

Cognizant Classic

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes



Q. What did you think of your round today?

RORY McILROY: Pretty solid. Some good, some not so good. Really good off the tee. That's been a really good thing. I led strokes gained off the tee at Riviera a couple weeks ago, drove it really well again today.

But a little loose with the irons. Didn't really hole much going out, but I holed a couple on the back nine.

Overall, it's a solid start. 67 around here is always a decent score. It was so benign today. You're not going to get this course much easier.

Probably could have been a couple of shots better, but overall still a decent start.

Q. Your driver has been a weapon for a long time, but do you feel like the advantage has shrunk a little bit with technology and other guys training? What do you have to do to have that advantage week in and week out?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I would say I think like DJ, myself, maybe like a Gary Woodland, like that sort of style of play I think became pretty prevalent in the sort of 2010, '11, '12, and I think for a while there, yeah, there was a big advantage if you played that way and you could really take advantage of driver off the tee. But I think guys -- there's so many things that go into it. There's TrackMan. There's analytics, people telling you to hit driver more. People are training more, technology in drivers, technology in ball. I think all those things together, it has probably corralled us a little bit more closer together. Maybe not quite as easy to separate yourself as it was 10 years ago.

Just means the rest of the game has to be just that little bit sharper.

Q. What's it like being set up this week so close to home?

RORY McILROY: Same as a usual week at home except I

usually don't get up at 4:30 like this morning. But pretty similar to most weeks that I'm home. It's nice to sleep in my own bed for a change.

Q. We know the Bear Trap can play pretty difficult, but 5, 6, 7, that stretch can be difficult, as well. Can you speak to how that played today?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it played -- I think 5 played pretty easy because it was downwind. 6 played tough. It was back into the wind. Thankfully I played that hole very well.

I think that stretch -- it's even -- like 4 is not easy. It's a short hole, but the depth of the green is pretty narrow, and you've got to be really on with your second shot there. So that little stretch is tough on the front. It's an underrated stretch of the golf course for sure.

Q. You got your first look at kind of front row seat at Jake Knapp today. What did you think of his game after seeing it up close? Secondly, how many guys out there on TOUR that no one has really heard of have the potential to be like a superstar or a Megha star?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, he could definitely be a star. It looks like he's got the full package. He's obviously got the speed. He can control that speed pretty well. He hit some beautiful shots out there today. Looks like his short game is pretty good.

He's got charisma and like we had a good chat out there for a lot of the round. He's in good shape, and he -- if he keeps playing the way he is, he's the full package. He could be a superstar out here for sure.

Q. You talked about missing it with your irons, missing left, missing right. When you go to the range, can you explain exactly what you'll do to try to correct that? Is there something that you've done before?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so it's something that I've been struggling with for the last few weeks, and it's hard. It's hard to replicate on the range the visuals that you're getting on the course, and it's more a visual thing. When I see a pin on the left side of the green, I'm just a bit more uneasy



of what shot to play and how I'm trying to swing it and whatever.

I'll try to find a place on the range today where I can sort of imagine that I'm hitting to left pins and just trying to hit the shots that I want to hit. Repetition is basically all I need to do.

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