

DP World Tour Championship

Tuesday, 14 November, 2023

Dubai, UAE

Jumeirah Golf Estates, Earth Course



Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

BRIONY CARLYON: Delighted to welcome Rory McIlroy here to the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai.

Rory, obviously with results going your way over the week, you have been crowned Race To Dubai Champion for a fifth time. Just give us a sense of what that means to you and what you are looking forward to this week.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, in fairness, I probably would have liked to have done it another way. But I've played well when I've come back over to The European Tour this year and won two Rolex Series Events and had some other really high finishes in tournaments that give a lot of points, and yeah, look, it's really nice to have my name on the Harry Vardon Trophy for the fifth time and just be one behind Seve and still a few behind Monty.

But you're talking about the greats of the European game, and to be up alongside them is really, if someone had told 18-year-old Rory when I was making my professional debut in 2007 that I would have won five Order of Merits up to this point, I wouldn't have believed them.

Yeah, really, really cool. I certainly don't take it for granted, and you know, it shows the consistency that I've played with over the last few years that even though I feel like I've had a good year, I don't feel like I've had a great year, but I can still go ahead and achieve things like this.

Q. Did you realise last week what needed to happen or didn't? Did you take notice of it?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I did. I knew that as long as Adrian and Ryan didn't finish basically in the top five or top four last week, I was over 2,000 points ahead of Rahmbo. As long as they didn't break into sort of within that 2,000-point barrier, I knew not that I could come here and relax, I still wanted to come here and win this golf tournament. This golf course sets up well for me and it's a place I've always done well at.

It's nice to come in here with at least that off my mind so I can just concentrate on the golf tournament.

Q. Where do you think the Order of Merit stands? A lot has obviously changed over the years.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it has. You know, I'd say I went through a period in my career where I didn't prioritise it, I guess. I won my third one in 2015 and if you look at 2016 through to 2021, I probably could have done more to try to prioritise it. The last couple of years, especially last year, I wanted to win both, the FedExCup, and I guess post-2015 I prioritised America a little bit more, I won three FedExCups in that time frame and I've also won a couple other Race to Dubais.

It's hard. It's hard to do it on both tours. Only a handful of guys have ever really done it. You know, I'm fortunate enough to be one of those but I've been able to figure out how to excel on both sides of the pond.

Q. Probably asked you this this time last year as well. But how do you look back on the season, what sort of score would you give yourself out of ten? You've had a couple of wins, big Ryder Cup, three top sevens in majors and a near-miss in L.A. where would you put it?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, probably give it a 7 out of 10. Played good golf. I had the two wins. I think the big -- I had my best-ever Ryder Cup, which feels like a win to me, especially coming off the back of Whistling Straits.

So I've been happy with the year. If I looked back on one thing, I'll rue that miss at L.A. I had a great opportunity there to pick up another major and I didn't. But I'm still not going to let that take away from the fact that it's been another really consistent, solid year with some really good performances. I'm feeling like my game is in as good of shape as its ever been throughout my, whatever it is, 16-, 17-year career. I'm happy with that, and try to finish this year off on a high and play well this week and reset and get ready for 2024.

Q. Just wonder if I can ask you about TGL because obviously there's been a lot of noise over in America. But just from a European perspective, a global perspective, when do you think it is going to bring that golf needed going forward? What is it bringing to the party?



RORY McILROY: Younger people hopefully. That's the future of our game is trying to get the younger generations involved and trying to have them somehow relate to our game in some way.

So yeah, just a different demographic, trying to put golf on a slightly different platform, and you know, if we can increase the interest in the game for a younger demographic, hopefully golf doesn't look like what we are doing in TGL 50 years from now because it is a game to be played outdoors and on golf courses and in the fresh air.

But I think there's a place for it to maybe get people excited about watching a different version of the game that they can relate to, and I guess if that gets their foot in the door in some way, that's a really good thing.

Q. Just one other question about where we are at with the game at the moment. The investment that is coming in, and we are hearing reports from all sort of different directions. How would you sum up where we are at the moment? I know there have been meetings going on and so forth.

RORY McILROY: I think the professional game has never been stronger or healthier or from a financial standpoint, there's never been a better time to be a professional golfer. But that's 5 percent of what golf is. It's the golf that you play; it's the golf that my dad plays. It's not just about us. It's about the overall health of the game.

We are all talking about this investment coming into the top level of golf, but I think that investment also needs to go into the R&A and the USGA and for them to try to increase participation.

