

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

Thursday, March 3, 2022

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## Rory McIlroy

### Quick Quotes



**Q. Rory, they talk about golf courses fitting a guy's eye, Graeme said that about you. Is there something about the mental component when you get to Bay Hill because you've done so well here?**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think you turn up at any golf course where you've had success, and automatically you're going to have some confidence coming in. I've shot some really nice scores here. I think the last couple of years I've opened up the tournament really well with scores similar to what I shot today.

Yeah, I feel there's a nice flow to this golf course where you can really build a score. You have par-5s, one every few holes, and you've got a couple of scorable par-4s. As long as you don't do anything stupid and you keep it in play, you feel like you can sort of methodically build a score on this golf course. That's what I tried to do today.

I played the par-5s particularly well, and that was the bulk of the score. I've sort of said this all along. I don't feel like you need to do anything -- like you can play within yourself here and still shoot a good score, I feel, if you're just disciplined and pick off the birdies where you're supposed to.

**Q. Can you talk more about your stellar play on the par-5s.**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I hit a couple of really good long irons into a couple of them. I hit a 4-iron into 12 and a 4-iron into 6. They were probably two of the best long irons I hit in a while. So when I start hitting long irons like that, I know my swing's in a pretty good place. Seeing shots like that certainly gives me some confidence.

**Q. And do you prepare differently as the course conditions get tougher?**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I was actually pretty surprised at how firm the greens were already. From the Pro-Am yesterday, we played at a similar time to today. The golf course is firmed up already. I think with this weather and

the sort of warmer weather that's coming over the weekend, it's just going to get more and more firm as the week goes on. Then that places a premium so much more on just getting the ball in play. Fairways and greens and just being really disciplined with your game.

**Q. You talked about 6 yesterday, specifically the tee shot and having choices. When you hit a shot like you did there today, does it embolden you to be maybe more aggressive the rest of the weekend?**

RORY MCILROY: That was as far left as it needed to be. I was trying to hit it into that fat part of the green, like that front third. I did -- the wind maybe took it a little further left than I wanted to. I hit it well enough I knew it was always going to cover.

No, I mean, you just -- that hole, you're trying to get your tee shot away. Then if you do, you're just trying to from there just get the ball down in three and make a birdie and move on.

**Q. Rory, Adam was just over here talking about how nice it is to play with you. He likes watching your swing. He thinks it maybe rubs off. Isn't it sort of the same about him?**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, any time I play with Adam, it's a good pairing. We chat about all sorts of stuff. I feel like we've got quite a bit in common. Yeah, anyone could watch Adam Scott swing the club all day long. He's got a nice rhythm.

Yeah, it's nice. If he feeds off me, I certainly think I feed off him a little bit too.

**Q. Do you like having no runoffs or fewer runoffs around these greens? Why or why not?**

RORY MCILROY: Not. I prefer the runoffs. I think it separates the good chippers from the bad chippers. I feel like, when you miss a green when the rough is like this, you know, it's half skill, half guesswork, luck. There's a little bit more that goes in. I think, whenever you miss greens and there's runoffs and it gives you options, I think



that's where the guys with the better short games separate themselves. So that's why I like runoffs. I like that style.

So, yeah, I don't particularly understand why they did that this year, but it presents a different challenge. You just have to adapt to that.

**Q. Do you think most TOUR players like the thick rough, though, because as long as they know the lies, they kind of --**

RORY MCILROY: It certainly makes it a little simpler if you don't feel like you've got a great short game. But like even next week, for example, wherever that second cut is, it's not too long, I think even a cut like that, I feel like the guys can really show their skill around the greens if they have that skill.

And it's fun to see. I think that's the other thing with -- it's fun to see different shots and you can play it certain ways. Obviously, a setup like this this week, that takes that out of the equation. You basically miss a green, and you've pretty much got just blast it out and try to hole the putt.

