

U.S. Open Championship 2020

Saturday, September 19, 2020

Mamaroneck, New York, USA

Winged Foot Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Flash Interview



Q. Rory, 2-under 68; how are you feeling about your round today?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, really good. Geez, I think anything under par on this golf course today is a really good score. I saw Alex go out there and shoot 3-under earlier. You know, I'm not saying it's out there; he got a good one, I did, and there's maybe a couple other guys that are under par. Yeah, and the wind is not quite as strong as it was yesterday. You know, it maybe played a touch less difficult I'll say. Not easier, but it was a little less difficult.

But some of the hole locations are still pretty tricky and got to leave yourself on the right side. But yeah, overall 68 out there is a really good score. I don't know where that's going to leave me at the end of the day, but I'm feeling pretty good that I've got a good chance going into tomorrow.

Q. When you're in a little bit of a chasing position as you are right now, what kind of conditions are you kind of hoping for or half hoping for tomorrow?

RORY McILROY: It's sort of a double-edged sword, right, because you would think that you'd want tougher conditions because it'll make it more difficult for the guys in front of you, but also makes it more difficult for yourself. I think looking at the forecast, the conditions are going to be pretty similar to today, which is fine. If I go out there tomorrow and shoot another 68, I won't be too far away.

Q. Kind of along those lines, depending on how the next few hours work out, is there a number in your head based on how difficult this golf course is that you feel like legitimately I could come back from?

RORY McILROY: I mean, around here, anything. Not necessarily anything, but I said over there, if Matt pars his way in and is 5-under par, I still don't think that's out of it by any stretch of the imagination. You know, it doesn't take much around here for -- someone gets off to a decent start, maybe 1- or 2-under through 5 and then the leader goes

the other way, 1- or 2-over through 5, and all of a sudden you're right in the thick of things.

But yeah, we'll see what happens. No matter where I am at the end of the day, I feel like I've got a pretty good shot.

Q. Is yesterday's round a little harder to swallow after today?

RORY McILROY: No, not really. I mean, I felt like I finished the round well yesterday. I was sort of hemorrhaging after like 12 or 13 holes, and then to just par my way in, right, so 14 through 18, so five in a row, just to get it in the clubhouse, sort of regroup, and then I sort of started the same way today. I parred the first five, first six holes, made a birdie on 7, made another birdie on 9, so played a really nice stretch of holes there from the 14th last night to the 9th today. I played those holes in 2-under par and didn't make a bogey in that stretch.

You're going to have stretches in U.S. Opens where you're going to make bogeys and you're going to make mistakes, but if you can back it up with stretches of golf like I showed there, that's what you have to do. It's not going to be all plain sailing in this tournament.

Q. Given how hard you had to work to get 68, how surprising is it to look up at the board and see somebody with a 30 on the front?

RORY McILROY: Is that what it was, a 30?

Q. Yeah, missed probably about an eight-footer for 29.

RORY McILROY: Wow. I mean, that's just -- you can't say anything but that's just awesome golf. Yeah, I mean, everyone knows how talented Matt is and he played great at Harding Park in the last major. You know, he's explosive like that. He can get on runs like that. So yeah, I'm not saying it's out there. I certainly didn't see shooting 30 on any nine today, but we'll see what happens over the back nine.

Q. If Matt is leading tomorrow, do you think it helps him to not have to try to win a major with a massive crowd around him in the same way that Morikawa



didn't have to face the crowd at Harding Park?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, of course. Of course, yeah. It's one variable that you just don't have to deal with, where -- is that a loss of an advantage to you who's accustomed to being in that environment.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it could be, a little bit. Maybe not a loss of an advantage to me, but just more of a -- just makes it a touch easier for the guys at the top. Even today, look, you've got Bryson and P-Reed out in the final group, and any other U.S. Open final grouping you've got those two guys, things are going to be said and tempers are going to flare. Even if those guys don't have to deal with that today, it just makes it a little different and maybe a touch easier if you're in those final few groups.

Q. Do you have a simple explanation for why it hasn't been the massacre that many expected going into this week?

RORY McILROY: I mean, I guess what's a massacre? Yeah, okay, 5-over is not going to win like last time and 7-over when Hale Irwin won. I'd say the golf course is playing just as difficult.

You know, you've got to think 14 years on the game has changed a lot, guys hit it further, equipment. There's a lot of different things that -- scoring averages have went down a little bit, on average. The game has just moved on a little bit and everyone has collectively, I think, just got a little bit better.

Q. You mentioned just earlier the first three or four holes and how difficult they are and just hoping to kind of get through those unscathed. Can you talk more about what that's going to mean for you tomorrow and just getting off to a good start?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, fairways and greens. It's literally just bringing it back to the basics. From that first tee shot, just try and make a good swing and hit the fairway, hit it on the middle of the green, take two putts, especially on that green because it's probably one of the craziest greens on the course and in golf. And then it's the same thing on 2, hit the fairway, hit the green. You get yourself out of position those first few holes, it just makes it really difficult.

And when you do get yourself out of position, making bogey is fine. That's the thing, you look at some of the guys that went off earlier today those first few holes there was some big numbers made, and when you're in trouble, get it out, play for a 5, and if you're not going to putt for a 4, that's a bonus.

Q. The course is playing about a shot easier today. Do you attribute that more to the gentler winds or the hole locations were more gettable?

RORY McILROY: No, the wind more than anything else. The hole locations today I thought were pretty tricky. It was hard to leave a putt dead. Even if you've got a putt that's uphill, once it gets past the hole it starts to go downhill again. It was very hard to leave putts within top-in range. I felt like every time I hit a good putt that didn't go in, I was marking it and resetting and it was at least three or four feet.

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