

# Amgen Irish Open

Wednesday, 11 September, 2024  
Newcastle, County Down, Northern Ireland  
Royal County Down GC

## Rory McIlroy

### Press Conference

MATTHEW JOULE: Delighted to be joined by Rory McIlroy. The Amgen Irish Open here at Royal County Down, does it get better than that?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, not really. Good to be home in Northern Ireland. It's been a while to be back. Nice to refamiliarise myself with the place a bit. Playing the Irish Open on arguably one of, if not the best golf course in the world in my eyes is a real treat.

We don't get to play this calibre of golf course on tour, so to be able to play somewhere like this is amazing.

I was out there for nine holes in the Pro-Am this afternoon, and with the crowds that are out there already, playing with Tom the first to days, as well, is going to be great for both of us, a great experience for him as well.

You know, hopefully these sort of stormy squalls blow through tonight and we can have some decent weather over the week. Excited to be back and looking forward to the week.

**Q. You talked recently about golf course architecture, watching YouTube. Can you talk about that and coming somewhere like this?**

RORY McILROY: I think it's hard because a professional golfer's perspective on what makes a good golf course is probably a little different than what a good golf course actually is. You know, we think of it as somewhere that obviously tests different aspects of our game, and you know, if you ask like most tour players what a good golf course is, they will say, thick rough, firm greens, trees, dog-legs, that sort of stuff.

I think when you speak to a lot of golf course architects, especially ones that have an affinity for the way golf courses were designed back in the day with wider playing corridors and some more interesting features, I think you start to appreciate some of the older golf courses in the game and golf courses in the world.

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So you know, coming back to somewhere like this where you know, it feels like every hole is just sort of being carved out of the land. Doesn't seem like they moved a lot of dirt or ground to make this golf course. Yeah, different architects have different philosophies but I think that what I really gravitated towards is that sort of wider playing corridors, the ball that sort of gets repelled away from greens when you don't hit the perfect shot, and a golf course that provides you options.

If you look at this golf course, you can hit numerous different clubs off tees. You can hit numerous different clubs around the greens in terms of bump-and-runs or chips or landing it on the green, not landing it on the green. I think the best golf courses I've sort of decided are the ones that provide you as many options as possible. And as I said at the start, I think there's a lot of golf courses that we play on tour I don't think really do that. I think you have to play quite a one-dimensional game.

To have a golf course like this that provides so many options is a real treat.

**Q. Are there any challenging holes that you identify out there -- is golf architecture something you can see yourself being interested after your playing career?**

RORY McILROY: I'm good at playing golf courses but probably to the good at designing them. I'll stick to them for the time being.

Is there -- there's so many. I think the collection of par 3s is very good here. I think the 7th hole, it's 140 yards, and especially today with the wind blowing off the right, you're standing on a tee wondering how you're going to hit the green.

But I think a lot of those, like the fourth hole, another par 3, you miss the green there and it provides you -- can you put it from those run-offs, can you bump-and-run it, can you chip it. But the golf course provides with you so many different options, even the tee shots. The second and third tee shots, you can driver and 3-wood or an iron.

Fifth hole you can hit an iron off the tee or hit driver and be

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more aggressive. It's nice to think a little bit about your strategy.

**Q. Am I right in saying this is a course you play with your friends back home?**

RORY McILROY: The last time I played this golf course was before COVID. So quite a while ago.

But yeah being I think when I did spend more time here, you know, I'd say from Holywood, this is 50 minutes away where maybe Portrush is like an hour and 15. So 25 less minutes in the car; I always gravitated towards here than Portrush.

Yeah, I played Walker Cup here, and have wonderful memories from that week. Played the Irish Open nine years ago, or half an Irish Open nine years ago. And then I've obviously played a little bit here and there since. Still, I played nine holes Monday. Played nine holes today. Still have to refamiliarise myself, especially with some of the tee shots, having to get comfortable with your lines off tees.

So I wouldn't say -- I played it probably a little more than most in the field but it's been a while.

**Q. Apparently talks going on between PGA TOUR and LIV as we speak. What should we read into what's happening?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's certainly peculiar timing. I don't know much about the talks that are going on. I know that there is but that's not something that I'm a part of.

Yeah, I mean, I think we are all in the game of golf trying to look for a solution to all this and try to move forward. So we'll see, yeah. I know as much as you do at this point, and I'm sure news will start to trickle out here in the next few days.

**Q. And the match, Scottie and yourself against Brooks and Bryson; that meant to send any kind of message?**

RORY McILROY: I wouldn't say it's meant to send a message. It's more we wanted to do something that, I guess, all golf fans could get excited about. You've got the best player in the world. You've got two guys in Bryson and Brooks that have won majors in the last two years. You've got me in there who -- I haven't done what those guys have done the last couple years but I've definitely been I feel one of the best players in the world. It's a way to show golf fans in the world that this is what could happen or these are the possibilities going forward. I've been saying this for a long time. I think golf and golf fans

get to see us together more than four times a year.