So yes, all this stuff is going on but I hope some of that money that is going to be invested is in invested back into the game of golf in terms of grass roots programs and again trying to drive the game forward for the next generation.

Q. And do you expect clarity? Because at the moment, the waters are seriously muddy, aren't they.

RORY McILROY: I wouldn't think so. I think if you were in the middle of it, you would see that there's a path forward. It's just that no one on the outside has any details, right. Loose lips sink ships, so we are trying to keep it tight and within walls. I'm sure when there's news to tell, it will be told.

Q. PGA TOUR card being handed out, there's been some outside noise about it's not been a good thing

for the DP World Tour; that we are losing ten stars. Do you see it just as a sort of progression of the natural migration that happened in previous years when players went to the US?

RORY McILROY: It's a formalising of the pathway that's always sort of been there. I got into the top 50 in the world at the end of 2008, and in 2009, I was going to start in the Middle East and then I was going to the States and play the Match Play, the Honda, the whatever else. It's always been there. It's just a bit more official.

But at the same time, you know, the reason that The European Tour started with as to give professional golfers opportunities to play golf tournaments and earn a living. So if you look at what the mission statement is for the DP World Tour, it's to give professional golfers opportunities to play their sport, make a living, and there's no better place to have opportunity and to make a living than what's going on on the PGA TOUR.

So I don't see that side of the argument at all. For golfers playing on The European Tour, I think it's an amazing thing that's happened and as I said, is formalizes a pathway to get to the very top level of professional golf.

Q. The likes of Bob MacIntyre having to make some sacrifices to go to the States, would you encourage that as that something that you have to grasp that opportunity?

RORY McILROY: I didn't see it as a sacrifice. I see it as an opportunity.

Q. We've got The Scottish Open as a co-sanctioned event, but would you like to see more co-sanctioned events between the DP World Tour and the PGA TOUR. I always thought the Middle East cohost won, whether it be Dubai or elsewhere. Is that something you would like to see in the future?

RORY McILROY: Absolutely. I think, again, what's been -- and part of everything that's going on, one of the discussions, then, okay, if we can create a perfect golf calendar, what would it look like. And I don't think it would look like it looks right now. I think there would be changes made.

I think that, you know, look at what Max Homa and Justin Thomas did last week going down to South Africa. They had a really good time. They played in a different part of the world where they had never played before. If more of that sort of stuff could happen, I think it would be really good for golf. So yeah, I would be all for more co-sanctioned events.



It makes it hard for the players that are maybe further down the rankings on both sides because only the top of the top are going to be able to qualify for these co-sanctioned events like in Scotland and basically like the World Golf Championships in the past, I don't think the World Golf Championships quite captured the imagination like everyone thought that they would. I would certainly like to see more co-sanctioned events.

I think The Scottish Open worked really well and certainly one could work well here. Some of the National Opens, try to revitalise some of those that have some great history in our game and a lot of tradition; the Australian Open, for example. There's so many -- to me, I've won quite a few National Opens and they are probably some of my most prized possessions in my trophy case. You look at the names on them, and that's what golf is about.

It's being able to try to compare yourself to previous generations, and I look at the Australian Open trophy and I see the names on that. To me, that's what being a professional golfer and being competitive is all about is being able to go and win all over the world, and to test yourself in different conditions on different grasses. I feel like I've been doing that for the last, you know, 15 years, and I think I'm better because of it.

Q. You've spoken at times this year about the personal toll of the political involvement and energy that's required. How important is it for you, the wider political situation gets wrapped up and doesn't drag deep into 2024, because I think most of the chatter suggests that this December 31st deadline is looking ambitious at this point.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I would say that's right. I think getting something done sooner rather than later is a good thing. Because you know, even if we get a deal done, it doesn't mean that it's actually going to happen. That's up to the United States government at that point, and whether the Department of Justice think that it's the right thing to do or whether anti-competitive or whatever.

Even if a deal does get done, it's not a sure thing. So yeah, we are just going to have to wait and see. But in my opinion, the faster something gets done, the better.

Q. Presumably that's beneficial to you. Are you enjoying having a seat at that particular table?

RORY McILROY: Not particularly, no. Not what I signed for whenever I went on the board. But yeah, the game of professional golf has been in flux for the last two years.

Again, the overall game I think is in really good shape. But everyone focuses on this top level because it is what it is, and it's an entertainment product and it's a show, but the faster that it gets rectified, I think the better for everyone.

BRIONY CARLYON: Thank you, Rory, for your time, all the best this week.

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