

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**RORY McILROY**

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**MODERATOR:** Rory, thank you for joining us here. One week removed from your win at THE PLAYERS Championship and making your first start at the Texas Children's Houston Open since 2014. Welcome back to Houston. If we can get some comments on being here this week.

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, good to be back. As you said, it's been 11 years since I was here. It was usually the week directly before the Masters tournament and now it's two weeks before.

Yeah, I've watched this tournament the last couple years, especially since it moved to this date instead of the fall, and felt like it was a golf course that would be right up my alley and would suit my game and suit my style of play.

Good to get a look at the golf course the last couple days. Yeah, excited to just sort of just keep going, you know. It's been a great start to the season for me and I want to continue that.

**Q. Since you're seeing the course for the first time, you can go ahead and give us some thoughts on what you're seeing out there, and does it remind you of another course on the circuit anywhere?**

**RORY McILROY:** No, not particularly. Like the way it's set up, look, for the longer hitter it's a perfect golf course. It's sort of bombs away off the tee, then it requires quite a bit of thought from the second shot in.

Like the green complexes are pretty, you know, they're severe in areas and you have to really think about where you want your second shot to be and where the miss is and a lot of the runoffs.

I think it's generous, it's generous off the tee, but then second shots in it really challenges you and challenges you to really think about where you want to place your ball after that.

**Q. Rory, what's one or two things you picked up from your trip to Augusta? Obviously you've been there enough times, but is there one or two things that stood out to you on your trip to Augusta this week?**

**RORY McILROY:** Not really. I use those trips just to refamiliarize myself with the place, clubs off tees, looking to see if they changed any greens. There's four greens that are new this year that they've redone. You just sort of, you have a look at those and see if there's any



new hole positions they give you, stuff like that.

Apart from that, honestly for me, it's nice to play a practice round without people around and it sort of takes the pressure off the start of the week for me. There's a lot of obligations, there's big commitments whether it be from media or the par-3 tournament on Wednesday. I just like to get up there and feel like I'm not rushed Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday the week of the tournament and that's usually the reason I go there.

**Q. Obviously there was a lot of damage on 16, tree fell. Did you see 16? Did it appear any different to you?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, the loss of a few trees is definitely noticeable, but in terms of like they've had to redo that green but it's exactly the same as what it was. The hole will play -- apart from maybe a few less shadows on the green late in the day because of a couple of trees that were lost, but apart from that, it's pretty much the same.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**RORY McILROY:** No, I've played San Antonio the last couple years. Yeah, I like San Antonio, I think it's a good track and it's a good tournament and it's a really well-run event. As I said, I've watched this tournament the last couple years and felt like it would be a good fit for me, good fit for my game.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, yeah. Look, it's an amazing -- it's an amazing venue for a golf tournament. We can stay right here like five minutes away from the golf course and everything's so convenient and so easy. It's a great location, for sure.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**RORY McILROY:** Not really. I feel like I always played pretty average over there at the old place. So yeah, I remember it always being pretty rainy and it looks like we're going to get a bit of rain again this week, yeah.

**Q. (No microphone.) At the end of the day there is only one Augusta. You've played there enough, you don't really need --**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I just want to get a card in my hand and shoot scores and hopefully get myself in contention and try to win another golf tournament. It's not as if I'm playing here this week and thinking about two weeks' time. I'm here, I'm in the present, I'm trying to do my best this week and trying to win this golf tournament.

**Q. Obviously, Rory, you're in form as they would say in the U.K. What do you hope to get from this week knowing that you come in such in form?**



**RORY McILROY:** I think just competitive reps. I'm obviously playing well, I want to keep playing well, so I think every round you play where you see good things you're sort of filling up that confidence bucket a little bit, so I want to see that.

I still -- look, it was great to get a win a couple weeks ago but I still feel I could have played a lot better. I tried to poke holes in a lot of my game last week and think about things I could do better, and there were definitely things that I could work on or do better. It's a good opportunity to go out and see if some of the work I did at home and I'm continuing to do here, hopefully it's all going in the right direction.