I think that's what we've tried to do. It's in the middle of December. There's not a lot going on in the game of golf. So trying to get people excited about something before the season starts again. I think we all thought it was a good idea and something that hopefully is a sign of things to come in the future.

**Q. I noticed you on the sanctuary of the putting green after nine holes, and young fans looking for your autograph. How aware are you of the generation --**

RORY McILROY: I know it doesn't seem that long ago that I was one of those kids in that line trying to get an autograph at Mount Juliet or an Irish Open wherever it was back in 2003, 2004. And I know how much it meant to me to get, you know, Tiger's autograph or Ernie or Sergio or any of those guys.

Yeah, I understand, it's hard to get to everyone but I try to make an effort, especially when I come back here. I don't get to play competitive golf very often back here. So I certainly appreciate the support that I get.

And yeah, as you said, to see so many youngsters out there, it's great to see. Try to make sure that they know that it's appreciated and hopefully I can, I guess, give them something to aspire towards in the future if golf is what they want to do.

**Q. Do you get a buzz off --**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's a bit of a double-edged sword. I get the buzz but I also feel the added pressure of trying to perform at home. Something I've honestly struggled with in the past. You know, the couple Irish Opens that I've played in northern Ireland, the one Open Championship I played in Northern Ireland, hasn't went so well. I usually just try to relax and go about my business as I would at any other time of the year. It's great to play in front of them but tone of voice manage my own little world around me to try to get the best out of myself as well.

**Q. Every golfer obviously wants to take advantage of every chance to win. How do you learn from that to take to next year?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think I've got myself in good positions this year. The U.S. Open and the Olympics are probably the two that I'll look back on of those missed opportunities that you're talking about.

Again, I think it's maybe a little bit of game management. You know, I look back to Pinehurst and I definitely was

very aware of where I was on the golf course, very aware of where Bryson was on the golf course.

Partly to do with the nature of the golf course and how the layout was but also, I probably wasn't in my own world enough on that particular afternoon.

So I think just those little things, or, you know, I think you need to be aware of where you're at but then you know, whether it's -- it's just sort of finding that balance between pressing enough and not pressing too much, and if I think back to the 15th hole at the Olympics on that last day, I pressed a little too much there, trying to get a wedge a little too close, instead of maybe accepting 15 or 20 feet behind the hole.

So it's picking the right shot or having the right thought at the right time. At the top level of all sport, whether it's football or golf or rugby, the margins are so, so fine, and this year, I've just been on the wrong side of those margins. Next year, I'm hopefully going to be on the right side.

**Q. Knowing when to hold them and knowing when to fold them, setting up your schedule, saying you're going to play far less --**

RORY McILROY: I'm going to end up playing 27 this year and I haven't played 27 since 2010 which is sort of my first year of giving it a go on both tours, playing in Europe and playing in America.

I've traditionally basically post-2011 played like 22, 23 events a year. I think you have to play that many to -- I think the other thing is, if you look at sort of my career, I've tried to prioritise winning on this side of the pond a little bit more recently again, where you go 2016 through 2021, I wasn't really a factor in The Race to Dubai that much because I prioritised America a little more.

But if you are really trying to give it a go and trying to win on both sides of the Atlantic, you need to play a lot. So there's a bit of give and take there.

But I would say, that sort of 22 number seems like a better number for me where I still feel sharp going into golf tournaments. But it gives me 35 weeks back at home to work on my game and do the things that I feel like I need to do to prepare, and also mentally to have a little bit of a break and get away from it at times. It can get intense, and it can become all-consuming. I talked about this a lot but I value trying to have a balance in my life and trying to get a better balance in all of that.

**Q. The last Irish Open, you took a 13-year-old for a**

**practice round and he's obviously in the field this week. What has that relationship meant for you just watching him grow up from a young boy to the golfer he is today in?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's been amazing to be -- just to watch his journey and see him from that little boy and come up and be a European Tour winner, and getting to play practise rounds with him at major championships now. It's really cool. It's cool to feel like I've had a tiny part in that journey in some way.

And you know, I've tried to help Tom as much as I think needs my help. I don't think he needs much of my help. He knows that if he ever has a question, I'm on the other end of the phone. But the way I always like to do things, you know, whether it was Darren Clarke or G-Mac or some of these guys that were putting their arm around me, you know, I would never seek out their advice unless I really, really needed it. And Tom seems to be the same. I think he knows what he needs to do, and he's got his -- he's a very mature young man. So you know, I don't think he needs much advice from me, but if he ever does feel like he needs it, he always knows that I'm here, and I'm excited to play competitively with him these next couple of days, and you know, it will be a great atmosphere out there, and I'm sure we'll both enjoy it.

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