

TOUR Championship

Friday, September 4, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

Q. It's been a wild five days in the McIlroy house. How have you been able to compartmentalize both events?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, golf was the furthest thing from my mind the first few days this week. And then once we got home on Wednesday and everything was good and mom and baby were healthy, that sort of took a load off my mind, and that meant I could come here and somewhat focus on what I'm supposed to do.

It was just nice to get home, as I said, have that reassurance that everything is okay, and then if anything, what's happened the last few days, it's nice to get out on the course for four or five hours and just do this.

Obviously I have a lot of good memories here at East Lake, and nice to have another really good round.

Q. Before the break due to the pandemic, you were the hottest player on the planet and then you came back and didn't play your best golf. Now that the baby has been born, how much of that was weighing on your mind as you were trying to go about your business out here on the PGA TOUR?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, so I think partly there was -- subconsciously there was probably something in there that was lingering, but I think it was just a perfect storm of that going on in my life and really not adjusting well to life without fans out here, as well, and just not really getting an energy.

You know, I've seen signs of my game that's getting a little better over the last couple weeks. I played okay last week in Chicago. It's nice when you come here, even though I've had success here, I was coming in with no expectations. I didn't touch a club for four days in between tournaments.

As I said, I come in here and golf was sort of the furthest thing from my mind, and sometimes that's a good thing just to decompress and get away from it, and yeah, happy to have the start that I did.



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Q. Are you surprised that you played so well four days after becoming a father?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, a little bit. You know, it just shows you golf is such a mental game, and if you come in with low expectations, that's always how I've played well. Whether I don't feel like my game is in a good place or I'm not the favorite coming into a tournament, all that stuff, I feel like that's when I usually play my best and I can play with a bit of freedom, and that's what I did today.

Q. First round as a father; how many times did you think of Poppy and think of your wife during the round?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, a little bit. Yeah, it's like every three hours she's supposed to be fed, so I'm like, okay, there's a feeding coming up.

But like it's natural. It's natural that in between shots you think about other things, and obviously my mind has been very much on what's going on at home. But it is nice to have this little four or five hours to myself to concentrate on my game and sort of get into this stuff.

I played well today. I played really well. I played as good as I have in a long time, and that was very encouraging.

Q. What were you happiest with?

RORY MCILROY: My iron play. For the most part I hit a lot of good iron shots, good wedge shots again. That's been something in my game that's been pretty good over the last few weeks, even though the results haven't been there.

I just need to get the ball in the fairway more. If I can get the ball in the fairway, I can take advantage of how my iron play is. I love these greens. I've always putted these green well and I putted them well again today. Just a few more balls in the fairway and hopefully I'll be right there.

Q. In the months leading up to this, in the weeks leading up to this, how much was it hard to focus when you were out on the golf course because of everything that was going on?

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RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean, I think as it got closer, so coming up to -- you know, like Harding Park and then coming into the Playoffs not knowing if the baby is going to come early or not, I think that sometimes -- you're in limbo a little bit. Your body is here and your mind is trying to be here, but your mind is also sort of divided and back there. I don't want to say -- it's not an excuse. It wasn't a distraction, but it was on my mind.

At the end of the day I just didn't play well enough over the last few weeks to get myself into contention, and I never want to make the excuse that there was other things on my mind, because you should be able to concentrate for that 15 or 20 seconds you're over a golf shot to do what you need to do.

Q. Did the drive on 18 surprise you, and has that happened before?

RORY MCILROY: It's happened before. The last time I think I did it was during the playoff in '16, but it seems like they've extended the fairway a little bit. The rough is now more like on the downslope, because I remember being in the rough in '16 and being able to hit this high shot on to the green, and where I was today I couldn't do that.

Yeah, I thought it's 370 to the end of the fairway, and it plays like 11 downhill. But I thought if I hit a good one it's going to carry maybe 340, 350, and with the Zoysia I thought it could land softly and sort of not run out, because the only time I've run out on that fairway is if you hit the downslope and it sort of trundles on.

I knew it was carrying the downslope so I didn't know if I was going through or not, but 3-wood never crossed my mind there. It was nice to get up to the ball and it not be in the water and was able to get a 4 and get out of there.

Q. When you left Chicago Sunday night, was there any concern you were going to miss the birth? Was there any kind of maybe just your panicking a little bit to get back, you were in a hurry?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I was in a hurry. I don't know if there was a panic, but yeah -- I mean, they say first-time mothers it sort of goes a little slower than most, but you want to get home. You want to be there. You want to just -- you just want to -- yeah, you just want to be there.

You don't want to miss anything, and you want to be helpful when you can. The pilots took a straight route home and I landed and I was there for 9:30 Sunday night.

Q. Just to be clear, you did not hit any balls or practice until you got here yesterday?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, none. Not at all, no.

Q. Going on the assumption that this wasn't a total surprise, when you guys found out that she was pregnant and you're looking at the schedule, was there any part of you then thinking, Wow, the season is pretty much going to be over; I'm going to have lots of time; not, Wow, we're going to have a baby and then I'm going to have a U.S. Open --

RORY MCILROY: I was expecting a very quiet fall. I thought, Oh, October, November, December, three months at home watching my daughter grow up a little bit, that'll be nice. And it's sort of the case. Look, we've got U.S. Open, CJ, ZOZO, Masters. That's what I'm going to play in, so I've got a couple of three-week chunks there that I can spend time at home and enjoy it, and then post-Masters I've got a couple months to really enjoy it.

But yeah, I was expecting a quieter fall than I'm going to have.

Q. How was your Whoop monitor on Sunday and Monday?

RORY MCILROY: A couple little spikes. A couple little spikes.

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