

TOUR Championship

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Mike McCarley

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're going to jump back into it here. We'd like to welcome Rory McIlroy to the media center here at the TOUR Championship. Ninth TOUR Championship appearance this year, obviously the 2016 and 2019 FedExCup champion.

You're entering the week seventh in the FedExCup. Just a couple quick comments on being back here at East Lake and a chance to become the first-ever three-time FedExCup champion.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, always great to make it to East Lake at the end of the year. It means you've had a very solid season.

Yeah, I've had a lot of success at East Lake over the years. This is my ninth time at East Lake, and I've won a couple of them. I've had chances the majority of the times I've been here to win the FedExCup.

Great to have another opportunity to try to do something that no one has ever done before in the short history of what the FedExCup is.

But yeah, excited to be back.

I felt like I got my golf game together a little bit better in Wilmington last week and played okay. I need to make a few more putts this week to have a chance.

Yeah, just want to give it another solid week and try to finish the PGA TOUR season on a high before I have a whopping five days off before I go over to Europe and start playing over there.

Q. Rory, obviously with all of the conversation about LIV and all the changes that were announced today, you have taken on a much more active role in the direction that the TOUR is going. What was the point for you where you decided to be more than just a golfer and to be an actual influence on the direction of



the sport going forward?

RORY McILROY: I don't know if I could pinpoint a time when that happened. I think I've maybe over the last two or three years just sort of evolved into that role. I care deeply about our sport. I care about its history. I care about its legacy. I care about the integrity of the game. There's a lot of players out here that are like-minded and share those same views.

I felt it was just right.

I think the one thing that has sort of happened over the years is we all sort of are our own little independent businesses and we sort of try to compete against each other, and I think this is the first time in a long time where we sort of all sat down and were like, let's try to be business partners. How can we all pull in the same direction here to benefit everyone and to help the entire TOUR and to help each other basically.

I said this a few days ago. Unfortunately, Tiger Woods doesn't play as much as he used to. Tiger Woods was the single biggest draw that the PGA TOUR had, amongst other things. We have to recognize that. So for the 23 of us that were in that room last Tuesday night, including Tiger, we all have to sit down, okay, what is the best thing for our TOUR going forward? What can we do to help put forward the best product possible so that in 50 years' time the PGA TOUR is still thriving and we can safeguard the future of the TOUR? That was basically what last week was about.

It was amazing to have Tiger in the room because of his influence, but all those players in that room bought into the vision that Tiger and I and others have sort of came up with. It's not as if we did this as a renegade group. We kept Jay privy to all these sort of discussions so he could try to make some moves internally to try to get stuff happening pretty quickly, and obviously that has culminated in some of the announcements that have been made today.

I'm sure there will be some changes going forward, as well, but I think today was a great step in the right direction.

Q. To follow up on that, with you guys coming together to put this plan on paper now, what do you

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foresee this actually doing to further benefit the health of the PGA TOUR starting next season?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I think I saw a stat yesterday that apart from the major championships and maybe THE PLAYERS, the top 10 players, top 20 players in the world get together to play against each other one other time during the year, and that just doesn't -- I think if you're trying to sell a product to TV and to sponsors and to try to get as many eyeballs on professional golf as possible, you need to at least let people know what they're tuning in for.

When I tune into a Tampa Bay Buccaneers game I expect to see Tom Brady throw a football. When I tune into a Formula 1 race I expect to see Lewis Hamilton in a car.

Sometimes what's happened on the PGA TOUR is we all act independently and we sort of have our own schedules, and that means that we never really get together all that often.

I think what came out of the meeting last week and what Jay just was up here announcing is the fact that we've all made a commitment to get together more often to make the product more compelling.

Q. Rory, do you think that your commitment, the other top 20 in this PIP would have been there if not for the threat of LIV?

RORY McILROY: I don't know. I have no idea. I don't have a crystal ball.

But I think everyone in that room realized that this is the best way forward.

Q. Also, the announcement today by Jay, these new changes, do you think it will have any impact on the players that were in that room and the seven that are reportedly going to go to LIV? Do you think there will be any change?

RORY McILROY: So my whole thing, like I had a conversation with Cameron Smith two days after the Open, and firstly, I wanted to congratulate him, but also I wanted -- guys that are thinking one way or another, honestly I don't care if they leave or not. It's not going to make a difference to me.

But I would at least like people to make a decision that is completely informed and basically know this is what's coming down the pipeline. This is what you may be leaving behind.

I just don't want people making decisions -- hearing

information from one side and not from another. So I think that's sort of been my whole thing this entire time. I've always said guys can do whatever they want. Guys can make a decision that they feel is best for themselves and their families. But I want guys to make decisions based on all of the facts.

Sometimes I don't think some guys made those decisions based on having all the facts in front of them.

