

U.S. Open Championship 2020

Thursday, September 17, 2020

Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference



Q. Rory, just talk us through your round a bit.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, obviously had a really good start. Played the par-3s really well. Played those in 3-under for the day. Drove the ball better. I put the ball in play much more today than I have done in the previous few weeks. That bodes well.

Hopefully I can keep that going over the next three days, and that's what you need to do around here, just keep it in the short stuff, and then the greens are still receptive enough where you can give yourself some chances.

I took a couple of my chances today. It was one of those rounds I felt like could have been a little lower than it was, but at the same time 67 is a really good start.

Q. I don't know the exact stats, but you played the last three rounds of majors much better than the first round the last couple years. Anything different to get off to a good start today or just golf?

RORY McILROY: Golf, I think. Yeah, maybe putting myself under a little too much pressure to get off to a good start. Yeah, you know, it's always -- first round of a major you're always anxious to play well, and maybe I've overthought it at times. Yeah, I just went out today and just took what was given to me a little more relaxed and played really nicely.

Q. You did say that getting off to a hot start was kind of your game plan. Can you talk a little bit more about that considering your slow starts over a few majors?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I started this tournament last year decently. I think I shot 68 at Pebble on the first day last year. So I've gotten off to decent starts, and it's just once -- I think at a U.S. Open, if you can get off to a good start, you're not chasing as much. And when you chase on U.S. Open golf courses, that's when you can start to make mistakes and compound your errors.

To have that sort of cushion, to be a little bit more relaxed

about your play, not take on too much, be able to still play conservative golf, I think that's important here.

Q. It looked like you were in control off the tee and in the fairway. Did you feel like you were in control of the ball most of the day today?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, for most of the day today I was. There was a couple of loose ones in there, the wedge shot on 1, sort of stuck between two shots and just didn't make a very good swing. But yeah, for the most part I did drive it well. I hit my irons good. When I got out of position, I tried to just get myself back in position and play from there. I didn't really take on too much. Tried to go for the 12th green in two. That was probably the biggest mental error that I had today. I hit it over on the right side and had no shot with my third and was lucky to just get away with a 5.

But overall, yeah, I hit it really well and kept it in play, which is really important.

Q. 67 for the first round of a U.S. Open obviously is a really good score. I have a feeling that you're not 100 percent satisfied with it in some ways.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I definitely feel like I could have -- I three-putted for par on 6. There was a couple other chances I let slip by, the three-putt for bogey on 1. So there was chances there to maybe sneak another two or three out of the round. But at the same time, 67 here is always going to be a good score.

Q. Are you surprised by the scorability today, and would you be optimistic or cautiously optimistic that it's going to stay this way?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, the greens are still pretty receptive. I think they can get a little firmer as the week goes on. I don't think the greens need to get any faster with how sloped they are, but they can certainly get them a touch firmer.

Not really. You've got J.T. shot 5, Patrick 4, myself 3, but then after that there's not -- I think if you shoot even par you're just outside the top 10. I wouldn't call it scorable by any stretch of the imagination. There's a couple of guys



that have went a little lower than maybe was expected, but it's not as if the rest of the field are finding it that easy.

Q. Despite the shots you feel you left out there, when you look back on it, is there something in particular that you feel you were doing better today than you have been recently or some area where --

RORY McILROY: Off the tee, yeah, just my driving the ball, putting the ball in play off the tee. That was important today. I did that well for the most part. I still missed a few fairways, but I was able to recover from there. But I hit a lot of good tee shots, which I was sort of seeing a little bit in the latter stages of Atlanta, but it was nice to see it today.

Q. What does that do for your frame of mind going forward the rest of this week?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it gives me a little more confidence in my game, maybe a little more commitment with my swing off the tee, not guiding it as much, really being able to free-flow and make good, committed swings. Hopefully that sets me up to do that over the next few days.

Q. Just wondering the best shot you hit today. Was that the tee shot on 3?

RORY McILROY: Tee shot on 3 was good. Tee shot on 6, that was nice. Probably one that people won't -- it went to like 20 feet, but the second shot on 16 because it's the shot that I've been struggling with a little bit, where the wind was off the right and I had to start it right of the green, and I've been sort of hanging them out there a little bit and not committing to letting it turn back, and that was a really good shot.

But it went to 20 feet; people would just see it as a normal shot, but it was a nice little win for me because that was a shot I've been struggling with recently.

Q. What did you hit on 3?

RORY McILROY: 4-iron.

Q. Are you capable of being in some ways more naturally a more patient player than when you won a U.S. Open at Congressional? There the conditions you could be really aggressive, but at this point it would seem --

RORY McILROY: I wouldn't say Congressional I was really aggressive. I shot 16-under par, but I'd say only 15 guys broke par for the week. So it was still -- you still had

to be patient and it was still tough in spots. Yes, I played out of my mind and I won by eight and all that sort of stuff, but it's not as if I didn't have that back then, either.

You know, I still got up-and-down and had to hack it out of rough and make pars from 60, 70 yards out. I can play that game when I need to, and I think it's easier to play that game when you feel like you're in control. I feel like most aspects of my game are a little more under control now than they were say a month ago.

Q. Is it more gratifying to do it on a really hard course like Congressional or someplace here --

RORY McILROY: Of course, yeah. To go out and shoot a score like that here at Winged Foot or any tough course -- some courses you show up, you don't really have to work that hard for a 67, where here you do. So it's a little more gratifying.

Q. What do you like better, early-late or late-early, and how do you manage your time?

RORY McILROY: Late-early. You go straight in from one round to the next, and then I've always said if you have a terrible first day you can get home early on the second day.

Q. What do you do now to fill the time? Do you watch the golf?

RORY McILROY: No, I try not to. I'll go grab some food, maybe do a little bit more practice. I'll go back, try to -- probably FaceTime, maybe do a little gym session and then the basketball is on tonight, so I'll watch that.

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