

Alfred Dunhill Links Championship

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

TOM CARLISLE: Delighted to be joined in the media centre with Rory McIlroy. It's a very special week this week and having a chance to play with your dad, saw you on 18, having a laugh with the guys on the first tee. It's a special week, isn't it, the Alfred Dunhill links?

RORY McILROY: It is, it's a great week. Lots of great memories here for me and for my family and my dad. I feel like it's where my professional career really began and really took off. I got my European Tour card 15 years ago here at this golf course, and you know, it's been a pretty great journey since.

It's a great week. It's just so nice to be able to sort of share it with my dad and with my family, and we had a great day at Kingsbarns yesterday and we had a great day on the Old Course today. The focus is trying to get us over the line so we can play here again on Sunday. Try to make the cut, play the Old Course again one more time, and yeah, really looking forward to the week.

Q. Taking you back a few years, you had a comment with Paul Lawrie in your second event, if you look back, the majors, WGC titles --?

RORY McILROY: I think when you embark on a professional career, I think I just sort of took it one step at a time. I wanted to get my TOUR card and once I did that, I wanted to play the majors, the WGCs. I didn't start off with grand ambitions of, say, Tiger having pictures of Jack Nicklaus on his wall. I didn't even know he had that. So I guess I just wanted to become the best golfer that I could, and whether that meant I was at a certain level or the levels I reached, I just always try to get the best out of myself.

Yeah, when I look back over the 15 years, it's an amazing life, it's an amazing career, provides you with amazing things, obviously. But you still have to remember where you came from and yeah, I have to pinch myself sometimes and I have to give myself that little perspective because you know, even on the 18th green today, I made a putt for eagle. Just stuff like that, even just being in that

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position to have a chance to win on 18 at St Andrews, it's just stuff that you dream about as a kid. I get to live out my childhood dreams and not everybody can say that. It's an unbelievable position to be in.

Q. In July, you obviously were disappointed --

RORY McILROY: I feel like any time I've had a setback in my career, whether it be a setback of you know, missing a cut or having a chance to win a tournament and not pulling it off, I always feel like I've been able to bounce back a little. Throughout my career, whether it be trying to get my first win on The European Tour in 2008 in Switzerland, losing in a playoff there, was able to get myself into the Top-50 by the end of the year. Trying to win my first major championship, didn't win that and bounced back a couple months after at the U.S. Open.

I feel like time and time again, I've been able to bounce back from some adversity. It's been a learning curve but I think it's one of the things that I'll look back on my career in 20 years' time, it's probably one of the things I'm the most proud of is that I have bounced back from setbacks very, very well and I've become more resilience as I've gone on in my career.

Yeah, I don't know if I surpassed. I think once The Open was done, I just reset my goals on what I thought a successful season would look like, and that's what I went off and that's what I was able to achieve.

Q. Is it a good thing being back here so soon after The Open Championship --

RORY McILROY: I mean, I got a nice bounce on 14. Obviously 18, I wish I had made eagle -- but not really. I'll always have a deep appreciation for St Andrews and what it means to our game.

I think that's more important than me trying to win an Open Championship here. This course and what it means will stand test of time. I'm in a game where one day, when I move on and leave the game to the younger generation, they will try and do the same things that I've been trying to do the last 20 years. No regrets.

If anything, I sort of take a trip down memory lane every time I come here and just have a real appreciation for

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everything.

Q. Just on the DP World Tour rankings, do you think --

RORY McILROY: Maybe. There's a lot of points up for grab in Dubai end of the year. I had two good weeks, Wentworth, Italy. Didn't quite get the win that I wanted but two very solid weeks.

Honestly I'm here to have a great time with my dad and have a great week, and if I play well and if I have a chance to win, that's great. But it's not the forefront of my mind, put it that way. I'm here to have a good week with my dad and enjoy it.

Q. Would you swap an individual win for a team?

RORY McILROY: Yeah. Yeah, I would.

Q. With the changes in the team next year, how different will be team be in Italy from the last events?

RORY McILROY: There was like a 30-minute window on Sunday at the Presidents Cup where it looked like a Miracle at Medinah was about to happen which I was very much rooting for.

Look, our European Ryder Cup Team is going to look very different next year. There's going to be quite a few rookies on the team I would imagine. Europe's had an unbelievable run in The Ryder Cup for the past couple decades. This team is very, very strong and not a lot of scar tissue compared to the last few teams. They sort of have their pairings it looks like and they get a chance to do it every year, which I think benefits them.

I think one of the great achievements in our game nowadays is winning a Ryder Cup away from home. As you've seen the last few editions, it's sort of gone to the home team. The last away win was that Medinah team in 2012, and we had to do something spectacular to be able to win that one.

