

# The Northern Trust

Wednesday, August 19, 2020

Norton, Massachusetts, USA

TPC Boston

## Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

DOUG MILNE: We welcome Rory McIlroy, the 2016 and 2019 FedExCup Champion. Thanks for joining us for a few minutes prior to the start of the 2020 FedExCup Playoffs here at THE NORTHERN TRUST.

With all that just said, just a few comments on being here and starting the 2020 version of the Playoffs.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's great. Look, the Playoffs are always an exciting time of the year and exciting stage of the season. You know, it's nice to be up there even though I haven't had the best few weeks from coming back from lockdown. I'm still, you know, right in there. I'm in the Top-10 and feel like if I can get something going here over the next few weeks, I've got a great chance going into East Lake.

This is usually a time of year where I've historically played pretty well, so you know, and Boston's a place and a golf course where I've got some nice history, so hopefully that can ignite something for me this week and I can get on a good little run of golf coming up.

DOUG MILNE: You mentioned TPC Boston, two-time winner here, and you also mentioned coming in in good position, No. 8 in the FedExCup, and you have a good history in THE NORTHERN TRUST, coming off a tie for sixth last year.

Six Top-10s so far this season. You mentioned playing well late in the season. You still on par with that good feeling, kind of late season, playing well.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think so. The last few weeks haven't really been what I've wanted from a golf standpoint on the course and also results-wise, and even just sort of practice-wise and technique-wise, hasn't really been where I've wanted it to be. I sound like a broken record. I saw some good signs last week in practice, and just a matter of it translating out into the competitive arena.

**Q. I just have a question about the back nine specifically. It's pretty unique this week that the**



**four-most difficult holes at TPC Boston are all consecutive, 11 to 14, what's your strategy through that stretch?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it is, it's a tough stretch. The last time that I won here in 2016, I teed off the back nine starting on Thursday, and I was 4-over through three. So yeah, I know how tough it can be. But yeah, it's a stretch where if you can play those holes in even par, you're doing pretty well.

11 and 13 are probably the two holes on that stretch that are the best chances for birdies. But yeah, those four holes, you're going to play them 16 holes total for the week and if you can play those 16 holes in even par, then you're definitely going to be gaining a shot or two on the field.

**Q. Question about focus. You've spoken a little bit about focus and not having it as much, especially recently. When you have been on, when you've been winning, how do you account for that? Will you look back and say, how did I focus so well through 18 holes or through 72 holes? Is it a diet thing? Is it a meditation thing? How do you account for that?**

RORY McILROY: I think it's just -- it's how you react and respond to certain things. So sort of I've got this nice quote that I got from someone last week, and it's like let -- don't let your golf influence your attitude; let your attitude influence your golf.

That's where I've been sort of a little crossed recently where I've been letting my golf influence my attitude on the course instead of the other way around, because if you go out there with a good attitude, that will hopefully help your golf game. I've sort of got those a little crossed the last few weeks and I think going out there with a bit of a better attitude, not being as reactive to misses or certain shots, will definitely be better for me going forward as we enter this big stretch of golf.

**Q. Is that the way you were in 2014?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think when anyone is playing well, they let their attitude influence their game instead of the other way around. I think when you start to get into trouble, if the way you're playing is influencing how you're thinking, how you're feeling, it should be the other way



around, right. Our mind is way more powerful than really anything else. If you can utilize that the right way, it's inevitably going to help your game on the course.

**Q. How does having the U.S. Open at the end of this busy stretch impact anything for you? Normally you'd be shutting it down maybe for a little bit after the next couple of weeks. Instead, you've got a big tournament still on the back end?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, I guess in seasons gone by, it's not as if I would necessarily shut it down. I would go back over to Europe and play some of those events in the fall or go to Asia and play those. But obviously a major championship is a little different to those events.

Yeah, look, the way I look at it, I'm playing four of the next five weeks with a really big tournament at the back end of it. Yeah, I'm not really -- I haven't really thought much about it at this point. I'm thinking about here this week and Boston and trying to play the best I can here and just trying to get some good -- try to get a bit of good form going. I think that's the most important thing for me right now. If I can see some good signs in my game, then I'll start thinking ahead to other stuff. But right now, honestly, the U.S. Open hasn't even entered my thoughts.

**Q. Have you ever played Winged Foot?**

RORY McILROY: Never. Never played it.

**Q. Hi from the South of France.**

RORY McILROY: Ah, very nice, Bernie.

**Q. Really hot. Sticking hot. Can you talk about attitude going into a tournament? You've got a really good record there at TPC Boston, winning in 2012 of course, and you had that great come-from-behind win in 2016. How does that help? And it's a course and tournament where you've won multiple times, as well.**

RORY McILROY: Yes, it's always helpful going back to places where you've won and had good history. That was sort of a theme going into Harding Park. I had won there before and feeling good. Sometimes it doesn't translate into having a chance to win a golf tournament. The most important thing is executing the shots, right, and my execution over the last few weeks hasn't been as good as it's needed to be, and it doesn't matter how good you've played on a certain golf course before. If you're not hitting the shots the way you want, then, you know, it's not going to happen. You're not going to have a chance. It is nice to be back to Boston. We missed it last year.

So it is nice to be back to a place where not -- everyone is familiar with it. Most of the field, the TOUR, and obviously myself having won here a couple of times.

It's always nice to get back to familiar surroundings.

**Q. And if I may, I've always got an Irish Open angle question. I asked you a couple weeks ago -- and we didn't know that the Irish Open was being rescheduled to the week of The Ryder Cup, but are your plans probably much still the same that you'll stay in the States and not go back?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I'm planning to stay in the States, Bernie. I don't see myself traveling internationally for a while. As I said earlier in this press conference, I'm playing four of the next five weeks with that last week being a major championship, and yeah, it's just -- it might be different if it wasn't, but behind closed doors, and there could be fans there and stuff.

