

**ROUND 4 INTERVIEW**  
**May 9, 2021**

**RORY McILROY ( -10)**



**LAURA VESCOVI:** We'll go ahead and get started. First off, we'd love to congratulate you, Rory. You earned your 19th PGA TOUR title here at the Wells Fargo Championship. Obviously a very special win for you, this is the site of your first PGA TOUR win and it's your third win at Quail Hollow Club. Just thoughts on the win today.

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, this place has been good to me. Ever since I first set eyes on this golf course, I loved it from the first time I played it, and that love has sort of been reciprocated back. I've played so well here over the years. I think this is the first time I've ever won an event for the third time, so that's pretty cool to do it here.

And yeah, just I did -- jeez, there's been so many things that -- I'll get into it a little bit later, but I didn't even think I was going to tee off in this tournament Wednesday night. Then even if I had had a morning tee time on Thursday, I probably would have pulled out because I hurt my neck on Wednesday afternoon and couldn't make a backswing.

It just sort of, everything aligned. I was off on Thursday afternoon, I got enough treatment so that I could play and then progressively got a little bit better as the week went on. Yeah, it's just amazing how these little things, they all add up. Yeah, it's so cool to be able to win here again, see some of the hard work that I've put in over the past couple of months finally start to pay off.

**LAURA VESCOVI:** Obviously today's Mother's Day. We got to see you embrace with your wife and your daughter. Obviously extremely special to have them here to see you reenter the winner's circle.

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, really cool. For it to be Erica's first Mother's Day and for her to be here with Poppy, really, really cool. It was hard for me not to think of that coming down the last few holes and how cool that would be to see them at the back of the 18th green, but I had more pressing issues at the time, so it was pretty easy to get it out of my head. Really cool for them to be here and to be able to celebrate today.

**Q. Just wondering, you seemed to be breathing pretty heavy there at the end after all the time since your last win. I'm wondering, what was the level of nerves compared to the other 18?**

**RORY McILROY:** It's hard to win. You know, I got my nose ahead with the two birdies on 14 and 15 and then when I hit the tee shot on 16, I said to myself, "Four more good swings, that's all you need. You need a good swing into 16, you need a good tee shot on 17 and two good swings into 18."

I made three good swings and one not-so-good swing on the way in. It's tough. It was windy, you're playing one of the toughest stretches that we play. Those closing three holes are pretty tough, especially with the crosswinds out there. I would have loved to have went bogey-free today and won by two instead of one, but it's tough to get over the line, especially if you haven't done it in a while. I made it hard for myself, but hit a great third shot into the 18th there and was able to two-putt and get the job done.

**Q. Is the feeling more satisfaction, relief or somewhere in between, or just a combination of both?**

**RORY McILROY:** I think a combination of both. I mean, yeah, relief that I've won again, relief that my season I feel is sort of back on track, and more just satisfaction at the journey that I'm on and the process that I've been going through to try to get back to this point.

There's been a lot of hard work. I've put my head down, I haven't really looked too much in either direction, I've just tried to do what I need to do. You know, for a couple of months there, all that hard work seemed like it was not really getting anywhere, wasn't providing me with much, but then, as I said at the start, it's such a funny week thinking that -- knowing that my game was pretty good coming in here and then have my neck completely lock up on me on the range on Wednesday afternoon, not even thinking I was going to play on Thursday, and then I'm sitting here on Sunday night with a trophy. It's been a bit of a funny week in a way. Just glad that I got through it and played some really good golf over the weekend.

**Q. Rory, what was the WHOOP reading on the 72nd hole and can you talk us through a little bit about what you and Harry were going through and how bad that lie was?**

**RORY McILROY:** I'll tell you right now. Yeah, pretty big, 17.7 today on the day, Steve. Heart rate was -- oh, yeah, heart rate was up there. Heart rate was probably in the 140s at some point.

