on a Sunday, hopefully being in the last group, what are your expectations as far as what --**

**RORY McILROY:** It's going to be cool. It's going to be exciting. Yeah, I haven't -- I haven't had it for a while. I'm trying to think the last time I might have -- maybe like --

**Q. Bay Hill?**

**RORY McILROY:** -- Bay Hill 2020. So yeah, it's going to be -- it's going to be cool. I really have missed it. I mean, I said I didn't think I would miss it as much as I did when we came back. I felt that I actually enjoyed the quietness, but I sort of realized that it's hard for me to bring the best out in myself without that atmosphere that we had today.

I'm just -- look, I'm excited to be in the position I'm in. I wasn't really expecting to be in this position coming into this week. I felt like I was still working on my game and I thought progress this week was being here today, which I am. Then I play well again today. So I just have to go out and try to play well again tomorrow and see where that leaves me.

**Q. Do you get nervous, too? Do you have to get comfortable being nervous again?**

**RORY McILROY:** I like nervous, though, because it means that it matters. It means that it really matters. I like that feeling. It's almost just trying to not be too amped up and get ahead of yourself. I said to Henni over there, sometimes when I get off to a start like today, especially around here, it's hard for me to not get ahead of myself because I've done some pretty cool things here before. Just trying to keep myself -- sort of rein myself back in a little bit. Again, it was cool to play in front of that sort of atmosphere today.

**Q. With your record here and celebrating your birthday here every year, does it feel a little bit like a home away from home? Does that feel like all is right with the world, I'm contending again, I'm back at Quail, we've got fans?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, like people can draw those conclusions that I've come here to Quail, one of my favorite places on Tour, that I've had a birthday, everything feels good. I'm sure there's partly something to do with that, but I would say there's still quite a bit of coincidence. If we were at Colonial this week instead of Quail, I still think I've been playing good enough golf to get myself in contention. I'm happy that it is here because it's a golf course that I am comfortable on, and going into a final round tomorrow with a chance to win, I feel like I need -- I need everything I can get to try to get over the line. For me to be in contention for the first time in a while and for it to be here is probably beneficial.

**Q. Is 12 an indication of what this course is like where numbers kind of (inaudible)?**

**RORY McILROY:** Again, this is sort of where I probably knew I should have hit 3-wood on 12, but I wanted to hit driver to challenge myself, I wanted to hit the tougher shot just to see where I was with my swing and where my game was. I didn't quite pull it off and it sort of bit me, but I was fully committed to what I was doing because that was -- that was my intention. My intention was to try to pull off a shot that I was probably a little uncomfortable with and it didn't quite work, but those are the things that you have to do out there at times. My game plan might be a little different tomorrow being in the final group or final round and being in contention to win a golf tournament. Yeah, I mean, if I could take one back today, it was on the 12th tee because I felt I didn't play the right -- not that I didn't play the right shot, I just didn't hit the right club in the end, but I wanted to challenge myself and it just didn't work out.

**Q. There wasn't a single birdie on 18 today.**

**RORY McILROY:** I mean, I think the only birdie that's been made there with that pin has been Rickie Fowler in a playoff in 2012 to beat me. It's so -- I mean, wind's howling off the left, the green are firm. You pitch it anywhere left of that flag, it's got a chance of going in the

water. I hit a really good shot to 30 feet with a 9-iron. And then you've got a putt that you can't -- it's a defensive putt, you're just trying to lag down there and two-putt. Yeah, tough hole today.