

DP World Tour Championship

Tuesday, 16 November, 2021

Dubai, UAE

Jumeirah Golf Estates

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

Q. Obviously end of a year that's been I would have thought a very interesting year one way and another. I wonder what your evaluation of it is as you head into this final push?

RORY MCILROY: It's been good. I feel like it's been a year of exploration, learning. There's been some good parts, obviously the couple wins in the States were nice. I was tied for the lead with nine holes to go at a major championship, at the U.S. Open.

There's been some good stuff in there. I've worked hard. I've learned a few things. And I feel like I've sort of went through that sort of barrier, struggle, if you will, and then I came through the other side of it.

It has, it's been an interesting year. I don't regret any of it. I think it's been a good year. Happy to be here. Happy to feel like my game is in good shape. As you said, it's play here, play Tiger's event in the Bahamas in a couple weeks' time. I feel like I'm playing well. I got some confidence from the win in Vegas. Try to finish the year on a high.

Q. How important is it to you to be here for the finale of the European Tour season and the last time we can call it that, and your take on that as well?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, it was -- I wasn't always planning to be here and play. After the Ryder Cup, I didn't really know what I was going to do. But I decided to play a bit more and try to push through some of the things I was working on in my game.

As I said, I came through the other side of that. So it's important to be here. I missed it last year because of COVID. I just didn't want to deal with the travel and the bubble and that sort of stuff.

But this year is a little different and a little more normal, I guess. So it's good to be here. It's a place I've had success on. It's a course that suits my game really well. I'll have a good chance this week. I don't feel like I need to do anything too special to give myself a chance on Sunday.



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Q. The big talking point of the month has been environmentalism with COP26 and that sort of thing. You're somebody with a massive global footprint. You travel in private jets. You play a game that some people argue is not the most environmentally friendly. I've never heard you speak on that subject. What's your take?

RORY MCILROY: It's funny you say that. So two years ago, after I won in China, I flew back home privately, and it was just me on the plane. And I just got this massive sense of guilt come over me just because this can't be good and all that sort of stuff.

So we ended up reaching out to the GEO Foundation who do a lot of great sustainability things in golf, and that was the only sort of organization that we knew of that I guess could help us go in the right direction. What I was trying to do is make all my travel -- I wouldn't self-profess to be an eco warrior, but I'm someone that doesn't want to damage the environment anyway, so how can I make my travel around the world neutral, how can I neutralise what I do.

And they came up with a few different ways that I can do that. So on top of what I pay to fly private, I pay quite a bit more on top of that to make sure I'm carbon neutral by the end of the year.

So it's something that I have a conscience about and I take it seriously, especially when you see some of these weather events that are happening. And I live in a part of the world where hurricanes are very prevalent and becoming more and more prevalent as the years go on. I think we can all play our part in some way or another.

Q. How much of a talking point do you think it is amongst your peers, the other players? Is something that's going to gain momentum?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think -- yeah. As you said, we play on big pieces of land that take up a lot of water and a lot of other things that could maybe be put to better use some could argue. But at the end of the day, we decide to be professional golfers and hit a ball around a course. And I guess that's sort of the extent of it.

But as I said, we all can do our part. I certainly don't think

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it's something that I've talked to many of the players about really, but just from my conscience and my mind, I know that I'm at least -- when I do travel and I travel privately that I'm not doing it to the detriment of the world that we live in.

Q. (Question regarding Jon Rahm)?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I fully understand. He just won his first major this year, he's had his first child, he won this thing last year. I don't -- or not last year, the year before.

I fully understand. I don't think anyone can criticize him for not being here. He's given his all all year. He's had his trials and tribulations as well. He was an absolute star at the Ryder Cup for us. He couldn't have given more, and he's given a lot to the European Tour already. He goes to Spain and place those events there in his home country. I don't think anyone can criticize him for not being here this week.

Q. (Question regarding coach.)

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I don't know, it's like Michael has always been my coach. He's coached me since I was 8 years old. He's also been there, even if he wasn't visible, he's been in the background for the last six months, and I think Michael knows my swing and my game better than I probably know it at this point.