Yeah, look, it was a great day. Harry was awesome out there today, especially that decision on the last. I was ready to get in there and try to play that with a lob wedge and he was sort of like, "Let's take a step back, let's think about this, where's the best place you're hitting your third from." So he sort of calmed me down and slowed me down a little bit and said, "Pal, let's just think about this a little bit."

Ultimately we made the right decision and I dropped instead of trying to play that shot out of the hazard. Hit a great third shot onto the green and was able to two-putt from there. But I think this is Harry and I's sixth win together and it's probably been our best one. Bay Hill back in 2018 was great because I hadn't won in a while, but this is even better just because Harry's been there every step of the way. The sort of tough parts that I've sort of had to endure over the last few months, he's been with me every step of the way and it's nice to come through all that with him and to get into the winner's circle again.

**Q. Can you give me an idea coming up 18, did it feel normal? And I just don't mean the crowds, although I am talking about the crowds, but between the crowds and you being in contention on this particular golf course?**

**RORY McILROY:** I think when you haven't been in contention for a while, it never feels normal. I certainly felt it there on the back nine. There were some tee shots and some shots I just had to stand up and really commit to what I was doing. That's sort of been my mantra is try to just hit -- just hit good golf shots until I run out of holes and that's basically what I tried to do the entire day, just take good shot after good shot until you get to the end.

But it felt -- I mean, I'm certainly glad that the crowds were back and I'm glad that I was able to get the job done in an atmosphere like that today. And I'm excited going forward now that we get to play in front of crowds like that. It was just an awesome experience to feel that again over the weekend.

**Q. Listen, when you talk about (inaudible,) but the PGA Championship coming up is your next tournament where you won inaudible.)**

**RORY McILROY:** I didn't get the last part of that, Bernie, but yeah, this victory's very important going into Kiawah in a couple weeks' time. Obviously I played really well there last time. I'm honestly not sure whether they've made any changes to the golf course since, but I'll go up there and try to do my homework and re-familiarize myself with the layout a little bit.

But yeah, it's certainly great timing. This is obviously a huge confidence boost going in there knowing that my game is closer than it has been. So it's still -- I mean, I'll be able to poke holes in everything that I did today, it's certainly far from perfect, but this one is validation that I'm on the right track.

**Q. Rory, you said right after your win that it feels like a long time since you last won. I'm wondering what maybe the toughest part of that or the most frustrating bit of that stretch was.**

**RORY McILROY:** I don't know. I mean, there was -- even before the pandemic hit, there was a stretch there where I was getting -- I was playing really well, getting myself into contention and not getting the job done. Now that I think back on it and I think back of the -- and I think about the sort of particular road that I'm on now, I sort of realized why I wasn't getting the job done and why things were maybe falling apart on me on last days.

I didn't really have a consistent move or consistent thought process to fall back on maybe. So that was frustrating even though it was really good runs of golf, I wasn't -- I think it's funny, I came in here with zero form and I get myself into contention and I play great whenever the pressure's on. I think back to the start of 2020 when I would play great when the pressure was off and then I'd play not so good on a Sunday even though I felt like I was playing better and the results would suggest that. I'm more excited about this because this is the first real test that I've had since working with Pete and sort of doing some different stuff,

and for it to pretty much hold together all afternoon, first time of asking, I'm excited about that.

**Q. Yeah, on the spectrum of like technical versus mental, does this then fall a little more towards the technical side of things?**

**RORY McILROY:** But I -- so yes, but there's only -- I mean, if you don't feel like you can hit a fairway, I mean, it's okay telling yourself mentally be strong and mentally play with freedom, but if you know you can't make a swing to hit a fairway, so you need to get the technical part right and then you can -- then you can dial in the mental. That's sort of the process that I've been on.

I've spent some time with Bob Rotella over the last couple of months, but Pete Cowen would always -- he was saying, "If I don't do my job right, Bob can't do his job right." So Pete has to do his right and then Bob can take it from there.

