

# Zurich Classic of New Orleans

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

## Rory McIlroy

## Shane Lowry

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Rory McIlroy and Shane Lowry here to the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. If we can get some opening comments on being paired together this week. Rory, your first time here, and Shane making your first appearance.

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, it's good to be here. I was saying it to one of our pro-am partners out there today, professional golf, year in and year out, it's a bit of a grind sometimes when you're on your own a lot, so it's nice to have something different this week and especially to be here with a really good friend and enjoy New Orleans and hopefully go out and play some good golf and give ourselves a chance to win on Sunday.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, same sentiments. Obviously this is my first time here in New Orleans. I'm excited to be here. It's a tournament that I've watched on TV for quite a few years, especially since they went to the team format.

Shane and I have played in a couple of Ryder Cup teams together, and we thought it would be fun to team up together again in something like this. As Shane said, this is my 17th year as a professional golfer, and to be able to still do things for the first time like play in this event and experience something like this is pretty cool. Just really excited to spend the week with Shane, and hopefully I don't put him in too many bad spots and we can play some good golf.

**Q. Quickly, how this partnership came together, when you guys started talking about it.**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I was the one that mentioned it.

SHANE LOWRY: I basically didn't want to ask Rory because I didn't think that he would want to come and play. Then he was the one that said it to me, and I was like, absolutely.

Yeah, we talked about it, I remember Rory talked about --



the Wednesday after Ryder Cup we had a nice few drinks together. We talked about it that day, and then he sent me a text around Christmastime, and it was a nice little Christmas present for me to get. Yeah, happy to be here with him.

I like playing golf from the middle of the fairway, so I'm looking forward to this week.

RORY McILROY: No pressure.

**Q. Rory, are you able to confirm whether or not you'll make a potential return to the policy board?**

RORY McILROY: Not as of yet, no.

**Q. Are we able to speak in hypotheticals?**

RORY McILROY: Maybe.

**Q. When you go back to a year ago or eight months ago when you decided to step away, you talked about wanting to focus more on inside the ropes and things like that. What has changed in the last eight months? How do you look back now on that decision to walk away and why it might be interesting now?**

RORY McILROY: I think I can be helpful. I don't think there's been much progress made in the last eight months, and I was hopeful that there would be. I think I could be helpful to the process.

But only if people want me involved, I guess. When Webb and I talked and he talked about potentially coming off the board, I said, look, if it was something that other people wanted, I would gladly take that seat, and that was the conversation that we had.

But yeah, I think that's the whole reason. I feel like I can be helpful. I feel like I care a lot, and I have some pretty good experience and good connections within the game and sort of around the wider sort of ecosystem and everything that's going on.

But at the end of the day, it's not quite up to me to just



come back on the board. There's a process that has to be followed.

But I'm willing to do it if that's what people want, I guess.

**Q. Unification has been your big thing the last few months. If hypothetically you were back, is that something then you would have a stronger stance on on the board?**

RORY McILROY: Absolutely, yeah. I think it's the only way forward for the game of golf.

**Q. You've said before, I think, that maybe you didn't always see eye to eye with some people before on matters. How do you manage that if you're back in terms of trying to steer things a certain way?**

RORY McILROY: Compromise but also try to articulate your points as well as you can and try to help people see the benefits of what unification could do for the game and what it could do for this tour in particular. We obviously realize the game is not unified right now for a reason, and there's still some hard feelings and things that need to be addressed, but I think at this point for the good of the game, we all need to put those feelings aside and all move forward together.

**Q. Did you almost get a physical sense of relief or feel a burden when you originally left? You talked about not being able to split your time --**

RORY McILROY: Yes and no. I would say that I've played some of my best golf while being a PGA TOUR board member, so I don't think it really hindered me. It was maybe just taking away some time from me pursuing things or spending time doing things that I wanted to do at home, and having to hop on calls two, three times a week and just the whole thing started to take a toll, as it has on a lot of the players.

We're golfers at the end of the day. We don't need to be trying to run a \$15 billion business. We need to go out there and play golf and let the business people do the business things.

**Q. On the matters of golf, Shane, I saw you and Rory were out in the practice area together playing together, hitting practice shots and things like that. How often in a tournament other than this would you guys do that? Is that something that is unique to this venue, or is that something that you guys might ever do outside of say Ryder Cup?**

SHANE LOWRY: Well, it just kind of happened yesterday.

We were going out to play the course, but the course was quite busy and we didn't want to spend too long doing that, so we said we'd do some chipping around the chipping green.

I used to do it historically for years -- I've done it with Padraig Harrington over the years, but he's a lot of the time on Champions Tour now. We don't typically do it.

Rory likes to play and practice early in the mornings and I don't, so we don't really play that many practice rounds together throughout the year. We play a few but not that many. It just kind of happened yesterday, and it's good fun. I think it's a good way to practice.