So I just thought with the struggles that I had, especially at the Ryder Cup, it's funny, I talked to him at length after the Ryder Cup, and we had organized for him to come out the week after Vegas to start working again, and obviously I went and won Vegas.

But those two weeks in between the Ryder Cup and Vegas I feel like I figured a few things out on my own. Which sometimes you need to do. Sometimes you need to go and throw hundreds of balls down on the range and hit some and figure it out on your own.

And I feel like I did that. I'm not saying that I don't need any help ever again and I've got figured it out, but I talked about it in Vegas, just about being myself and not trying to do anything that other people do or what I can't do.

So I sort of tried to figure it out myself. And I guess I went to Vegas with a little more self-belief and I won that tournament, and that gave me even more confidence. And then if anything, Michael is more of a sounding board at this point. I say to him this is what I'm trying to do. Tell me if I'm completely not right.

But again like I've played golf a long time. I think I know what I'm doing for the most part. And that was really it. I

said last week I've always had a relationship with Pete, I've known Pete since I was 13 years old from the Irish setup, and if I want to ask his opinion on something, I can still do that. If I feel like I need his input, I'll ask for it. As of right now, I'm happy with the setup that I've basically always had, and I'm excited for the road ahead.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean, I don't -- I think one of the great -- if they -- whenever the RNA and the USGA brought out that whole distance insights report, I think the best thing they spoke about in that was the sustainability aspect of and making the footprint of golf courses smaller.

So that is certainly something that I guess we can do. If every other industry in the world is trying to make a push towards going green and making sure that you're doing your part for the environment, why should we be any different?

Q. (Indiscernible) can you just give me your appreciation of the fact of what this region has done for the European Tour and golf general?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, for golf in general. Yeah, Dubai has been the cornerstone of the European Tour for the last -- well, since 2009, since the Race to Dubai started, which is my second year on Tour. As you said, they hosted this event, the Dubai Desert Classic that they've hosted since the '80s. Yeah, just the massive investment in golf that they've made over the last few years. DP World coming on board to be the umbrella sponsor of the Tour. Which I think is wonderful news.

It solidifies the Tour's future for a long time. And I think it gives the lot of the members on this Tour peace of mind and they're going to be playing for good prize funds and in good events.

So I think all the players owe this region, especially Dubai, a debt of gratitude because they've invested so heavily in our game, and we've all benefited from it.

Q. (Indiscernible) what is something that you learned?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, so I think -- I assume you're talking about swing and game and stuff. I think when you become quite consumed with technique, you start to lose -- I'm very visual person, visualize things, and I think I sort of got out of that mindset.

I looked at ball, I looked at target, and I tried to make a swing to have the ball go to that target, but I wasn't seeing what I wanted to do with the ball.



So I just -- those two weeks after the Ryder Cup, basically every shot I hit, it's very easy to on the range to hit a ball, hit another one, every ball I was very disciplined, I stood back, visualized what I wanted to do with that shot, tried to be what I'm trying to do and just let my body react to what I see.

So that was very important to me. That sort of brought a little more I guess naturalness back into it. I think sometimes it got forced with what I was trying to do.

And that's on me. That's me just getting inside my own head a little bit too much and not being able to separate the two. Being more visual, seeing more shots, seeing trajectories, seeing shapes. That's what I've always done really, really well. And I got away from that, and I needed to try to get back to doing that more.

Q. Just curious, Rory, the DP World Tour, the new schedule, the increased prize money and more focus, new sponsor, does that change your thinking for 2022 and beyond in terms of how you would map out your own schedule?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I don't know. I live in America. That's where I'm going to play the majority of my golf. I don't think it will change really, it will change schedule for me. I just think it's a great thing for this Tour that the members that play on this Tour full time have a place to play long into the future.

But for me personally, I think I'm just going to play the same schedule that I've basically played for the last sort of five years. It may encourage me to add an event here or there, for the most part I'll probably keep doing what I've done the last few years.

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