**Q. How much credit do you give to Pete and the move to sort of bring him into your team for this win?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I mean, he deserves a good bit of credit for it, for sure. I still -- obviously Michael Bannon is the one that's got me all the way to this point, so I'm never going to mention Pete without Michael because Michael deserves a lot of credit, too.

But the work that Pete and I have done over the last few weeks again, going back to the last question, today under pressure I had a couple of things to fall back on, which was really important, especially under pressure. Needing to hit good shots down the stretch, I had a couple of very playable swing thoughts that I've had all week.

And Pete and I did some good work last week in Florida and I felt good about my game coming in here, but I didn't know that -- obviously I wasn't expecting to come and win first week straight out again. It's satisfying to see the work is paying off, but it's just the start. There's so much more I want to achieve and so much more I want to do in the game. But this is, as I said, it's nice validation that I'm on the right track.

**Q. And just to follow up, does this feel in a sense like a moment of liftoff? We know how a win can really propel you, that's happened in your career in the past.**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I hope so. Hopefully history repeats itself and I can get a lot of confidence from this and go forward.

But I'm just happy that I can -- that I can hit the golf shots that I need to under pressure. But it's all just getting yourself under -- you know, you just need to get yourself in the position to put yourself under pressure to hit the shots that really matter, and I did that today. I hit -- you know, when I got myself in the lead, two great shots into 16, a good tee shot into 17, tee shot on the last wasn't the best, but was able to pull it together and get the job done.

**Q. Rory, what exactly happened to the neck? What caused it to lock up and has that ever happened to you before?**

**RORY McILROY:** I have no idea. It's no coincidence that I turned 32 the day before.

**Q. There you go, there you go.**

**RORY McILROY:** I literally, I hit a shot -- I had done a really good practice session on the range. I hit a 3-iron, flushed it and I turned back to talk to Harry and as I turned, my left side of my neck just completely locked up and I couldn't -- I couldn't move it. It was really, really strange.

So I stopped what I was doing and I went and got some treatment. I iced it all -- all of Wednesday afternoon, Wednesday night. I woke up Thursday, didn't have much movement. Was trying to make a backswing and could only maybe take it half the way back before it started to catch.

As I said, if I had been playing Thursday morning, I probably would have pulled out, but I had enough time to get treatment Thursday morning, get it loosened up. It was still bothering me on Thursday afternoon. People probably saw the tape that was on my neck, but it sort of loosened up as the week went on.

Again, just all these tiny little things that you need to go right to win golf tournaments and thankfully I had an afternoon tee time on Thursday that allowed me to at least tee it up.

**Q. Rory, just real quickly, I'm just wondering what was the best shot you hit today and what was the most important shot you hit today?**

**RORY McILROY:** Best shot I hit today was the 7-iron into 17. Just really a -- just a really solid golf shot. And the most important shot was the third shot into 18, I would think. But the best shot today, that tee shot into 17, it was exactly what I saw in my mind before I hit it and executed it exactly the way I wanted to.

**Q. Rory, just wanted to double back on one thing since you've got an entire career of having these mini slumps or mini droughts. How quickly can you snap out of it? How often can it happen where someone's in the doldrums and then all, of a sudden, boom, they're in?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, it's happened to me. You saw how it was, I mean, I was just excited to be here for the weekend when I shot a good round on Friday. I hadn't sniffed a weekend of a golf tournament for a couple of months. I mean, I guess it turned around quickly. But there's a lot of work that has to go in in between to get to that point.

So even though, yes, my last couple of starts were missed cuts or didn't make the weekend,

the next start I win, but there was three weeks where I worked pretty hard and obviously worked on the right things to get myself back where I need to be.

**Q. Did that happen in some of the previous little droughts, '14, things like that?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, sometimes it's taken a little bit longer, but I think once you see progress and you get that little spark of confidence, then things can start to move pretty quickly.

**LAURA VESCOVI:** Thanks for joining us, Rory. Congratulations once again.

**RORY McILROY:** Thank you.