

DP World Tour Championship

Wednesday, 13 November, 2024

Dubai, UAE

Jumeirah Golf Estates, Earth Course

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

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

Rory, you've been in the UAE now for second week with back-to-back Rolex Series Events. Just give us a sense of what you're looking forward to this week and the potential of a sixth Race to Dubai title, as well.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it's always nice for me, anyway, to start and end the year here in Dubai. It's typically what I've done most of my career. I've had a lot of success in the region. You know, winning at the Emirates again this year, and winning this tournament a couple of times, and hopefully The Race to Dubai for a sixth time on Sunday if I can just keep playing the way I played last week in Abu Dhabi.

But yeah, always good to be back. I can't believe it's 15 years since the first time we came here back in 2009. So yeah, it's always good to be back, and I guess my goal this week is not so Todd have anyone with me on the 18th green; try to win both titles.

Coming here last year, I already had it wrapped up and -- which was obviously really nice but maybe lacked a bit of motivation in the tournament because of that.

So knowing that I still have to go out and play pretty well depending on what Thriston does, that gives me a little bit extra motivation to keep a bit more focused this week.

Q. To draw level with Seve with titles, when you get mentioned alongside someone like that, it can never get old, can it.

RORY McILROY: Absolutely not. I was a little -- I guess I am a little too young to remember a lot of Seve's career and things that he did.

Seve is almost like a, not a mythical character to me but was just a little bit before my time. But he was my dad's favourite player, and I don't think it can be -- the immense impact he had on European golf from a Ryder Cup and from what he did for The European Tour, he means a lot to



the overall game of golf but specifically in this part of the world and on this tour.

So to draw level with him and to have a career that can sort of somewhat stack up against his is very cool.

Q. Just wondered how you assess the year now as we get to the end of it.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, incredibly consistent again. I think I've been really proud of that over the last few years. But then at the same time, you know, thinking about the ones that got a way. I could be sitting up here with a fifth major title and I am not. So that stings and that's something that I have to come to terms with but at the same time I've got plenty more opportunities in the future.

But I really just tried to focus on the positives this year of consistently performing at the highest level. You know, still having three wins with an opportunity to get a fourth here this week, to win another Race to Dubai title.

You know, did I achieve every goal I set for myself this year? Probably not.

But I still consider it a successful season. You've got two guys at the top of the World Rankings down there winning two majors. You know, Scottie winning a Masters and a PLAYERS and the Olympics. They certainly separated themselves from the pack this year. I'm obviously very aware of that, and it only makes me more motivated to try to emulate what they did this year.

Q. If you were dishing out grades, what would you give yourself?

RORY McILROY: It would be a pass. It wouldn't be a pass with playing colours. Probably an eight.

Q. I'm from Denmark, and the other day we talked after you played with Rasmus in Abu Dhabi. I wonder what it is about their game or their personalities that impresses you about those two guys?

RORY McILROY: I've always been super impressed by both of them, and it still surprises me how young they are. Because I think about when I was their age, I was nowhere



near as polished as a player and as a person, I think they are two incredibly impressive young men that are the future of the European game. They have amazing potential.

Honestly if you had asked me three years ago, I probably would have said Rasmus would be the one to make the Ryder Cup Team first and it ended up being Nicolai. They are both incredible players. They are from a wonderful family. I've gotten to know their dad pretty well, as well.

They are just -- it's funny to say this, that they are good kids, and I'm, whatever, 13 or 14 years older than them. They have huge potential. They have great games. They have very good heads on their shoulders.

Yeah, they have got bright futures.

Q. And if you don't mind, at the other end of the spectrum, Søren Kjeldsen just quit his career on the DP World Tour and he won this event in 2015. What kind of person and personality are we going to miss up here without him?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, Søren, he was always bright. He was always smiling. He's a very hard worker, also. I think for -- especially for Rasmus and Nicolai, it's a great role model to have because of his work ethic and how hard he worked. He probably -- you think about, I guess, the skillsets that the twins have. They have a lot more natural -- not natural ability, but natural attributes that maybe Søren didn't have in terms of maybe smaller stature and didn't hit the ball very long, but he made up for that with all of the other parts of his game.

So yeah, I mean, Søren was an unbelievably consistent player. You know, played his own game. Probably targeted certain golf courses that would suit him over others and he had a wonderful career and now he can go out and enjoy his life and not grind on driving ranges all the time.