Q. You talk about the future of the game and caring about that. Even with these changes, how concerned are you still about where the game will be five or ten years from now at the top players, and can two tours coexist?

RORY McILROY: I mean, a bunch of tours have coexisted over the last I don't know how many years. You've had the PGA TOUR, the European Tour, the Asian Tour, the Sunshine -- there's a million different golf tours that have all been able to coexist in some way, but there was a -- there's levels.

There's levels to it, right, and everyone is trying to make it to the top level of professional golf, which is the PGA TOUR.

Look, the PGA TOUR are going to do what they're going to do. LIV are going to do what they're going to do. I think at this point, Jay said it best, the PGA TOUR are just trying to control what they can control and try to put forward the best product possible for people to tune into, for sponsors to get excited about, for TV to get excited about, and for the players to get excited about.

I think having the top players in the world playing together more often and competing against each other more often is -- I think it's what everyone wants. It's what the players want. It's what the fans want, most importantly.

And I think once we solve for that, a lot of the rest of the stuff sort of takes care of itself.

Q. I know Tiger at one point was your idol and now you guys are standing shoulder to shoulder trying to save the TOUR. Can you trace the evolution of your relationship with Tiger, not just on the competitive side but as businessmen and sort of spokesmen?

RORY McILROY: Yeah. It's funny, I never in a million years thought that I would be in this position in particular, and in this position doing this stuff with Tiger Woods.

I said to him the other day, I remember the first golf shot I ever seen him hit live. It was the 5th hole at Mount Juliet



whenever the Amex was there in 2002. I drove down with my dad, and I watched him hit a drive off the fifth tee, and a long iron into the middle of the green, a par-5; Tiger was my idol ever since I watched him play the 1996 U.S. Amateur.

But to -- it's an honor just to get to know him. He has been an idol and a hero of mine over the years, and I feel pretty lucky that I've gotten to know him more intimately than some. And he is so passionate about what we're doing. He realizes that the PGA TOUR give him a platform to build his brand and let him be who he is, and he is so -- he has tremendous respect about the people that have come before us.

I think this for him is all about what Jack and Arnie created in the '60s, and everyone that has come before us. And I think for someone like me and my generation, trying to do something to respect the generation that came before me, Tiger being the prime example, and just trying to carry that legacy on, I think that's really what he's trying to do here.

But having his influence and having his counsel, not just myself but all of the players on the PGA TOUR, he's a great advocate to have, and it's awesome to be doing these things with him.

I have to pinch myself pretty much every day that I'm in this position.

Q. This role of advocate for you, is it energizing or is it depleting?

RORY McILROY: It's energizing when you can get stuff done. When you're working on stuff for a while and nothing really comes to fruition, yeah, then it starts to become heavy.

But when you see progress and you break down a couple of barriers, that's energizing.

Q. What would you say to critics of these new changes who say it's less of a meritocracy and more towards popularity with some of the PIP changes?

RORY McILROY: So anyone has a chance to play their way into these elevated events. Anyone has a chance to feature in the Player Impact Program. Like that's the thing; the reason we're trying to do this is we're trying to build a TOUR for the future, young, ambitious players that want to be the best players in the game.

If you want to be the best player in the game, the PGA TOUR is where you want to be because it is a pure meritocracy. There's nothing stopping guys from playing in

these elevated events. There's nothing stopping guys from getting in the PIP. You just play better. You work your ass off, you play better, and if you do that, you will get into these events.

That's as simple as it is. Everyone has the same opportunity. Everyone starts the week at even par, apart from this week. But everyone has the same opportunity at the start of every week to make something of themselves and to compete, and that's the beautiful thing about this TOUR.

Q. The TOUR had previously talked about creating three limited-field events for top players overseas in the fall. Now having created this elevated event series, presumably that's under some question whether or not they do that. Is there a danger that the TOUR is conceding the rest of the world outside the United States to LIV or any other entity?

RORY McILROY: No, I think one of the -- we need to make this TOUR more global. I think that the PGA TOUR has taken some steps towards that with the Japan event or the Korean event, and obviously the strategic alliance with the European Tour and sort of figuring out where that will go over time.

But I certainly think there is a lot of opportunity to make this TOUR more global. I think you look at the membership on TOUR, you look at the players that are the top players on the PGA TOUR, they're not just American. You've got me in there, you've got Europeans, you've got Asian players, you've got South Americans, you've got Australians. I mean, you've got players from all over the world.

I think that the PGA TOUR need to be represented in all of those regions in the world.