I think for kids, if they want to practice, get a friend or a person, anybody who wants to practice, get a person to play against and go and chip around the green. I think that's a good way to get better.

**Q. With this being your first trip to New Orleans, what is your initial take? Shane, did you prep him for what this week's vibe was about?**

RORY McILROY: No, he didn't really prep me, I guess. We got in yesterday sort of around midday. We came straight here, so we didn't really -- I didn't get a sense really of the city last night. We got to the hotel and didn't really do much.

But we got some good restaurant reservations the next few nights, and sort of gonna hit all the staples that you should. I'll maybe venture down to Bourbon Street at some point and spend half an hour and say I've been there and I've got the tee shirt and then move on. I don't think I want to spend too much time down there.

But yeah, I'm excited to be in a new place. As I said before, we spend our whole lives going back to the same cities, the same golf courses and the same routines, so to do something a little different is nice.

**Q. I wanted to ask about golf at the Olympics. I know growing up, obviously you all never had that opportunity. How great was it to take part -- a little different because of COVID but potentially the excitement of doing it for real this year, having it as an Olympic sport and looking forward to that this summer?**

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, obviously growing up playing golf, you never dreamed of being an Olympic champion, so when golf came to the Olympics it was kind of a strange feeling to have. But doing the last Olympics with Rory together in Japan, albeit it was a COVID Olympics so it



was a little bit different, we both realized what it meant to go out and try and win an Olympic medal for your country.

I think that's something that excites me and excites both of us to go back to Paris this year and try and do that.

For me personally, I know to go back to Ireland with an Olympic medal would be like a dream. Yeah, something that is high on my bucket list for this year.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, same thing. I was in a seven-way playoff in Tokyo for a bronze medal, and I've never tried so hard to finish third in my life.

Yeah, look, we didn't grow up dreaming of winning an Olympic medal because that just wasn't something that was on our radar. Major championships have always been what has been the greatest achievement in the game of golf, but once you're there and you get into that Olympic spirit, it really sort of -- I don't know, something happens inside of you, and you really get a sense for what it means to so many people. As Shane said, even to just be able to call yourself an Olympian, but then if you were able to win a medal, that would be incredibly special.

**Q. I guess you're not too happy about the way the early part of the season has gone, and after the meat grinder of the last two and a half weeks, you said no pressure; is this a week where you can just relax and kind of let things -- maybe fix some things?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, a little bit. I don't think there's things that need to be fixed, but I think a week like this to sort of relax and play under -- maybe not the amount of pressure or the stress that we've both been under the last couple of weeks I think is a nice thing. And it's nice to be able to rely on a teammate every now and again and bail you out of trouble or know that you don't have to play perfect golf because you've got someone right there beside you.

It's a nice week for that. There's still a lot of FedExCup points on offer, and we know if we have a good week this week, that'll get us both up the FedExCup list and put us in a really good spot going into the summer.

**Q. You mentioned that you thought it would be fun to play here and you mentioned the novelty aspect. Is there some practical professional application, too, in terms of maybe you guys will be teammates again in the future? More team golf?**

RORY McILROY: I think it's just -- I just thought it would be fun to do, going and playing here with a friend and enjoying a week in New Orleans and going to eat some

good food at night and trying to play some good golf during the day. I thought it would be a fun week.

**Q. Are we allowed to know any of the reservations?**

SHANE LOWRY: I don't know them. I just go where I'm told this week and I just do what I'm told. Rory is the captain, team captain.

**Q. A report came out today that equity numbers might be released to you guys today. What's enough? What's a number that would make you guys feel validated for staying, considering the LIV payouts?**

RORY McILROY: I think the one thing we've learned in golf over the last two years is there's never enough.

**Q. Rory, just curious, had you been close to coming here before or playing in this tournament before?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, a few people have asked me over the years. Bubba Watson hounded me for years to come play this with him and I politely declined every time, not because I don't like --

SHANE LOWRY: Rory is probably like No. 1 on people's lists to come play here with. When you're out there playing with him, he's --

RORY McILROY: But no, it was never part of -- I guess it never lined up with my schedule and just wasn't -- this is my fourth week in a row, and it's not as if I haven't played four weeks in a row before, but for a fourth tournament in a row, something like this that is a little more relaxed, not as much pressure, I thought it would be a good thing to do.

**Q. You just mentioned that he's on a lot of guys' lists to play as a team. Why are you really excited that he picked you?**

SHANE LOWRY: Why am I excited that he picked me? He obviously thinks I'm good enough to be a teammate and come out here and compete with.

I think we're good for each other. I think we'll be good for each other on the course. We'll enjoy doing it, which is a big part of it, as well. Whenever we're out there and competing, you want to enjoy it, as well. At the end of the day when it comes to it, we are competitors, and I think we're two very competitive people, and when we get to the first tee on Thursday, we're there for one reason, and yes, it'll be to enjoy it, but it'll be to give ourselves a chance to win the tournament.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports



