

RBC Canadian Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

St. George's Golf & Country Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome our champion of the 2022 RBC Canadian Open, Rory McIlroy, into the interview room. Rory successfully defends a title on the PGA TOUR for the first time, wins on the PGA TOUR for the 21st time, and moves into a tie for 31st on the all-time PGA TOUR wins list. Rory, if we could just get an opening comment on the victory and what it means to you.

RORY MCILROY: And one more than Norman.

Yeah, it means an awful lot. I feel like it's getting tougher and tougher to win on the PGA TOUR. Even, just look at the two guys that I played with today. I went out with a lead and had to shoot 8-under par to get the job done. So the depth of talent on this TOUR is really, really impressive. And going up against guys like JT and Tony and coming out on top, that's something to feel really good about.

So super happy to get that 21st win, to defend, even though it doesn't feel like a defense because it's been so long. And then just to play in a final group like that with that atmosphere all day. I mean the fans here this week have just been absolutely unbelievable. Like so good and so cool to play in an atmosphere like that. Boisterous, loud, but respectful. It was really, really cool.

It was really cool to be a part of and just really happy to get the win today and obviously sets me up well going into next week in Boston. But right now I just want to enjoy this and focus on this.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned the 8-under par score today. 62 ties the lowest final round score by a winner on TOUR this season. What was the key to the round that, you just kept your foot on the pedal the whole day, how were you able to do that?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think you needed to today. So if you look at the scoring Thursday, Friday, compared to the scoring over the weekend, we had a northerly wind direction Thursday, Friday, which makes the golf course play a little bit tougher. And then we had a southerly wind



direction yesterday and today, which definitely makes the golf course play a touch easier.

So I think seeing the forecast last night and seeing that southerly wind again I knew I needed to go out and shoot 5- or 6-under par to have a chance to win.

So, yeah, you needed to keep your foot down, you needed to keep your foot on the pedal. I got off to a faster start today than I have done the previous few days. When you've got that little stretch around the tournament, 9, 10, 11, where you can make some birdies and I just kept it going.

I let them in, I let them back in a little bit after I got the 3-shot lead with a couple of missed short ones. But really proud of how I bounced back and birdied those last two holes to get the job done.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. You've accomplished almost everything in the game, is there a feeling that this win on this very strange and now important week in the world of golf might end up being a bigger part of your legacy than you would have expected before you made the trip to Canada?

RORY MCILROY: I guess time will tell. It feels really good with all the things that were going on in the world of golf this week. For the Canadian Open, a national championship, to have a week like it's had, three of the best players in the world going at it down the stretch, trying to win in front of those crowds and that atmosphere.

That's what I talked about last week at Memorial, talking about a proper golf tournament. Like that was just, that's as top notch as you're going to get. It was a pleasure to be a part of and I'll look back on this week and this, especially today, with very, very fond memories.

In terms of what it means for legacy, I don't know, but I just know it feels really good to win this week of all weeks.

Q. Obviously you're proud of the win but how proud are you of the show you, JT and Tony put on today and



that the Canadian Open put on this week, considering everything that's been going on?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean it showed out this week. I think St. George's is a wonderful golf course. I think it had all the ingredients. It had the golf course. It had the cast of players that you would want to be up there. It had the caliber of golf. And it had the atmosphere. You had everything this week to have a really top class golf event. Yeah, as I said, being a part of it, it doesn't get much better than that.

Q. You're talking about this, but I'm just wondering, like just how much did you want this one, just given all that's going on and also who you were playing with, the guys at the top of the leaderboard, like when you're out there, how much did you want this one?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I wanted it a lot. I wanted it at the start of the day and there was a few different incentives in there. I've been up against JT quite a bit in the past and he's gotten the better of me a couple of times. So I knew I had to play really good to beat him. Tony as well. Tony played incredible golf today too. So that was a big part of it. I think going up against the best and beating the best is always makes it extra special.

And then, look, I alluded to it, I had extra motivation of what's going on across the pond. The guy that's spear heading that TOUR has 20 wins on the PGA TOUR and I was tied with him and I wanted to get one ahead of him. And I did. So that was really cool for me, just a little sense of pride on that one.

Q. On 17 how close was your ball going into the deep rough, because seems like there was some good fortune there. Justin obviously goes a bit right, he gets a tough lie. You go in the left rough but stay in the first cut and obviously that was the difference in the tournament.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, that was, that was a huge swing. I was trying to err on the left side of the miss rather than the right because I knew that that big tree on the right was going to block you out.