Seeing it's going to be -- it's behind closed doors, and it's not an Irish Open like we're used to it being the last few years with obviously big prize funds and everything. But not even that, just the fact that I just want to spend time at home and not travel too much the next few months.

**Q. A bigger question is do we make sure that Bernie stays in France; is that possible?**

RORY McILROY: There you go.

**Q. I'm sorry, Bernie. I wanted to ask you mostly about the schedule. Justin made an interesting point that there's this virtual finish line that you get with East Lake and in this case we're crossing the end of the season and right in the middle of major season. Can you speak to that? Last year you went straight to Switzerland if I'm not mistaken.**

RORY McILROY: It's certainly different. I think everyone now is seeing the end of the season as after the Masters. The Masters in November is sort of the end of the season and again, for the U.S. players, it's a little different, but I think for international players that play, you know, basically all year round, they will go back over to Europe. I think the Masters has taken the place of one of those, you know, Race to Dubai events in Europe.

I think a lot of the international guys are used to playing that time of year. But look, it's a different year. I think we're all just glad that the tournaments are being played and that we're getting them in; that there's going to be a champion much someone's got to win them at the end of the day and doesn't matter if it's in April or November. The

fact that we have an opportunity is the most important thing.

Yeah, it's a different -- maybe have to approach it a little differently or just get your mind around it but for the most part, we've still got the opportunity to do it, and there's going to be, from what it sounds like, a couple of good events between the U.S. Open and the Masters that some guys will play.

So yeah, it's still some good golf coming up October, November time.

**Q. I was going to ask you what you're doing after East Lake, but you have a U.S. Open to play. Have you considered at all, when they move a couple of the Asia events to the West Coast, would you contemplate those?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, for sure. That was sort of my thought if they were to do that; I think it's a wonderful, not just -- I mean, I don't want to diminish the tournaments. But it's a gap-filler, right. You play U.S. Open, you play those couple on the West Coast and then you play the Masters. That sounds like a wonderful fall schedule to me.

**Q. Just with the news that Brooks Koepka pulled out this week, I was wondering about how you look back at a time in your career when you were injured and when you were out and maybe how that changes your mind-set or changes your approach when you try to come back?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I didn't even know that he pulled out. Look, it's tough. I think we've all -- Brooks is one of the biggest names in the game. We've all seen his physical struggles since last year. He had the knee injury and he slipped in Korea and he sort of struggled with it ever since. It's a good -- it's maybe never a good time, but it's a better time than sort of any other time to get it right. You know, take a few weeks off. Try to get himself ready for the U.S. Open, and then the Masters coming up, as well.

It's probably smart. He's just played six or seven weeks in a row, which it takes a toll on your body anyway, but even if you're struggling with an injury, even more so. So I think it's smart on his part to do that and hopefully comes back healthy and comes back ready to play.

**Q. Do you have any memories from when you were out for a bit of a stretch there?**

RORY McILROY: When I missed The Open in '15, it was a nice dose of perspective. I was rehabbing my ankle and I

think The Open had went to a Monday finish that year because there was like a delay.

So I remember it was right when sort of play was finishing on Monday, they were going into the playoff, and I was walking out of the gym because I was in the gym rehabbing my ankle and doing some exercises. People were just going about their daily lives. I was just sort of looking around, and it's like, yeah, you know, it obviously means a lot to me, but in the wider world, it's not that important.

It's important for career and whatever, but it was a nice healthy dose of perspective for me that people were not watching -- I couldn't believe people not watching the final round of The Open Championship, like what. It was a nice, healthy dose of perspective for me.

**Q. A couple weeks ago you put some new equipment into your bag. Based on the way the schedule has broken out this year with it being much more disjointed and different from what we are used to, is there any clean way for better timing to do it? I would imagine this is probably the first time in a long time you've put irons into the bag midseason just, a few weeks before a major championship and a major championship run. How challenging was that to do it right when you did it?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, it was -- like I wouldn't have done it if I didn't think the clubs that I was putting in play were better for me. I had tested those irons back in January when I played Torrey Pines. So I was somewhat familiar with them at that point.

But yeah, I mean, you have a week off and you mess around with them and you like them. You know, it's never going to be the same as when you actually put them into competitive play. But I think if you -- I think if you wait for like the perfect time to change equipment, I don't think you'll ever change. I think that's the thing, right. I don't think there is a perfect time. You have to, somewhat there's a bit of a leap of faith and you just have to go with it. Sometimes it works out and sometimes it doesn't.

**Q. With the major championship season now finishing in November, is there any residual effects if we are able to get the championship season back on calendar that we would anticipate or hoping to get; that there will be any lingering fatigue or rust? I imagine once you get through the Masters, if there's a way to take an off-season, everybody had a long one for three months, are you going to look to shut it down or how is that going to work?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, everyone had an off-season, you

just alluded to it. Everyone had nine or 12 weeks off or whatever it was.

I would imagine people not playing much over Thanksgiving and Christmas. I mean, that's a very natural time to take some time away, but then I'd say everyone will be raring to go. It's a little different next year, the top 30 that make it into East Lake can get to go to Kapalua. So you're probably anticipating a really good field there.

And then, you know, the season's back up and running. You've got all the West Coast and everything. I don't see there being any residual tiredness or sloppiness in play or fatigue because of that. I think people have had a nice sort of rest, off-season, whether that was just to work on their game or just to get away, a little bit of a sabbatical in the middle of their careers.

I see from January 21 onwards, it will be just full steam ahead for everyone.

DOUG MILNE: Rory, as always, we really appreciate your time, and certainly wish you the best of luck this week in search for that third FedExCup title.

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