**Q. Rory, you've won early in the year versus not winning early in the year. Does it mean anything? Does it matter?**

RORY MCILROY: It's nice to win just regardless. I mean, regardless of when it comes in the season, it's nice to win. Or in the year. This is my fourth start of the calendar year, and I've had one really good chance to win and probably one other half chance.

Yeah, I feel like I'm playing well enough to have chances to win golf tournaments, but all you can ask of yourself is to keep putting yourself in those positions on Sundays, and then you see where your game really is. Hopefully, this is another week where I put myself in a position where I can really see where my game is when the pressure's on.

**Q. In Dubai on that Sunday, that seemed to sting you.**

RORY MCILROY: Standing on the -- after birdieing 13, standing on the 14th tee with a one or two-shot lead with five holes to go, and I did all the -- in Dubai, I did all the hard stuff right. I made par on 14, par on 15, par on 16. And then you've got two gettable holes on 17, 18, and those are the holes where I made the mistake.

So I did the hard part, and whenever the opportunity came to sort of shut the door and win the tournament, I didn't do that. I think that was what was most frustrating about that.

**Q. I think I heard you say that you felt you had a**

**turning point in your putting, one of the earlier interviews. When was that, and what did you find?**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, like putting is -- like with putting, I feel half the battle is already done before you hit the ball -- reading the green, getting your setup right, aiming the putter. I think I just got a little bit lax on that side of things.

I've actually really enjoyed not having a green book. I feel like it's got me more into the putts. I feel like I'm more -- I'm not consulting a green book as much. Honestly, I feel like it's benefited me these last few weeks, and that's been a nice thing.

It's just been a little bit setup, just a little bit of setup, and a little bit more green reading and practicing that. Those two things have -- those have stayed constant, and I've putted well because of that.

**Q. Did you find that on your own, your caddie, or Fax?**

RORY MCILROY: A little bit of both. I was putting with Fax before going to the Middle East, and I just felt like I started to creep a little too far away from the ball. Eye line was a little too far inside, and what happens then is my right arm leaves my side. I really like, if I can keep my right arm in my side and the shaft plane and my right arm match up, it sort of becomes almost automatic from there. It's almost like your right arm acts as a piston, and that's the feel I like. Just setting up like that and having that constant is important for me.

**Q. Rory, as someone who came up young and was pretty polished on and off the golf course as you were, I'm curious what your impression is of Will Zalatoris. While you've gotten to know him. He hasn't been out here that long. What do you see in his game and how he handles himself?**

RORY MCILROY: Great player, obviously. Hell of a ball striker. Drives the crap out of it. Hits his irons good. He's got a nice flight. He can hit it up in the air. I don't know him that well. I don't even know if I've played with him on TOUR at this point, but from what I've seen with him obviously playing in front of us today and watching him on TV, he seems like a great kid. Kid -- I can't believe I'm saying kid. He seems like a great kid with a lot of potential and a really bright future.

**Q. On the rough, is it around the greens, is it a hit and hope, or do you have a certain distance you take it back if you have to hack it out ten yards?**

RORY MCILROY: It depends on the lie. Some are hit and hopes, and others, if you get a decent lie, it's more

technique-based. But there's a little bit of both in there.

**Q. Off the fairway, does it cost you a shot?**

RORY MCILROY: You'd have to look at the stats, but it's probably close to it.

**Q. When you're in position to win, do you feel like you're supposed to?**

RORY MCILROY: When I'm in a position to win? Like Dubai, for example?

**Q. Anything.**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think with the experience that I have and the tournaments that I have closed out in my career, if you're two ahead with five to play, I think you should win that, yeah.

**Q. Generally in position on Sunday, I guess your attitude if you don't, on your reflection time, is it always something that you blame yourself, or is it ever something where you acknowledge doing something different?**

RORY MCILROY: Sometimes someone just plays better than you and you've done all that you can. You're always going to nitpick and think there's things you could have done better. I'd say 25 percent of the time it's someone's just played better than you and you've given it your all. But I'd say three-quarters of the time there's self-error in there somewhere.

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