Q. Obviously several months ago Phil made some comments about the TOUR that were pretty harsh. I'm just wondering in light of what we've learned today if any of his underlying points had some merit. Maybe not the egregious ones, but if you dug down deeper, is there any truth to some of that, and is that why we're seeing this now?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, as much as I probably don't want to give Phil any sort of credit at all, yeah, there were certain points that he was trying to make. But there's a way to go about them. There's a way to collaborate. There's a way -- you get all the top players in the world together and you get them on the same page. You then go to the TOUR and you suggest ideas and you work together. This was pure collaboration.

As I said, this isn't some sort of renegade group trying to take some sort of power grab of the PGA TOUR. This is, okay, how can we make this TOUR better for everyone that's going to play on it now and everyone that's going to play on the PGA TOUR going forward.

Were some of these ideas, did they have merit? Of course they did. But he just didn't approach it the right way.

THE MODERATOR: We will welcome up Mike McCarley, founder and CEO of TMRW Sports to talk about today's announcement.

MIKE MCCARLEY: Good morning. What started with conversations about the future of sports over the past couple years led to Tiger, Rory, and I forming a company together that we announced formally yesterday.

It's called TMRW Sports, and we're happy to announce today our first project. It's rooted in the traditions of the game, but it's taking a big step into the future. Every step along the way, we thought about how can we enhance the fan experience.

It starts with having the two biggest superstars in the game, Tiger and Rory, committed to play.

Let me introduce you to the TGL.

(Video shown.)

A few details. This is a tech-infused team competition in front of a live crowd, in front of a live television audience. It's 18 holes in two hours. We've been working together on this for nearly two years, and every time we talked about it, it was always, This is going to be a complementary project to the PGA TOUR.

We couldn't be happier that Jay embraced the vision immediately and the TOUR got on board, and we're happy to call the PGA TOUR our partners on the project.

How does it work? You see the architectural renderings of the venue. For the fans, think sitting courtside at an NBA game. It's that type of environment, music, player introductions. You're right on top of the action as a fan. You see everything play out in front of you.

To orient yourself from a golf standpoint, you see the drives and approach shots go into the screen. It's a commercial-sized screen, not quite the size of an IMAX screen, but pretty damned close. The ball will be placed in the short game area and the guys play out from there.

It's six teams of three PGA TOUR players, so 18 players

total, and the regular season is 15 Monday night matches followed by a semifinals and finals series, and it starts in January of '24, which is 18 months away.

I know you guys have a lot to write about just based on what we've been through this morning, so there are going to be a lot of details that get announced as we get closer to the competition. After Rory, we'll take some questions.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, couldn't be more excited to partner with Tiger and Mike on this project. As Mike said, we've been working on this for two years. I think when someone comes to you and says, I've got something to show you, I think it'll be really cool, it'll enhance the fan experience, it'll be additive and complementary to the PGA TOUR season, oh, and by the way, Tiger Woods is involved, it's like, yeah, I think that would be pretty cool.

I think it's a great opportunity for PGA TOUR players to show a different side of themselves primetime on Monday night. I think it's great for brand exposure to try to engage a different audience. We've all heard about the fact of how old the golf audience is, trying to get younger eyeballs on to it.

I just think it's going to be a really cool concept. Tiger and I are incredibly excited. We shared this vision with the room of players last week in Wilmington. Some of those players were already involved.

It's just, I guess, another prong to what the PGA TOUR are trying to do to push the TOUR forward, and there was so much excitement in the room with that, as well.

It'll be partly owned by the players, this league, so players can get equity in this league, as well.

It's awesome. I think it's great for everyone involved, fans, TV, players, the TOUR in general.

Yeah, couldn't be more excited to get going.

Q. Will there be just one location that everybody comes to, or do you pick this stuff up, pack it up and move it around the country?

MIKE MCCARLEY: To start, there will be one location.

Q. Has anyone been to The Bogey in in Columbus?

MIKE MCCARLEY: I have not, but it sounds like you're going to tell me I should go.

RORY McILROY: I think the first-ever Memorial I ever played I spent Sunday night in The Bogey Inn.



Q. Were you hit under those windows?

RORY McILROY: No. I just remember having a few too many drinks.

Q. Well, they do have adult beverages there, but it's like garage doors and people hit out to fake greens, and then you come inside and you do the putting and the chipping.

MIKE McCARLEY: Oh, cool. Good to see.

RORY McILROY: This might be a little more sophisticated than that.

Q. On the timing of it, on the 15, do you have any specific dates in mind in terms of related to weeks of various tournaments?

RORY McILROY: Yes, yeah, very much so. Very much so will be Monday nights of tournaments that are in that January to April window.

MIKE McCARLEY: Yeah, I think the new schedule is going to help. The Monday night piece from a scheduling standpoint for media is great, but also the Monday night piece of the schedule in a player's week and all the demands on their time is great, too.

So imagine the new schedule and when these guys are available, it's going to all line up.

