

BMW PGA Championship

Wednesday, 18 September, 2024

Virginia Water, Surrey, England

Wentworth Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

MATTHEW JOULE: World No. 3, Rory McIlroy.

Rory, Royal County Down last week, BMW PGA Championship this week. How nice to be on the DP World Tour this time of year where the big events just keep oncoming?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's amazing. Yeah, I mean, in all honesty, I was really excited to get back and play -- obviously play last week. Play this week and the Dunhill in a couple of weeks' time as well. You know, three of my favourite events of the year.

Yeah, here at Wentworth, the sun is shining and so many people out there on a Wednesday. There's not many better places to be. So excited to be here. Looking forward to getting back on the horse after what happened last Sunday and giving it another go.

Q. Sounds like you got a bit of a nasty cough. How are you feeling physically?

RORY McILROY: I'm okay. I feel a bit better than I was yesterday. Poppy's had a cough for a couple weeks. Gave it to me last week. Started feeling pretty rough Monday, Tuesday. So went to the Doctor, on a course of antibiotics and I feel, energy-wise, I feel better than I did yesterday. But yeah, I'll be a bit wheezy this week but nothing I can't handle. I'm fine.

Q. And you mentioned getting back on the horse. When you've had a tough loss like Sunday is it beneficial to get straight back out and play or would you rather be locked in an anger room breaking things?

RORY McILROY: Don't make me laugh. No, I'm glad for the opportunity to get back on the horse again. I think there may be a misconception that it hit me harder than it maybe did. You know, I didn't really feel like I necessarily lost the tournament. I felt like Rasmus went out and won it. Shot 31 on the back nine.



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So yeah, I shouldn't have missed the green right on 15 and misjudged the first putt on 17. But I mean, looking back on Sunday and the support of the crowds and that scene on 18 and everything, it was amazing to be a part of.

Obviously just trying to look for the positives in all of it but yeah, happy to get here. My game is feeling like it's in pretty good shape and I feel like I have another chance to win a really big tournament that means a lot to me.

Q. On a completely unrelated note, what do you think is the major stumbling block or blocks holding up any chance of a deal between LIV and PGA TOUR and the DP World Tour?

RORY McILROY: Department of Justice. Maybe different interests from the players' side. I'd say -- it's pretty similar. I'd say maybe half the players on LIV want the deal to get done; half probably don't. I'd say it's probably similar on the PGA TOUR. Because just like anything, everyone's looking out for themselves and their best interests. You know, it would benefit some people for a deal not to get done, but it would obviously benefit some people for a deal to get done.

Yeah, I think there's different opinions amongst the players about what should happen, and I think when you have a members' run organisation, it complicates things a little bit, especially when should of those players are having to make decisions on the business side of things. So those are the two. I think the tours want it to happen. The investors certainly want it to happen because they can see the benefit for themselves.

But right now, it's DOJ and differing opinions of the players.

Q. A quick question specifically about heathland golf. We know last week you really enjoyed playing proper links at Royal County Down, and this week we are into London, capital of heathland golf. What is it about heathland golf, whether here, Queenwood, other places, that gets you excited about golf?

RORY McILROY: You probably missed the best heathland course there is here, Sunningdale. But you've got so many. You've got St George's Hill; you've got New Zealand; you've got the Berkshire. There's so many.

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I think aesthetically, they are very pretty, the tall pine trees, the heather and the long shadows in the afternoons, the bunkering. I think aesthetically, I think heathland golf could be the most pleasing of any golf courses on the planet.

And it's a hybrid between links golf and pure parkland golf. It's a hybrid of, it can obviously play soft but you get a little bit of sun, a little bit of dry weather, it can start to play linky very quickly.

Yeah, they are just beautiful -- I think they are just beautiful courses to play when you have nice weather.

Q. Doug is not here, so I'll ask a two-part question in his absence. The first part --

RORY McILROY: Sorry, who for?

Q. Fergie. The first part is, you know much more about LIV and things but we heard in the last few days that the last meeting that was last week, or just before that, but there was a more optimistic or it there is a more optimistic mood about that as a result of that meeting. As I say, you know much more about this than we do. Is that your feeling, too?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I believe so. I wasn't a part of those meetings, so I don't -- I may know a touch more than you do but not a ton.

But yeah, as I said, I think one of the stumbling blocks is the Department of Justice, and I think -- I think trying to approach that from a collaborative standpoint, I think seems to be the best way forward.

