

# The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday

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Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

## Rory McIlroy

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy the reigning FedExCup Champion to the interview room here at the 2023 The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday. Rory, ahead of your 12th start at the The Memorial can we get some opening comments on your return to Muirfield Village.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's always nice to be back at Jack's place. I've loved this tournament since the first time that I played it I've loved this golf course in all of its different iterations and tweaks over the years. It's one of the iconic events on the PGA TOUR. I haven't won it yet. I would love to be able to put my name on the trophy and walk up that hill and get that handshake from Jack. That would be pretty nice to do.

So, yeah, I'm excited to be back, excited to get on a nice little run of golf here coming up over the next few weeks and, yeah, always good to be in Muirfield Village.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll take some questions.

#### **Q. Does the swing feeling better than it did at Oak Hill?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah. Much better. I can't remember a time where I felt so uncomfortable over the ball for four days. So I needed to go back home and work on some things and, yeah, feeling a lot better about it, not fighting the club face quite as much. Feel a little bit more free, which is obviously a nice feeling.

#### **Q. Jon and Patrick were asked yesterday about the Ryder Cup and about the prospect of having LIV guys. You've said in the past that you don't think they should be able to play in the Ryder Cup. Do you still feel that way?**

RORY McILROY: I mean, I certainly think Brooks deserves to be on the United States team. I think with how he's played, I mean, he's second in the U.S. standings, only played two counting events. I don't know if there's



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anyone else on the, you know, on the LIV roster that would make the team on merit and how they're playing. But Brooks is definitely a guy that I think deserves to be on the U.S. team.

But I have different feelings about the European team and the other side and sort of how that has all transpired and, yeah, I don't think any of those guys should be a part of the European team.

#### **Q. You probably know Jack as well as anybody of the current players. Who is this guy off the course? Who is the Jack Nicklaus you know?**

RORY McILROY: (Laughing.) I think Jack, the guy that I know is probably the guy that you guys know too. He's not afraid to voice his opinion. I'll go in the lunch room at the Bear's Club sometimes and if I'm coming off a, like say an average week on TOUR the week before and I see Jack in the lunch room, I'm like, Oh, no, what's he going to say to me. (Laughing.) So he's not afraid to voice his opinion and obviously having the opinion of someone that has been so successful in our game is a great thing for, is a great thing for the people that spend a little bit of time around him. But I think the guy that you all see is the guy that we see as well. He's a wonderful human being. He does a ton, a ton for charity. He's a very helpful person and hopefully everyone sees that.

#### **Q. Billy Horschel was in here. He's 36. He was talking about the difference between being 23 and while he has more perspective, life perspective now, there's that challenge of distraction of not being singularly focused as he was. Is that real? Have you experienced that? How hard is that to juggle?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I've certainly experienced it. I think it's something that I've really had to juggle for quite a few years. It just comes with part of life. You go through that whole life process of getting married, having children, having interests outside of the game that take up some time.

Look, I would love to sit here and say that I'm just a golfer and that's all I focus on, but that's not reality. So it's just about managing your time the right way so that you can,



you can continue to hone your craft and make sure that when you turn up to events -- I think that's when you see players get to the latter stages of their career why they play less. Because I think it just takes a little bit more time to get ready for the events that you play. So, yeah, but that's life, right. I think that the interests and everything that I've got going on in my life right now at 34 are because of the things that I did when I was 23, 25, 27. So they're first world problems as they say.

**Q. You're probably always looking at golf courses and sort of thinking, well this should match up nicely with what I do with the ball. How often are you surprised by that the results don't necessarily match what you might have expected and have you been somewhat surprised that you haven't gotten a win already on this course?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, a little bit. I think the one thing here, if you look at the recent winners, maybe apart from Jon, they have all been sort of like medium-length hitters. I only hit four drivers on this golf course. Four or five. So it takes the driver out of my hand a lot. A lot of fairways bottle neck at like 330, 340. And it's, I have to -- the biggest weapon in my bag isn't quite the weapon that it is at some other golf courses. So there's that part of it too. I played okay here and had some decent finishes. But, yeah, it's, I guess, sort of surprised me with the four par-5s and sort of the way the golf course sets up that I haven't at least had a real chance to win here.