Q. What's the location going to be?

MIKE McCARLEY: Good question. We are going to be announcing a location as we get a little bit closer to the competition date, but we're viewing proposals from a lot of the partners that we've met with so far.

Q. Is it out of the question that it would move to a couple different locations as the TOUR moves?

MIKE McCARLEY: In future years that is not out of the question.

Q. Is there a purse? Is there money involved in this?

MIKE McCARLEY: Yeah, there will be a purse.

Q. Can you describe in rough terms what that's going to look like?

MIKE McCARLEY: Rough terms, I see the terms boatload and truckload being thrown around a lot lately. Maybe it'll

be in between those two, but we'll announce the purse as we get a little bit closer to the start date.

Q. Will you be able to gamble on this?

MIKE McCARLEY: Is that a personal question? Are you asking for a friend?

Q. Will people actually be able to --

MIKE McCARLEY: There's going to be a lot of data generated -- I mean, you can imagine an environment like that, the types of data that we're going to be able to capture. There's going to be a lot of data generated and obviously there's going to be other opportunities for fans to engage from home or wherever they watch.

Q. Rory, given the limited amount that Tiger is able to play, do you think this is the best use of his time? Best use of where we're going to see him play golf?

RORY McILROY: I mean, if you want to -- I mean, who knows where we're going to see Tiger Woods play golf next, right? We don't know what his schedule is going to be. We don't know how his body is going to be. But to be able to see him still showcase his skills on primetime, on TV without really any wear and tear on his body, I think to be able to see Tiger hit golf shots and still sort of provide people with a glimpse of his genius, I think it is a really good use of his time, yeah.

MIKE McCARLEY: And when you think about it, the wear and tear on the body is six-, seven-, eight-mile walks a day, up and down hills. This eliminates all of that, which is in addition to not creating that wear and tear on anyone's body, much less Tiger.

It also is the way in which we're able to condense the time frame. A 300 yard drive, 300 plus yard drive is a two and a half minute walk. On television, you go to commercial, you show our players. This, it's a 10-foot walk over to the bench area. You grab your next club, you come back, you hit your next shot.

So it eliminates a lot of that for sure.

Q. Do you have a television partner?

MIKE McCARLEY: We do not have a television partner. We're going to start that process right after this week. But I have already gotten some pretty good interest from various partners who I know from my past life, various partners around the world already. So I think there's going to be a lot of interest.

Q. Is it going to be network television? Can you tell us that?

MIKE McCARLEY: Well, if I can't tell you who the partner is, I cannot tell you where it ends up. But we will announce that when we have that deal done.

Q. Will there be a TGL Q-School or what sort of criteria do you see?

MIKE McCARLEY: That has not been something that has been contemplated, but the number of agents and players that have hit me up in the last couple of days, that might be something we have to add, yeah.

RORY McILROY: We're not looking for World Ranking points for this.

Q. These six teams, do they all play every week, or do two teams play this week, two teams play next week?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, exactly. So not every team plays every week, but you're going to see -- over the course of that 15-week schedule, you're going to see teams play against each other however many times.

MIKE McCARLEY: Over the 15 weeks, each team plays five times. So when you have six teams, each team plays the other five teams once. So Tiger and Rory's teams will play each other one time.

Q. We can assume team names, uniforms, all that?

MIKE McCARLEY: That's all to come. That's all to come.

Q. From your own history of fandom, I'm curious, did they ever show the battle of Bighorn in Northern Ireland?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I was actually playing the World Junior Masters in Hawai'i when the battle of Bighorn was being played, and the Showdown at Sherwood, and I think it was -- it was on Pay-Per-View at that time. We were staying in some hotel and I made my dad pay whatever it was, like 40 or 50 bucks to watch.

So yeah, I remember that stuff.

Q. I wonder if you could just speak on the space of a Monday night and why Monday is important or how that fits into the whole equation.

RORY McILROY: Well, I think these were very, very limited to like -- it was one Monday night a year. This is a league, this is a series, that is something that people can

get invested in and follow along, so I think there's a big differentiator there.

MIKE McCARLEY: And when you look at from the media standpoint, more or less college football national championship game is early January, Monday night, then you're pretty much wide open from a national sports standpoint until Labor Day when Monday Night Football starts that next week.

So you've got a really good window from a national sports standpoint where you've got NBA, Major League Baseball, NHL other nights of the week. But from a golf calendar standpoint, Tuesday, travel day, practice, Wednesday pro-am, Thursday through Sunday play. Monday and Monday nights is the time that all this makes sense, which is why a lot of the Monday outings are happening, because that's when it fits in guys' schedules. It's a combination of the overall media landscape but also how this is going to work for a player's schedule.

THE MODERATOR: Mike, Rory, thank you guys so much for the time, and best of luck.

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