

Amgen Irish Open

Thursday, 12 September, 2024

Newcastle, County Down, Northern Ireland

Royal County Down GC

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

RORY McILROY: You've got 1 through 3, you're hitting balls on a strong left-to-right wind on the range, 1 through 3, strong left-to-right and you turn around and you play 4, and I didn't hit a shot in the right-to-left wind for probably 24 hours.

So that's sort of tricky. Then like any links course and with wind like this, especially crosswinds, it's about managing ball flight and giving yourself enough margin for error so that even if you are a little bit off you're not getting yourself in huge trouble. And I think I know this place well enough that I know the right side to miss it, and I think that was one of the things I did well today. Even when I did miss it, I missed it in the right spots where I was able to either get it up-and-down or have a decent next shot or a chance at a next shot.

Q. You mentioned great to get off to a about start and hopefully have a chance to contend over the weekend.

RORY McILROY: It was nice, I felt like I controlled my ball flight well. I've been working a little bit on my swing these last couple of weeks. Yeah, it felt a little better. I've probably struggled a lot in left-to-right winds this year, so to sort of control my ball flight a bit and test it out there today was good to see that, you know, I was able to do it when I needed to.

Q. After a couple bogeys, it was nice to bounce back with three birdies?

RORY McILROY: It was. You know, 16 and 18 are really good birdie chances, and after the two bogeys on 14 and 15, I thought, you know, if I can get those two back, you know, that would be a good start, and then to obviously get one more back as well, that birdie on 17, yeah, obviously a really nice way to finish.

Q. Is it a major feel with the difficulty of the course?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think so. I mean, yeah, in terms of like difficulty of the golf course, yeah. Saying that, I found Troon very difficult. More difficult than this.

AMGEN
IRISH OPEN

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It's a major championship-calibre golf course. It's just unfortunate that we don't have the infrastructure around the golf course to host something like an Open because if we did, it definitely would be able to host an Open Championship. It's just limited the amount of people you can get in here and logistically it doesn't quite make sense.

But it's up there with the toughest courses that we play.

Q. Did 16 feel like a big moment? It's a treacherous tee shot?

RORY McILROY: I was surprised at where my ball finished. I thought it was a bit right and it finished sort of pin-high there just to the side of the green.

Yeah, it was nice to get that ball up-and-down, and I think as well, you know, you chip it to four feet and you're waiting to hit your putt for five or six minutes. It starts to, you can start to think about it too much, and to hole that putt was nice.

I made four great swings on the last two holes that both 17 and 18, and the two second shots. So yeah, it was nice to finish like that.

Q. You said yesterday, it's been a double-edged sword sometimes playing the Irish Open. Did it feel different?

RORY McILROY: I think it's felt different staying at home. I feel a bit detached from the golf tournament. Today I woke up and usually when you're at a tournament site, like you can get if I was staying at the Slieve Donard there, you can hear people announced on the first tee, and maybe the first thing you do is checking your phone and seeing how the boys started off and checking the leaderboard.

Staying an hour away, I've felt detached from the tournament this week, which has been quite a nice thing and haven't been so wrapped up in it, which is quite nice. Probably the reason why I started well, I would say.

Q. The strategic concentration, is it like a major?

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RORY McILROY: I wouldn't say it's quite like a major but it's a tough test, and you know that anything under par -- I think the strategy that you need to play with is a little bit like a major but majors obviously bring their own type of pressure as well.

But yeah, it's great atmosphere out there. It's a difficult golf course, and you have to have your wits about you.

Q. I missed the start, so apologies if I missed this. But to finish the way you finished, to go from outside the top 30 to tied fourth is the start that you need, isn't it?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, but I think as well, it's so bunched, as you said, you're even par and 30th and you're 3-under and you're four. It's so bunched. It's the way the golf course is. It's hard to go very low but if you can manage your way around, even if you don't have your game, you can make a lot of pars.

So I think it's going to be one of these tournaments where you know there's probably going to be a lot of people in with a chance going in to Sunday just the nature of the golf course and how it plays. But yeah, it was great after the bogeys on 14 and 15, it was great to birdie these last three holes.

Q. Does the feel, getting back to links, and obviously it's a feeling your way into the weekend type of scenario, you must have got that over the last few holes, especially.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's been great. I came here and practiced and played nine holes on Monday. Didn't come to the course on Tuesday and then played the Pro-Am and practiced last night. To go out there today and hit the ball the way I did and play the way I did, it was quite pleasing to see that some of the stuff that I've been working on this week, I've been able to take it out on to the golf course, and it's felt pretty good.

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