So yeah, I think to me it seems like the people that are really making the decisions are all rowing in the same direction, which is a really good thing. And even if they are all rowing in the same direction, it still doesn't mean that a deal may get done because it's just a very complicated set of circumstances.

But yeah, from what I hear, there's optimism there, and that's good to see.

Q. May I ask the same question that I asked Justin yesterday, and that is, can you conceive of a Ryder Cup Team without Jon Rahm?

RORY McILROY: Yeah. He could be injured; his game could go off.

But Jon Rahm, the way he's playing right now and the way he's played since he turned pro in 2016 or '17 or whatever

it is, Jon Rahm is a wonderful addition to the European Team.

Q. I meant ruled out because of an inability to follow the rules. That's what I meant.

RORY McILROY: Well, from my understanding, he is following the rules. He appealed the decision or whatever it is that he did. So that makes him eligible, as long as he plays his minimum number of events, like Members of the Tour have to do to be eligible for the Ryder Cup.

So I wouldn't expect someone that as a Member of the Tour, you know what the rules are to be able to play a Ryder Cup and be eligible, and as long as you meet that criteria, then you're okay to play.

Q. They say be aware of the injured golfer, or in this case a poorly golfer. It's been ten years since you last one here. How much would it mean to you to get a win this week?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it would mean a lot. It feels like quite a long time since I won at Quail Hollow back in May, and I've come close here a couple of times. I was second to Francesco in 2018; second to Shane in 2022.

My form at this tournament over the last few years has been very good. So yeah, it would be nice to just get another win on the board. It's felt like awhile. And I've played some very good golf in that stretch, not just been able to get over the line.

So yeah, it would be -- I think for me, it would just be wonderful to give myself another chance. Every Sunday that I get myself into contention is an opportunity but also a day to test myself and learn from the good, the bad and everything else. So yeah, just another opportunity would be nice.

Q. Back on the Ryder Cup theme again just for a second if you don't mind. You may or may not have seen quotes related to Ian Poulter over the last couple of days saying that he still harbors hopes of being a European captain at some point. Is it plausible, or given everything is there too much water gone under that bridge, do you think?

RORY McILROY: I think it's hard because we don't really see them anymore, especially -- I'm not sure if Poulter gave up his European Tour Membership. You know, you need someone around that's comfortable. You look at what Luke has done the last few years, he's really made an effort to come over. He played in Czech Republic. He was in Switzerland.

He's making an effort to be around the players and be -- make the players feel comfortable with him, the up-and-comers that haven't had a chance yet to be on a team or trying to make a team.

With the guys that left, Poulter, Westwood, we don't -- how can these young up and comers, you know, build a rapport with them when they are never here? You can't see them. I think that's a really important part of a Ryder Cup and a Ryder Cup captaincy.

I'm not saying that Poulter doesn't have the credentials to be a Ryder Cup Captain, but I just think with the current state of where everything is, you need someone that's around and showing their face as much as they can. Right now, that honestly just can't be them because they are elsewhere.

NB: Under current DP World Tour regulations, any Member who fails to comply with the minimum Counting Tournament Regulation in any one Official Season or who does not take up Ranked Membership in an Official Season in which he is so eligible (ie: falls out of Membership) will be ineligible thereafter to be selected as the European Ryder Cup Captain or Vice Captain.

Q. On a personal level, would you have any objections to being captained by Ian Poulter or Lee Westwood or whoever else could potentially be?

RORY McILROY: It's such a gray area. There's some that I would be okay with and others I wouldn't be okay with. Sorry to put them all in the same bucket.

Q. As you said, it's a very complex scenario at the moment for the game in general. I just wonder what your feelings are with regard to the DP World Tour, the reports this week of potentially a deal being done that could have some kind of relationship with the PIF or with LIV, would that be in any way desirable in your opinion to in some way find a pathway out of this?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, you know, if things don't materialise with the PGA TOUR, I think it would -- you know, it would -- I think it would maybe bring The European Tour back to like the '80s and '90s when there was like really two strong tours.

But it keeps the game divided and I don't like that. You know, I really want the game to come back together. It would be Plan B. It would be maybe an alternative to the best solution.

And look, selfishly as a European, it would be wonderful to

get that investment and to use that money in the right way for this tour. But it still keeps the game divided, which I just can't quite get on board with, and I'd love to see everything and everyone come back together.

MATTHEW JOULE: Thanks very much for your time. Hope you feel better tomorrow.

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