

ROUND 1 QUICK QUOTES
February 19, 2026

RORY McILROY (-



Q. (No microphone.) What's the mental conversation you had with yourself when you almost always enjoy the challenge (inaudible)?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I've definitely got more comfortable playing in conditions like this over the past few years as I've gotten more comfortable in controlling my ball flight, and controlling my ball flight taking a lot more club, hitting the ball low.

Yeah, and I've started to just really enjoy this style of golf. If you had asked me 10 years ago, I didn't enjoy these conditions, but it's been a shift in a mindset and maybe just a continuation of trying to build upon the skill set that I have. Then when it does get to conditions like this, I'm a lot more prepared. I wouldn't say I enjoy them, but I can certainly handle them better.

Q. (Inaudible) Which one were you the most proud of?

RORY McILROY: Probably the chip shot on 12. That was a nice one just to keep momentum in the round going for sure.

Q. Do you feel like these conditions allow you to separate a little bit more and just show off your ball-striking prowess?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think so. And also maybe just my experience a little bit as well. As I said, I haven't always enjoyed these conditions. I haven't always -- honestly, I haven't always had the skill set to excel in them. To start to enjoy them and have the shots to succeed on days like this, that's a really satisfying thing to be able to be, you know, nearly 20 years into a career and still feel like you're getting better at some aspects of the game.

Q. Kept the big numbers out of play today. Is that a function of the golf course or how you played?

RORY McILROY: I think more of a -- a little bit of both, but I think a function of the golf course. There's no real hazards to hit it in. I hit a wild tee shot on 3 today where if that was last week in Pebble Beach, could have been out of bounds, could have been in the Pacific, could have been anywhere. You have a little more room off the tee here, or a little less penalty should I say.

Q. Rory, a couple shots today. No. 6, I know you had -- it's not the first time you've been on the wrong side of the bunker.



RORY McILROY: Yeah.

Q. That was an amazing shot.

RORY McILROY: Thank you.

Q. And then also the 18th tee shot. Why so low?

RORY McILROY: So on 6, I really like tight lies. I practice my chipping a lot off greens back home because it just, it really helps me control my low point and find the low point. If you can chip off of a really tight lie or a green like that, you can basically chip off any lie. So I do a lot of practice chipping off green, the practice green at home at the Bear's Club. The superintendent probably doesn't like it too much, but it helps.

And then the tee shot on 18, I've always -- you know, if you look back at my tee shots over the last few years on that hole, I've played it that way. I don't like -- for some tee shots I just don't like getting the ball in the air. If I feel if I can keep it low, it keeps it in front of me. Even if I tug it slightly, it's still going to catch the fairway on the left. It's not going to carry far enough to get to the left rough like Tommy's did, for example, and it hangs up there.

So I've done that for the last few years, but obviously the hill's about 20 yards further away than it was a few years ago, so when I hit the tee shot I was like, oh, go, go just a little bit. It was fine, but it's a nice shot to have in the bag.

I tried to hit it on 12 and on 13 as well. On 12 I tugged it slightly, but 13 I hit a really good one. It's a shot that I've went to a lot more over the last few years when I've just needed to keep a tee shot in front of me.

Q. Collin said this is the softest greens he's ever played on. Are these some of the softest you've seen, and what's the challenge and what's the nuance to hitting where you're almost hitting into like a bucket?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's like they're soft but they're fast, I think that's the hard thing. It's like last week at Pebble they were soft, but they were slow because they're worried about the wind. Here, they're so fast. The ball, like it just starts to get away from you a little bit, especially if it spins back.

It's just taking more club and taking spin off it. I'm hitting a lot of just little chippy 7-irons and 8-irons. And even that 9-iron at the last I hit, it was 186, I hit a full-blooded 9-iron thinking that, you know, 25 miles an hour downwind, it's not going to come back too much and, you know, it came back 30 feet.

I think it's a combination of how soft they are, but also how fast they are as well. And a lot of the greens here are pitched quite severely from back to front, so it's difficult.



Q. What was the easier part of the day, the rain or the wind?

RORY McILROY: The rain.

Q. Disappointing.

RORY McILROY: No, I'll take whatever I can get, but it was -- there wasn't wind. And yeah, I mean, playing in rainy conditions is fine, it's not a big deal. Yeah, the wind made it pretty tricky.

Q. Rory, a year ago was pretty devastating what was just a mile down the road. Fans are really ecstatic to be back. For you, do you have any sense of that now with a round under your belt?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's great to be back in the area. Obviously what happened here a year ago was absolutely devastating. I know people that lost their homes and places of work and offices. So it's -- I have a couple of, like Sean that works for me and Niall, they went and just had a drive around parts of the Palisades to see the real devastation of it, and it's just, it's unimaginable if you had to go through that.

So look, it's great to be back in the area and hopefully this tournament raises a lot of money to try to help a lot of the people that were affected.

Q. You mentioned embracing this style of play mentally over the course of your career, but in terms of technical, is there some more shots that you're practicing or how do you feel you sort of feel like you got better at playing from a technical standpoint in this wind?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I've started to hit -- so I talked last year at THE PLAYERS about this three-quarter three-quarter shot that I hit a lot. So I play that shot a lot even with -- you know, so I play that a lot with wedges, but then when you get conditions like this, I'm playing that shot with a 6-iron, with a 7-iron, with an 8-iron, and then just trying to dial those numbers in with TrackMan.

So, you know, my three-quarter three-quarter 7-iron goes 175. You know, my three-quarter three-quarter 8-iron goes 162. You know, and just trying to figure out OK, what the yardage is, what it's actually playing. You know that those shots aren't going to come back as much on the green, so those are more the go-to shots in conditions like this.