**Q. First of all, you talked about as players get older they play less and so forth. Phil was making this argument at the PGA about that the LIV schedule may be more conducive to playing better in majors. We don't have, we don't really have much of an example to go on yet, but, and certainly it's self serving in a way.**

RORY McILROY: You think?

**Q. Yes, I do.**

RORY McILROY: (Laughing.)

**Q. But is there some merit -- you seem to suggest, is there some merit to playing less to prepare more maybe as you get older?**

RORY McILROY: You only have to play 15 events on this TOUR.

**Q. Yeah.**

RORY McILROY: You know, like it's not, you know, no one makes anyone play 25 events on the PGA TOUR.

15's the minimum. So you can play 15 and your four major championships and there you go. You're at 19. No one's making you play that many. So I think that's a pretty flawed argument.

**Q. I would probably agree. Secondly, you talked about when you have a lot of distractions and so forth and trying to fight through those to play your best golf. Can you speak to the challenge of keeping your concentration, not just for 18 holes but for 72 holes on the same golf course. It seems like a challenge that people maybe over look as part of what goes into winning.**

RORY McILROY: I think so. I mean, I was just having this conversation in the pro-am. It's very rare that you see, over the course of four days, someone shoot low 60s twice, for example. It's very hard to follow-up a great day of golf with another great day of golf. And I think that just plays into the psychology of this game and expectations. And I, it's happened to me on this golf course before in 2014 I opened up with a 63 and then followed it up with a 78 or something like that. So you go out in the first round with nothing to go on, I guess. Nothing in your recent memory to go on. And all of a sudden you shoot a 63 and then you get out on Friday and you're almost expecting to do the same thing and it doesn't quite go that way and it starts to become a little bit of a struggle. So, yeah, keeping your composure and keeping your perspective on the fact that it is a 72-hole golf tournament and that whether you start with an average first round score or a great first round score, there's a lot of golf left and a lot of stuff can happen. That's something that I've always had to try to manage in my game. Because sometimes you're in the middle of the second round and you're eight or 10 shots off the lead and you think you have no chance of winning. But when I go back into my memory bank there's been times where I've won from those positions. You always have to remind yourself of those moments as well.

**Q. You said earlier a couple weeks ago you never felt so uncomfortable over the ball. Two things on that.**

RORY McILROY: Might have been a slight exaggeration, but I did feel uncomfortable.

**Q. One is -- well, first, you did seem to manage it pretty well. I mean, you got some pretty good scores out of it, despite maybe not having, not feeling the best. But how does that happen? Like how do you think you get into a situation where this is something you do all the time, but yet you don't feel comfortable.**

RORY McILROY: The golf course allowed me to manage it. I think the setup of the golf course, the fact that it didn't

-- there was only two holes I felt at Oak Hill that really penalized big misses, which was 6 and 7. So you take those two holes out of it, it was, it was what I would describe as a bogey golf course. It was very hard to make anything worse than a bogey. So you hit it in the rough off the tee, you got these openings into greens, you can run it up into the openings, make your par, 2-putt and move on. So I think the way the golf course was set up allowed me to manage the way I did.

If that, for example, was this golf course, where there wasn't as many openings going into greens I would have struggled more.

**Q. How does that happen though that you can feel so uncomfortable?**

RORY McILROY: I think just golf swing getting a little off, fighting the face a little bit. Fearful of the misses. I was so fearful of a left at Oak Hill I felt myself subconsciously just starting to aim further and further right as the week went on. Even like the last shot into 18 on Sunday that meant absolutely nothing. Like if I birdie the hole I'll finish 5th and if I par it I'll finish 7th. And I wanted to go to that left pin and I just couldn't get myself to aim there. I just kept creeping right and right and right. So just that's what I mean about being uncomfortable and just being a little fearful of a miss.