So I saw -- I guess I had the luxury of seeing the two guys hit in front of me and both hit it a little bit right. So I just took a line that was a touch further left than that. And as soon as I hit it I knew that it needed to get down. And once I got up there and saw it was in the semi rough I was really happy with that.

It's still, it still takes a little bit of control off the golf ball. I landed it probably 15 yards short of the pin and let it

release down there. But it's a huge difference playing out of that first cut than it is out of the longer stuff. So, yeah, that was a big break.

Q. You mentioned earlier that this set you up well for Boston. Just wondering, playing a course like this that has some similarities to the Country Club how much confidence can you take into Brookline next week?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean, I think that it's not as if I win here and then we're going to like Erin Hills or somewhere like that where it's completely different. It's a similar style of golf, it will probably be a similar setup in some ways. I would imagine the greens next week will be a little firmer if they get the weather they want to.

But overall I thought it was a great week to prepare for the U.S. Open and there's no better way to prepare yourself for tournament golf than to be in contention, having to hit the shots when you need to. And I proved this week that I can do that and hopefully get myself back into position to have to do that again next week.

Q. You and JT shared an embrace out on the 18th hole right after you won. Curious if you wouldn't mind revealing what was said and just speak to just how special that was. I know you wanted to beat him but at the end of the day you guys are competing and both really had a great week.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, so JT is a tough competitor, but he's also a really, really good friend of mine. And I have probably more respect for him than maybe anyone else out here. Just because we both live in South Florida, we practice so much together, and I see how much, how hard he works at his craft. I appreciate that and I respect that. It's always cool to be able to go up against the best and come out on top.

And, yeah, we had that embrace on the final green and I just said, Let's do this all again next week. That's what I said to him. So that would be cool to be able to do it all over again with him.

Q. Just specifically on your day and even more specifically on your start, how important was it to get out of the gates as fast as you did, especially because Justin was also 5-under for his first nine holes.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, and Tony wasn't lacking either. I think he was 3-under. So, yeah, it was huge. Like that was a nice putt on 1 just to get myself into the round.

And then the second shot on 4 was like, when I hit that shot, I was like, okay, that was probably the best shot I hit

today. To be able to birdie that, which is a really tough hole.

And then the bonus on the 6th hole with the chip-in.

But then after that I just went on this run and once you see a few birdies go in early all you're thinking about is making more. And I just got a little bit of momentum on my side and sort of carried that through the rest of the front nine and obviously into the start of the back nine as well.

Q. A quick follow-up on process and then something we talked about early in the week. Obviously you used a sub-in caddie this week. How did that kind of go? Was it like, Hey, come read this green for me or, No, don't worry about it, I've got the club, I'll figure it out?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, Niall was great this week. It was -- so that's the second time he's caddied for me. We finished fourth in Dubai a few years ago and then finished first here. So we're doing okay. So any time that he needs to fill in for Harry I'm feeling pretty confident about that.

But one of the things for me this week, which I don't do usually, is I was pacing out all my yardage, writing all my notes down in my yardage book and just sort of -- I was actually, JT and I were having lunch beforehand today and I was like, I had my head in my book a lot more today and was really into my shots and into my golf.

Honestly, I think that helped. I take on a little more of the load, but I think it really helped in terms of my mentality and my approach to some shots. So I think I'm going to keep doing it at this point because I think it was helpful to do that again. I've sort of gotten away from that and rely on Harry quite a lot for that sort of stuff. But it was nice to get back into the yardage book this week.

Q. Do you consider yourself an honorary Canadian yet and if not what will it take?

RORY MCILROY: (Laughing) Hey, I'll take it, for sure. The support and the love I've got -- I've only played in Canada twice, in Hamilton and then here. It's been two pretty good trips.

But, yeah, look, the fans are amazing. They come out and they support this event really well. I think they just really appreciate the fact that we come up here and play in your national championship.

Yeah, if there was some honorary Canadian citizenship bestowed upon me I certainly wouldn't turn it down. That would be a very proud thing for me. But, no, I'm happy to come up here once every now and again and play some

golf and take this trophy south of the border with me.

Q. You mentioned the enthusiasm of the fans. Have you ever seen the crowd rush on to the fairway like they did on 18 there and come right up to the greenside?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, so I was part of the group in East Lake in Atlanta 2018 when Tiger got his first win coming back, geez, it was his first win in a long time. I'm going to say like five years. I was an afterthought in that group, but I was witness to that. That to this day is one of the coolest things that's ever happened to me in my career. Today felt sort of similar, maybe not quite the -- well it was pretty raucous out there, but it's really cool. Whenever that happens and you can enjoy your walk and you know you've got the tournament sewed up you can take it in and really relish it and enjoy it and it was a cool scene on 18, yeah.