It's getting more and more difficult. I think with the younger guys coming through and the fresh blood, I said it in Italy, it is time for a rejuvenation of the European Ryder Cup Team. We need to blood some new guys, a home Ryder Cup is the best way to do that. You've got your 13th man on your side and you've got the crowd with you, and if you can introduce some of these new guys in The Ryder Cup team then it's the best way to go about it. But of course, we'll be the under cogs going into Italy and with how young this American Team is, looks like they will be very strong for a very long time.

I'm excited. It's a new challenge, a fresh challenge, a lot of new faces and I'm excited to be a part of it.

Q. Do you expect Bob to be on the team?

RORY McILROY: He obviously played fantastically well at the venue a couple weeks ago. You know, Bob's gone through a few changes with his coach and he's sort of been on that journey. You know, it seems as if things are starting to really come together for him with the win in Italy and he played pretty well last week, too.

If he keeps playing the way he's playing, then yes, there's a lot of time until The Ryder Cup next year, but hopefully this win in Italy will give him a good dose of confidence to move on and qualify for the team; and if not qualify, play well enough to obviously warrant a pick.

Q. Your thoughts on the letter from the LIV players, the loss of rankings, becoming obsolete?

RORY McILROY: I certainly would want the best players in the world ranked accordingly. I think Dustin Johnson is somewhere around 100th in the world. It's not an accurate reflection of where he is in the game.

But at the same time, you can't make up your own rules. There's criteria there and everyone knows what they are. If they want to pivot to meet the criteria, they can, and then all of a sudden -- I certainly have no problem with them getting World Ranking points, at all. But you just have to meet the criteria, and if you don't meet the criteria, it's going to be hard to justify why you should have them.

Q. Do you feel this week, you playing with your dad, Matt with his mom, might remind people that there's more to golf than money?

RORY McILROY: There's more to golf than -- the professional game is very professional, it's such a small part of the game of golf. Golf is so much bigger than all of us and I think people miss that.

Yeah, I thought the 150th Open Championship was really a feel-good moment for the year. It bigger than all this crap we've talked about all year. It St Andrews and tradition and where the game was created and where it was built. That's golf at the end of the day. We're all playing the same game. Sometimes our vision of what that game should be is a little bit different but at the end of the day it is golf and it's a wonderful game and it's a game that can be played for life.

You know, my two-year-old daughter swing a club and hit a ball -- well, not the same as a my dad, but you know what I

mean, like grandparents can play with grand kids, different generations can sort of all be interested in something together. That's one of the most special things about our game that has been lost in all this rhetoric the last few weeks.

Q. How close were you on 18?

RORY McILROY: 20 feet.

Q. You held the putt?

RORY McILROY: I did.

Q. What did you use off the tee?

RORY McILROY: Driver.

Q. This week, Dunhill have issued a statement saying they want a cessation of hostilities in the world of golf and people should try to get together and sort is out. Do you believe that someone should step in?

RORY McILROY: I've always said I think there is a time and a place where everyone that's involved here should sit down and try to work together. It's very hard for that to happen right now when there's two lawsuits going on.

There's obviously this court case that's going to happen in February with the DP World Tour and then the one in the States, whenever that gets -- so that's what makes it very difficult. I've seen a few guys have sort of dropped their name from that suit in the States over the last 24 hours. But that's what makes it difficult.

And I think, as well, there's a natural timeline here to let temperatures just sort of settle down a little bit and people can maybe go into those mediations with cooler heads and not be so emotional about it all.

But look, I don't want a fractured game. I never have. You look at some other sports and what's happened and the GAME of golf is ripping itself apart right now and that's no good for anyone. It's no good for the guys on, you know, this side or the sort of traditional system and it's no good for the guys on the other side, either. It's no good for anyone. There is a time and a place for it. I just think right now, with where everything is, it's probably not the right time.

But saying that, I don't think we can let it go too much longer. So I'm all for everyone sitting around the table and trying to figure something out for sure.

Q. Obviously the last time you were here it was a bit

disappointing. What would it mean to get the win today with your dad?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I don't think it would quite make up for missing out on a Claret Jug but it would certainly soften the blow. But again, I've got memories around St Andrews that will last me a lifetime even if that's not winning an Open Championship. I'd love to in the future and hopefully I get that opportunity again but it's a nice week. As I said, it's a feel-good week and you get to do something you don't get to do all the time.

It's a pure form of the game, playing with your father. Sort of reminding myself where I started and playing at the golf club with him and all that sort of stuff. That's the real nice thing about this week.

Look, a win would be the cherry on top, of course but we're both going to have a good time this week and that's all that matters.

Q. Just on playing with your dad, would you say he's your perfect playing partner?

RORY McILROY: At times, yes. My dad loves to chat and sometimes he'll be chatting to someone else in the group and not realise I'm over my shot trying to hit a golf ball. I have to say, "Dad, just tone it down a little bit" at times.

Yeah, if I were to make up a perfect foursome to play golf with the rest of my life, he would obviously be in it. We've had the opportunity to play here a number of times. We have played golf pretty much all over the world together, and again, it's one of the great things about this game that we can do that.

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