**Q. When is the last time you felt that, you know, struggling with your driver, what you called your biggest weapon?**

RORY McILROY: I'm sure at some point. Maybe not last year. I felt like I drove it really well for most of last year. Probably back in 2021. I was fighting it a little bit. So it's been a little while.

**Q. Tiger at the Masters said that he wants there to be a cut. What have the conversations been like with him, with Jack, and what would you say to Arnold Palmer that his event's going to no longer have a cut?**

RORY McILROY: Look, I think that's all TBD. I'm not sure. Honestly, I haven't really been a part of those conversations over the last few weeks, I've sort of tried to not distance myself. But I just haven't, I just haven't really been on -- there's been other things in my life that have taken priority over that. So I don't know if that decision has been made yet or if that's final. If you've got Jack and Tiger, and obviously Arnie's no longer with us, but those player-hosted invitationals as such, I mean, you know, could you create some sort of bracket where those tournaments, if the hosts really feel that a cut is important to them, to have a cut, then, you know, that, a 78-man field

cut to 50 at the weekend, whatever it is, then I would certainly be okay with that.

**Q. Are you as a player concerned about the fact that the purses are growing so exponentially, including even the majors, and is this, where the PGA TOUR's having to go into the reserve fund, the PGA of America, the USGA, I don't think we have to worry about the Masters, but the R & A, they're all having to find ways to generate new revenue to meet these purses. Do you think at some point this is becoming unsustainable?**

RORY McILROY: At some point maybe. You look at where -- and I think -- and, look, I don't know if this is, I don't know who to place the blame on here, but you have a new entity coming into the game offering 25 million dollar prize funds and other entities feel the pressure to keep up. So, yeah, I mean, you think about the four most important tournaments in our game, the prize funds aren't in the top 20 of prize funds. You think about that, right? Like that's, that doesn't quite add up. So whether there needs to be some sort of correction in that or -- I don't know. I, look, as a player these big prize funds are great. But it's a good question whether that's sustainable in the long-term. Golf has never been healthier. The industry's doing really well. There's more money coming into the game than ever before. More people want to put money into the game. So I think for the short- and medium-term I don't think it's a problem. But long-term, I don't really have a good answer for you. But right now I think it's at least sustainable for the next decade.

**Q. If in fact the majors decided that they couldn't continue to go on this rampage of increasing purses, and actually decided to level them off or actually reduce them to some extent, would that stop you from playing a major?**

RORY McILROY: It wouldn't stop me from playing a major, but at the same time the major championships basically rent the talent for a week from the PGA TOUR and you could argue from LIV and wherever, DP World TOUR and wherever else. So the major championships aren't going to be the product that they are without the top players in the world. So would that mean that I would or anyone would go to the lengths of not playing a major championship to make a point? No. But that's just having a reasonable conversation with the governing bodies and the people that run those tournaments and try to come up with a solution.

**Q. You were talking about work-life balance for professional golfers. But what about yourself right now, what's the most challenging work-life balance that you're going through at the moment?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it's that. It's making sure that I spend enough time on my golf and on my career that I feel like I'm ready to play tournaments like this. But then at the same time that I spend enough time with my wife and my daughter so they actually know who I am. (Laughing.) I'm not saying that I don't, but there's that balance of, you know, it's time management, it's just getting your priorities in order.

**Q. Spoken like a true father.**

RORY McILROY: Trying to, yeah.

**Q. Do you reach out to anyone in that regard? Like a lot of guys have gone through that, obviously.**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, and I think the great thing about the PGA TOUR is it feels like one big family and a lot of the families travel. Poppy's made a lot of friends in the day care program and all that. So it's a really nice sense of community, which is really nice to have. But no, I haven't, you know, I mean that's something I feel like I can figure out on my own, but at the same time there's, I know there's a lot of people that have went through the same thing and it's nice to know that you can reach out if you want to.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Rory, thank you very much for your time.

RORY McILROY: Thank you.

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