

Dubai Duty Free Irish Open

Friday, 2 July, 2021

Thomastown, County Kilkenny, Ireland

Mount Juliet Estate

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

Q. 67 today, five shots better than yesterday's 72, describe the difference in your play from your point of view?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I got off to a better start and then once you do that, you make a couple of birdies early, you start to feel like you can make a few more. The greens were much better this morning than they were yesterday afternoon, as well. It felt a little easier to hole putts. And that's really what I did. Everything was just a little bit better today and sort of added up to a better score.

It could have been a little better than what it was playing the two par 5s at even par on the front nine. Missed a couple of chances, too. But it was better.

Q. Pádraig Harrington told had he when he first played in the Irish Open he felt the weight of the crowd. How has it been for you?

RORY McILROY: It's been sort of similar in a way. It's been a bit of a learning curve for me but definitely feel the support more than the expectation. Honestly it makes it easier not living here anymore, sort of separating myself from it all and coming back and enjoying the week has made a difference, as well.

Q. The work you've done with Pete Cowen, where have you seen the most benefit so far and where is it still to come?

RORY McILROY: My iron play is much better. I'm hitting it pin-high more. The club's coming -- I'm hitting it with the right loft. The flights came down. Wedges are better for the most part. That's the thing. It's just consistency. Just being able to do the same thing over and over again, and I feel like we're on the right track and creating the right pattern to be able to do that.

Q. 5-under par 67 today, what was the most pleasing aspect of that round?

RORY McILROY: I did everything better today than I did



yesterday. I hit it pretty good off the tee. My iron play was better. I hit some better iron shots. I got it a bit more online. Felt like I was hitting shots left yesterday. It was a bit better today. And I held a few putts. The greens are always better in the morning, freshly cut and not as much traffic on them. They got a little bumpy yesterday afternoon, so to get on some good greens this morning was nice and nice to see a few go in.

Q. When you play an Irish Open, so much support and people willing you to do well, is that something that energizes you?

RORY McILROY: It is when you're playing well. I feel like it's the momentum when it's going with you on a week like this, it's great. But whenever you're sort of struggling, it feels almost like more of an uphill battle. But yeah, it was nice out there today. I made a few birdies and the crowd got behind me and it was nice to feel that.

Q. You must now feel like you've given your shot at a second Irish Open win come Sunday?

RORY McILROY: We'll see how the guys go this afternoon. I don't feel like I'm right in contention right now. I'm probably going to be five or six back going into the weekend. But there's a lot of people between me and the lead so I need to go out there tomorrow and shoot something probably a little better than I did today to give myself a real chance on Sunday.

Q. How pleased were you with that response?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it was much better. I did some practice last night, and figured a couple of things out and to play the first nine holes in 4-under was nice, and you know, being 5-under through ten, I thought I was on course for something a bit lower than 5-under in the end. But I'll take it. It was definitely a big improvement on yesterday.

Q. Probably disappointed you didn't pick up another one or two shots on the last eight holes?

RORY McILROY: To play the par 5s on the front nine at even par was disappointing. I thought had I got to 7 it would have been a good effort and that's sort of what my goal was over those last few holes. Didn't quite happen



but as I said, it was a much better effort than it was yesterday.

Q. Did you feel the buzz and response from the crowd as you played better today?

RORY McILROY: I did. It was nice to feel like I had a bit of momentum on my side instead of just sort of treading water like I was yesterday. Hopefully give them a bit more to cheer about over the next few days.

Q. Winnable from this position do you think?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, of course. I need to go out and play as well if not a bit better tomorrow to give myself a real chance. I need to at least get into double digits under par by the end of tomorrow to give myself a chance and there's a bit of weather coming in, as well, and we'll see how that goes. I don't think I'm right back in contention but I'm pretty close.

Q. Nice round, and two minutes past eight this morning, you're in the face of a bunker on 10 and you make a really good wedge shot and all of a sudden you have good momentum. Moment is everything on the front nine, especially?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, these courses, par 72s, the way to keep momentum is by birdieing the par 5s, and I did that on the first nine today, the back nine. Then I didn't do it on the next nine and that was sort of I guess -- par on 2, par on 3, had a good chance on 4 that I missed and to three-putt 5, that was a momentum killer. From there on in, I scrambled a couple times to make par and probably hit the wrong club shot on 8 to that back pin. But overall, it was a better day.

Q. The way you seem to be going about just looking at you, you have this almost point-and-shoot feeling about your iron play, especially. There seems to be a freedom, the Pete Cowen changes if that's what I can call them; have they settled in your mind and you're not thinking too much about them?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, that, plus I think there's more of a mentality of point-and-shoot on this tour just the way the golf courses are set up. Harry and I were saying on the 9th hole today, you would never see a pin there in America, middle of the green, you can never get that visual. I'm not used to seeing that for the last couple years, and then you come back over here, everything is set up just a little more benign. It gives you more opportunities to point-and-shoot, as you say.

Q. 67, could have been a 64. This is winnable from

where you are but you need something lower than 67 probably?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I'm going to need something at least the same if not better to give myself a chance. The lead right now is 10. It's possibly going to get to 15, 16, by the end of tomorrow, maybe. I don't know, it depends on what weather comes in. I need to get myself at least into double-digits I think to have a chance.

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