**Q. Are you aware of how well Tony's played here the last few years? Any thoughts on that?**

**RORY McILROY:** Look, in any other sport you may be looking at what your opponents or competitors or doing, but if I go out this week and I shoot four 65s, pretty sure that will be OK. I just have to worry about myself.

**Q. You're not playing Tony?**

**RORY McILROY:** Exactly. I'm playing Memorial Park this week.

**Q. Did you pick anyone's brain when deciding to come here over San Antonio with maybe about the course changing from being in the fall to now the spring?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, not -- it was sort of more just me watching it on TV the last couple years. We watched a little bit of it last weekend with Scottie being up there and Stephan Jaeger. It just looked like with the overseed and sort of trying -- you know, a lot of the chipping is very similar to what we're going to face in a couple weeks' time. I just thought there were a couple different things about the golf course that would not only fit my game and what I do well, but also, yeah, looking with one eye ahead to a couple weeks' time, is there certain things that I would face here that would be somewhat good prep or good practice going into the first major of the year.

**Q. A regular tournament like this, not often you get No. 1 and No. 2 in the world. (No microphone.) Is it kind of fun to have him on the course at the same time?**

**RORY McILROY:** It's awesome. I think what Scottie's done the last couple years in golf is amazing. It's great to have him be -- he's great for the game. What he did last year, I don't think it gets talked about enough. His season last year is up there with one of the all-time great seasons in the history of the game. He's an amazing player, he's a great person as well, he's got a great family. It's good to see him doing -- like it's good for the game and it's nice to see nice people succeed. I have nothing but respect and admiration for Scottie.

**Q. Having said that, you hope to beat him though, right?**



**RORY McILROY:** Of course.

**Q. You talked about copying Scottie's strategy on the board, maybe not (inaudible) stuff like that. Could that be the missing piece for you, copying that? He's had so much success.**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I've had quite a bit of success too though, so I don't think there's a lot of missing pieces so to say. I think you're always looking around, seeing if there's certain things you can maybe take out of someone's game. I think it's hard to not look at what Scottie's done the last couple years and not take notice and sort of try to dig in, OK, why has he been able to separate himself a little bit from the rest of his peers at this point.

To me, one thing he was definitely doing a little better than me the last couple years was that sort of course strategy and course management and that's something that it's forced me to look at and maybe be a little more thoughtful and diligent with that side of it.

**Q. Rory, what was your Happy Gilmore filming experience like? Looking back on it now, what do you think when you look back on it now?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, it was amazing. I spent two weeks up there. Just really cool to -- I did it with -- spent a lot of time with Scottie and Brooks and Bryson, sort of the four of us that were up there and filming a lot of the same scenes.

Yeah, really cool to be -- Happy Gilmore was one of my favorite movies growing up.

To be acting alongside -- well, "acting," I don't know if you could call it acting, we'll wait and see -- with Sandler and all the rest of the cast, it was an unbelievable experience. I certainly do not have a future in movies or acting, but it was an amazing experience.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**RORY McILROY:** Depends how firm it is. But yeah, I think that's the one thing, you know, even when I went to it, I thought like in firm conditions it could really help just having that a little bit of extra spin around the greens, extra spin with some of the iron shots coming into the greens.

But yeah, like it depends. If it rains, I think it almost could be like a little more challenging because it is a bit spinnier, but if it's firm, it could certainly help.

**Q. (No microphone.) Rory, talk a little bit about how golf can be more relatable, how you can be more friendly to the media, players. All players show emotion on the golf course, the difference is it's all catching on video these days whether it be whoever. You show emotions. Can that make golf more relatable to the average guy? The average golfer obviously plays, knows how hard it is, shows emotion. Can that be**



**relatable?**

**RORY McILROY:** It can be relatable, but at the same time you want to try to set a proper example. Like you don't want -- you don't want 10-year-old kids punting their putters across the green every time they miss a putt.

But at the same time it does, it shows that we are human, it shows the human side to ourselves. But at the same time we have a responsibility to set an example, and golf is a lot about the etiquette of the game and doing right thing. There's a balance to be struck there.