Q. Growing up in links heaven, Portrush, County Down, is it fair to say that Canadian golf was not on your radar as a teen and how has it evolved over the last few years?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I guess a little bit. Yeah, I didn't know much about the golf courses in Canada. I guess Hamilton was designed by the same guy that did Portrush. Colt, right? And I didn't really know much about this golf course, I just saw some pictures.

And I've always preferred like this style of golf, parkland golf. I think maybe I grew up playing on a parkland, but played a lot of links golf growing up in tournaments. Probably took it for granted a little bit and played so much of it that I always gravitated towards playing more this style of golf, because I think something in my mind told me that this is the type of golf you're going to have to play week-in week-out to succeed and be a successful professional golfer.

So I started to hit the ball high and I started to try to develop the shots that you need for golf courses like this. It's sort of worked out well. And next week as well. But looking forward to getting back and playing some links golf during that open stretch as well.

Q. In Wednesday's pro-am on the 6th tee I asked you to split 10 rounds. I asked you if you had a preference between Saint G's and Hamilton. You gave me a very Ryan Holiday answer of, It's too early to tell. If you could split 10 rounds between Saint G's and Hamilton, how would you spend them?

RORY MCILROY: That's a good question. I would

probably go six here, four Hamilton. So I just gave the favor to here. A little closer proximity to the city, a couple more things going for it.

Q. In hindsight, the up-and-down on 14, given how well things have been tracking and then the first bogey of the day comes along on 13, that up-and-down on 14 in hindsight right now seems like a pretty big deal.

At the moment, in that moment like how, what was your thought process and how do you feel about that one?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, it was massive. I think I was so confident with my wedges today that the lie on 14 after the tee shot wasn't -- I felt like I could have got a 5-iron on it and got it up by the green. And maybe previously or a few years ago I would have tried to do that.

But I just knocked it down there to a number that I knew was going to be comfortable and relied on my wedge play to get that up-and-down. So that was, that's a big step forward for me, something that I probably wouldn't have done previously and I think just having the confidence in my wedge game, knowing, okay, I can get it up-and-down from a hundred yards, move on to the next and no damage is done. So that was huge.

Q. The PGA TOUR and the Canadian Open afford the media such incredible access. It's been awesome to see you guys up close. What don't we see after this? What are the hours like after you win something like this, assuming we can't follow you to where you're going next, these passes don't get us that far, but maybe talk a little bit about what the next few hours will look like that we won't see.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, so I'll go straight to the locker room, get all my stuff packed up if it isn't already. Give the locker room staff a nice generous tip for all their help this week. And then get going to the airport. My wife and daughter are already on the plane, so she's probably trying to keep her entertained before I get there.

And then just get on the flight, go to Boston. Land. I mean, yeah, it's not really that -- I mean, if I'm feeling up to it, once I get to the house that we're renting in Boston I might afford myself a glass of wine or two to celebrate. I give Shane Lowry a ride from Jupiter up to Columbus last week and he brought me a really nice bottle of wine. So that's been with us. So maybe open that, if I'm not feeling too tired.

And then go to bed and get up again tomorrow and go learn a new golf course and do it all over again.

Q. You won so many tournaments, but how much confidence and belief comes about just winning on a Sunday like this and beating two guys, just going into a U.S. Open and for the future?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, it does, it gives you a lot of confidence to know that, just to see where your game stacks up against the best. JT's coming off winning his second major at the PGA Championship. He's won I think 15 times on TOUR. He's done a lot in the game. Tony as well. Like Tony's struggled a little bit the last sort of six to 12 months, but he seems to have really turned it around. He had a good finish at Colonial, had another good finish here.

So to go up against guys that are not just the best players in the world but best players in the world playing somewhat near their best and coming out on top, that, it can only give you confidence. So, yeah, and I guess for me, just some of the shots that I hit coming down the stretch, those are things to certainly build on going into the next few weeks.

THE MODERATOR: Rory, do you know who the last player to win on the PGA TOUR and win a major the following week was?

RORY MCILROY: Would that have been me?

THE MODERATOR: It would be. In 2014. So best of luck next week.

RORY MCILROY: Thank you.

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