

# The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday

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Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

## Rory McIlroy

### Press Conference

HALEY PETERSON: Good morning, everyone. We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy to the interview room here.

Rory, you're making your 11th start here. What's it like to be back here at a place where you've found success with Top 10s?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think like Muirfield and I have had a bit of a complicated relationship. It seemed to fit me quite well earlier in my career and then the last few years, I've sort of maybe struggled with the strategy of how to play it. I feel like a lot of the fairways here pinch in around 310, so it allows the sort of average hitters to hit driver.

For an example, last year I played with Viktor Hovland the first two days, and the first hole, he can hit driver sort of right to where the bottleneck starts. I can't hit driver because I'll hit it too far but then I hit 3-wood, you know, 15 or 20 yards short of his driver. So I'm hitting 6-iron or 7-iron in and he's hitting an 8-iron or a 9-iron in.

So it just seems like the length advantage has sort of been nullified here over the last few years. So it's just finding a different way to play the golf course. A lot more 3-woods. I've actually went to one of my old 3-woods this week that's a lower lofted. It's sort of like a 2-wood in a way which I think will be good to utilize this week.

Yeah, it's great to be back at Memorial. I think it's one of the guys favorite events on TOUR. I think everyone looks forward to it. Great to be here. These big player-hosted Invitationals are a pretty big deal. I've been lucky enough to win at Arnold's place at Bay Hill. I'd obviously love to win at Jack's place, too.

HALEY PETERSON: A week off since PGA Championship. Entering the week with three consecutive Top 10s. How is your game feeling?

RORY McILROY: It feels good. I feel like everything is going in the right direction. You know, I feel like Southern Hills was a missed opportunity there but I have to take the



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positives from it. I did some really good stuff that week. It's just a matter of trying to build on that.

I'm embarking on a four-week stretch here. So I'm going to playing a lot of golf coming up and I feel like my game is in good shape. So I'm excited for this run and excited to give myself a few more chances to hopefully win golf tournaments.

**Q. It's very hard to predict golf tournaments and we've seen some crazy finishes recently where guys have come from way back. What has been the craziest last hour of a tournament that you've experienced, whether you've come out on top or whether you've sort of not come out on top. Just sort of the most topsy-turvy last hour of a tournament that you've personally experienced?**

RORY McILROY: Honestly, I think some ever the most topsy-turvy, or like you say, Medinah 2012 Ryder Cup. My Walker Cup in 2007; it looked like we would win, and the Americans would win, we would win. So the two that sort of stick out in my mind are not individual events. They are more team events.

But yeah, I mean, watching the last few holes at Southern Hills, that was wild with what was happening there. And then even at Colonial last week. Sam posted, and then guys trying to hang on.

But I think that's more what happened the last two weeks is more, you know, if you have the right golf course setup where it challenges guys to really hang on, things like that happen. Pressure does funny things to people, and I think it's just you see how everyone raved about Southern Hills and a lot of people love Colonial. I think golf courses like that, they can have very entertaining finishes because of the golf course.

**Q. With the LIV field being announced last night, were you surprised, disappointed at some of the names, and in your opinion, does the TOUR have to drop the hammer in terms of discipline to prevent guys from going in the future?**

RORY McILROY: I'd say indifferent is probably the way I



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would describe it. A couple -- a couple of surprises in there I think.

I certainly don't think they should drop the hammer. Look, they are well within their rights to enforce the rules and regulations that have been set. But there's going to be -- you know, it's going to end up being an argument about what those rules and regulations are.

Look, I have some very close friends that are playing in this event in London, and I certainly wouldn't want to stand in their way to, for them to do what they feel is right for themselves. I certainly -- it's not something that I would do personally. But I certainly understand why some of the guys have went, and it's something that we are all just going to keep an eye on and see what happens over these next few weeks.

But I certainly don't think the field is anything to jump up and down about. Look the field this week. Look at the field next week in Canada. They are proper golf tournaments.

**Q. When you turned professional, did you think about playing for money or are you playing for history? Tiger always said he was playing for history.**

RORY McILROY: What I turned pro, I was playing for money. I wanted to keep my card. I remember -- I remember I played the Spanish Open in 2007 as an amateur, and the year before, one of my really good friends in amateur golf, Oliver Fisher, had turned pro and got his European Tour card. And we went out for dinner one night in Madrid and before going out for dinner, I looked at The European Tour Order of Merit it and saw he made 200 grand that year. And I was like, "Oh, my God, 200 grand, that's unbelievable. The guy is loaded."

I think at the start, of course, we turn professional to earn a living playing golf. Like when I turned pro, I didn't -- I was nowhere near getting in majors. I was nowhere near playing at the top level of professional golf. I hoped to be there one day but like all I wanted to do was get my TOUR card, make a living playing golf. Yeah, like first thing I did when I got my TOUR card was buy myself a house. You need a job and you need to make money to buy yourself a house.

There's a lot of different parts to this. Do I play golf for money now? No. My situation has changed over the years. But when I started playing the game professionally, yeah, money was at the top of the list.

**Q. After your great start the last day of the PGA, how low did you think you had to get on Sunday, and if you had the luxury of knowing that 5-under was going to be**

**in a playoff, how would that have maybe changed the way you played the last eight or nine holes?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I thought -- he thought I needed to shoot -- I shot 31 on the back side on Thursday morning. After nine holes, I thought I needed to shoot another 31 to win, which would have got me to 7-under for the tournament, and I would have ended up winning by two.

I don't think it would have changed anything. I mean, I made -- the tricky pin positions on 10 and 11, two good pars. I had a good chance for birdie on 12. Good chance on 13. Good chance on 15. I had -- yeah, I mean, if I had known 5-under, especially after the start, I don't know if I would have done anything differently, but I may be mightn't have put as much pressure on myself to try to, you know, make birdies and make putts.

But I mean, at that point, I didn't know. I thought -- I thought 7- or 8-under was going to be the number and that's what I was -- that's what I was going for.

**Q. Curious about the money you were chasing as an 18-year-old. When you bought that house, how much was it? Do you remember?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it was about 600,000 pounds, and I remember -- like I remember they were giving mortgages out -- this is write before the crash. So like I put 5 percent down and like interest-only repayment. I got it for free, basically. Like everyone else back at that time.

But yeah, it was like 600,000 pounds. So I don't know what that would equate to in dollars back then. Maybe \$750,000.

**Q. Do you still have it, the house?**

RORY McILROY: My mum and dad actually live in it. It's the house that they live in whenever they are back home.

**Q. On the Saudi thing, I don't know to what degree you've talked to some of the people you're close with, but do you get any sense that they still want to play the PGA TOUR?**

RORY McILROY: Not really, I guess. You know, you have some guys in a position where like they are literally not guaranteed a job next year. It's hard to stay in the Top-125 out here, especially when you're a guy in your 40s and maybe you don't hit the ball as far as you've used to.

As we've seen, it's a young man's game nowadays. So someone that isn't guaranteed their TOUR card next year, another entity comes along and says, we'll guarantee you

this amount for three years, plus you're playing for a ton more prize money, and you're playing less events, you can spend more time with your family. I mean, whenever you sit down and look at some of those things, you know, it's very appealing to some of those guys that are in that position.

Again, I'm not in that position, and it's not something that I would do. But you know, you at least have to try to put yourself in other people's shoes and see where they are coming from.

**Q. Over the years, you've seen subtle changes and the major changes at 16. What is your approach right now to taking on that challenge at the 16th hole?**

RORY McILROY: I think with the way this golf course is being tweaked over the years, 16 is just hit it in the middle of green, two putts, take your three and run to the 17th tee. I guess you really want to take a club that if you do pull it a touch, you cover that water on the left.

But really, yeah, you play to the sort of front third of that green and you know, you avoid the water and you -- yeah, middles of the greens here, especially with how small some of the targets are, like 16, is always going to be good.

**Q. Do you remember the first milkshake you had here, how good are they, and what is your approach to that bar that makes the milkshakes these days?**

RORY McILROY: I guess I don't want to get in trouble here, but like I -- like the milkshakes are good. I've had milkshakes that are just as good elsewhere. Maybe because it's Muirfield Village, they taste better, I don't know.

Mine, probably the first year I played here in 2009, and like I didn't know -- like I wouldn't be a big milkshake guy. I just said to the dude making them, "Like what do people order?"

And he goes, "Oh, the Buckeyes."

I'm like, "Buckeye? What's that? I hadn't heard of a Buckeye. I didn't know that was the nickname for the university.

He goes, "Oh, yeah, it's chocolate and peanut butter." It was good. I'm happy with having one or two a week. I'm certainly not one of the guys that's standing there getting two a day.

**Q. Ben Crenshaw, honoree, one of the great putters,**

**Jack was in here talking about guys who he thought were some of the best. Modern, among modern players, who are some of the best putters that you've seen?**

RORY McILROY: Jordan Spieth is up there. I think especially from that sort of middle distance, every putt he hits is just like the perfect speed. I think that's one of the things I always notice when I play with Jordan.

I'd say one of guys with the best putting strokes out here right now, and this is maybe recency bias, but Sam Burns. I think Sam rolls it really, really well.

Yeah, putting is one of those things where anyone can get hot for a few weeks or a few months. But I think we all know who are the consistently good putters out here. You know, someone like Denny McCarthy, he's up there in the stats every single year. But sort of from that upper echelon of guys, I'd put Jordan ahead of most people.

**Q. Along those lines, what makes -- have you studied it? What makes a great putter? Why are some guys really good at it and some guys average?**

RORY McILROY: Trust. I think trusting your read. Trusting your stroke. Trusting your instincts. I think one of the -- I think the reason people miss putts more than anything else is indecisiveness, not committing to a read, not committing to a speed. I think being very trusting in what you're doing, and that trust just comes from seeing the ball go in the hole more often than it doesn't. You know, so it comes from practice. It comes from seeing that practice pay off in play, and I think that's the biggest thing.

And acceptance. That's the other thing, accepting that you are going to miss putts and that missed putt doesn't carry over into you reacting in some way to you hitting your next putt, if that makes sense. So I'm on the first hole, I miss a right-to-lefter low, and I get on the second hole and I have a right-to-lefter again, and I don't react to that first putt by reading more into it just because I missed the previous one low.

I think you have to try to keep every putt its own putt, and not try to react to the other putts that you've hit that day. I think that's pretty important as well.

**Q. Given that knowledge, is putting easier or harder for you than a decade ago, say?**

RORY McILROY: Easier. I think I've definitely improved as a putter over the years. So I would say -- it's not easy, but I've definitely simplified it.

**Q. One quick follow to that. What do you consider the**



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**most important putt you've ever made in your career?**

RORY McILROY: I held a putt on the 17th hole at Valhalla on the Sunday to take a two-shot lead into 18. So that was big to have that cushion to win there.

**Q. Trying to figure out, is this a short list or a long hit?**

RORY McILROY: It's hard because I think some of the most important putts could be -- like I 2-putted from 60 feet on the ninth hole on Friday night at Quail Hollow to make the cut before going and shooting 66, 62 to win my first PGA TOUR event. Like that was a massive 2-putt. You had just as much chance of 3-putting that as I had of 2-putting it. I 2-putted it and ended up going on to win my first PGA TOUR event. Those are moments that I guess no one will really remember apart from me, and I think they are some of the most important ones.

**Q. Do you mind if I go with 17 at Valhalla?**

RORY McILROY: It will be better for your story, so yeah, I'd go for that one.

**Q. We had a Ben Crenshaw mention. I was just wondering what your memories are of '99 Ryder Cup and what your experiences have been playing The Country Club?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I did an event last night and Ben was there and we were talking about The Ryder Cup in '99. I remember that press conference on Saturday where he says, "I've got a good feeling about this."

Yeah, I hated Justin Leonard for the longest time. Didn't know him. Never met him. And I met him, eventually played on TOUR just as he was finishing his career, and he's the nicest guy. But that was a hard one. I was watching that on a Sunday night at home and it was hard to watch as a European, to see that come back.

Then I've only played Brookline once. I played it a couple years ago. It was completely different. It was a different time of the year. It was in the fall. Just it was different. So I haven't really seen the place the way it's going to be set up for a couple weeks' time.

**Q. Will you just play it like the week of?**

RORY McILROY: I think so. I was maybe toying with the idea of going the day after this tournament finishes, like next Monday to check it out. But I don't know. I'm still up in the air with that. You get there, you have three good days at it. I think that should be enough.

HALEY PETERSON: Rory, thanks for joining us. Best of luck this week.

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