Q. You said Seve was a favourite golf of your dad. Growing up, did he tell you any story of Seve that stood with you?

RORY McILROY: Not particularly. I think just the style of golf that Seve played is what he was drawn to. So that swashbuckling, you know, almost Houdini-like act of hitting into trouble and getting out of trouble.

But yeah, I think a lot of people were drawn to Seve. He was an entertainer. He played the game with a certain flair and style, and a little bit like Arnold Palmer before him in the States. Seve is to European golf is what Arnold Palmer was to golf in America, and I think that's what a lot of

people gravitated towards.

Q. Thriston, what a great season he's had, five second-place finishes on the Tour. With the absence of guys like you not playing an entire season on the DP World Tour, what do you think of the rise of a guy like Thriston? Anything you want to say about his game.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I've gotten to play with him -- I got to play with him the final day at Wentworth and got to play that one hole in the playoff. Played with him the first two days last week. For example, you could see why he did well in The Open at Troon, just his ball flight, the way he manages his game. He's quite a creative player. He plays a lot of different shots.

Yeah, he's had a wonderful year. We had a good chat last week about what his plans are for next year, and obviously PGA TOUR card and sort of his plans to try to make that work over there, as well.

But yeah, great player who plays well in those sort of tougher conditions and can play his ball in the wind. Yeah, he's a very, very solid player, and he's had a fantastic year.

Q. Can I just ask one last question about the golf course over here? 14 tournaments over here and you are averaging 12.8-under par for every tournament. You have had 24 over-par rounds in 14 tournaments over here. What is it about this golf course that really suits your eyes?

RORY McILROY: There's a lot of fairway bunkers that are in the middle of the fairway at about 310 yards -- I've been coming back here for 15 years, and it's a very modern-style golf course that suits what I do pretty well. There's four par 5s that I can take advantage of those. There's a couple of shorter par 4s that I can get it close to.

Yeah, I don't know, like the aesthetic of the sort of splashed up-white bunkers. I feel like it provides a lot of definition and you can see what shots you want to hit. I'm not going to give it too much credit because of who the course designer is (laughter) but it's a course that I have always enjoyed playing.

Q. Just on the comments about your scheduling last week, obviously you're looking to reduce -- I think this will be your seventh tournament on the DP World Tour side. Is that likely to replicate?

RORY McILROY: I think it will look very similar going forward. Start in the Middle East in Dubai, and then I don't really play over here again until The Scottish Open. So

you know, play that. That's a tournament that I've enjoyed playing the last few years, especially leading up to The Open Championship.

And then once the season in America is done, then yeah, come back over. The way the schedule is, Irish Open, Wentworth, Dunhill, these two events. Yeah, it's going to look very similar.

If anything, the schedule will be reduced over in the States in terms of some of the tournaments I played this year that I typically don't play. But those are the ones that I would shave off.

Q. Thanks for your nice words about Seve from the Spanish fans, and congratulations to your family for his great taste in golf. Any other Spanish players that have inspired you in your career as a professional golfer? And my second quick question is, if I'm not mistaken, 2011 is the last time you played in front of the Spanish crowd. Don't you think it's about time to come back?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, when Sergio was coming through -- especially in the PGA in '99 at Medinah running up the fairway, Sergio was my favourite player for a lot of years. Sergio definitely inspired me.

And then when I got to playing on tour and getting to play on Ryder Cup teams and stuff with him, it was a dream come true for me to play so closely and to partner with one of my favourite heroes growing up.

Yeah, I think Finca Cortesin was the last time I played in Spain in the Match Play tournament. Yeah, there's a lot of different places I would like to go and play. I think for me after the summer in America and I play the Irish only and Wentworth and the Dunhill, typically, or at least some years, there's only so many tournaments you can play.

But I would love to go back and play The Spanish Open and The French Open. I've talked about this for a while about the importance of some of these national Opens, and they are some of the most historic tournaments that we have in the game.

So yeah, I would certainly like to go back and play in front of the Spanish fans eventually. It's just a matter of trying to make it all work. And there's an event at Valderrama every year but I can't play in that one, unfortunately.

BRIONY CARLYON: Rory, as always, thank you for your time and best of luck this week.

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