

Italian Open

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Rome, Italia

Marco Simone Golf & Country Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference



BRIONY CARLYON: Delighted to welcome Rory McIlroy to the ds automobiles Italian Open.

Rory, your first time playing in Italy as a professional. Just give us your sense of what it's like to be back and also here at Marco Simone, your thoughts on the golf course.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, excited to make my professional debut in Italy. The only other time I played in Italy was the European Amateur Championship in 2006, which I won, so I've got 100 percent record in this country and I'd like to keep that going.

But it's great to be here, to see the golf course here at Marco Simone, especially for The Ryder Cup next year. Obviously get some early preparation and get a look at what the course is like but also trying to win a prestigious championship that's been running for nearly 30 years and a national Open title, which is pretty cool, and some great names on The Italian Open trophy, too.

Excited to be here. I'm glad that I could sort of work it into the schedule this year and excited to get going tomorrow.

Q. So looking at your results this season, and looking at your position, how much has it been important working with Bob Rotella the last few months?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I feel like I've never needed extra motivation to go out on the golf course and play my best. I believe when I play the golf that I'm capable of that I'm the best player in the world, and I think a lot of people in my position at the top of the game believe that, also.

I definitely feel like Bob Rotella has maybe helped me unlock a couple of things within my game that were maybe lacking for the last couple of years. So working with Bob again has been a lot of fun. You know, he's a great man, a wonderful character. I love talking to him, even if we don't really talk about golf that much, you're always going to learn something. He's got so many incredible stories, and I definitely think he's helped me bring more of like a relaxed focus to my game that I maybe didn't have for the last

couple of years.

Bob has been a big part of this year and why I've played so well, along with the rest of my team. Everyone plays their part and everyone helps me be the best version of myself, I guess, and you know, it's been a great year so far, and I said it last week at Wentworth, I want to continue to have a great year and finish this season off on a high.

Q. Just wondered if this were any discussions with Luke Donald being here this week, getting some experience on The Ryder Cup course for next year?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I had already committed to playing in this event before Luke was the captain and it was someone else. It was always a part of my schedule. I wanted to play at least one tournament here before The Ryder Cup next year. I think The Italian Open is being played in May next year. I knew that that wasn't going to fit into my schedule because of how busy it is in the United States at that time.

So this was a good opportunity. I was already in Europe playing at Wentworth, and it was a good opportunity to see the course. But I've had discussions with Luke and you know, we are actually a few of us are meeting for dinner tonight for a little bit of team bonding but also have a talk about the course and how we think it should be set up to favour The European Team.

Q. Seems obvious that the fact that none of the well-known live guys are here week nor should they expect to play?

RORY McILROY: I can't speak on behalf of them, if they will come in May. I'm not sure what LIV's schedule looks like, if there's tournament on that week or where in the world they are playing. But yeah, I have said it once I've said it a hundred times, I don't think any of those guys should be on The Ryder Cup Team.

Q. First of all, congratulation, you had a great BMW. Can I quickly ask you for your thoughts about the



passing of Queen Elizabeth and the impact that this has had and might have in the future?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, she was a wonderful human being, wonderful lady. I think you see the outpouring of love and the emotion that you've seen over the past few days, it sort of shows how admired she was and how strongly people felt about her. I said this last week, she shows so much dignity and dedication and grace towards what she did.

She put duty over everything else and I'm sure that was a very heavy crown to wear; excuse the pun. She was a wonderful person. I think she had handled herself with absolutely incredible grace, and she'll be very, very missed. I think that's part from the scenes over the past few days. But life goes on and we are all going to have our time where we are not here anymore but she left a wonderful legacy and she had a wonderful life. You know, she'll be remembered for a very long time.

Q. Did you have any special moments or meetings with her?

RORY McILROY: I met her once before. I met her once a few years ago.

But yeah, she was very, very nice. Just a wonderful lady and very welcoming. Made me feel very much at ease in her company. When you meet someone as important as that, it's nice to be able to not feel too intimidated, I guess.

Q. A I can't imagine you being intimidated but that's besides the point. Now on to the golf. Is this the first time you've played here? Can you give your impressions and how do you feel about it compared to what you've seen in other Ryder Cup courses?

RORY McILROY: So I would say that the two Ryder Cup courses that this most reminds me of would be Gleneagles and Celtic Manor. They were both similar-style courses.

I think the back nine here is a wonderful layout and a wonderful set up for match play. I think it's going to create some really exciting finishes to matches. You know, you've got two drivable par 4s on the back nine. You've got a few holes with water and you've got that wonderful closing hole which could be really exciting.

The front nine is a little more -- it's like the first couple of chapters of a book. It gets you into the book a little bit and sort of sets the story, but the real juicy bits come on the back nine. That's where you really get into it.

Q. Just staying on The Ryder Cup topic since we are

obviously at this course, quite a tough loss at Whistling Straits. What does Europe need to reduce the gap in the next year? You've talked about bringing in the other guys. Is that where the potential for improvement lies, and any names in particular?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I would say we have got a core of -- I think the European Team has a core of six or seven guys that I think we all know are pretty much going to be on that team, and then it's up to some of the younger guys to maybe step up. For example, Francesco had a top 10 last week at Wentworth and seems to be coming into form, and I think having an Italian on the team would be huge.

So you know, you've got your core there with experience in The Ryder Cup and played in a few, so I think, yeah, you're looking for some of these younger guys over the next 12 months to step up and put their hand up for a possible pick. The criteria this year is a little different. There's going to be six, six picks. So whoever is in form at that time but also has shown that they have played consistently well over this period.

But I think we were in need of a rebuild, anyway. It was sort of -- we did well with the same guys for a very long time but again as I just said, everything comes to an end at some point. I think Whistling Straits is a good sort of demarcation, I guess.

That's all behind us. We have got a core group of guys but let's build on that again, and instead of filling those three or four spots with older veterans, let's blood some rookies and let's get them in and build towards the future. I think that's important.

Q. As far as the course itself, what is going to be special or unique about holding The Ryder Cup in this venue or this city?

RORY McILROY: Who doesn't want to come and spend a week in Rome? You know, just walking the around the city last night and the history and the culture, it's an amazing place. Italy isn't the biggest golfing nation in the world but I think having a Ryder Cup here can certainly grow that, and if that can inspire the younger generation of Italians to pick up a club and play, and Italy has produced a lot of wonderful players over the year.

But if it inspire the next generation, that would be wonderful.

Q. You've been on such a tear lately. Has been becoming the most outspoken anti-LIV player helped you?

RORY McILROY: In a way. The leaderboard at Wentworth last week at about 2.00pm on Sunday was looking pretty grim if you were in a position that I hold, and that probably gave me some extra motivation and a few other guys on the leaderboard to get past that 14-under mark. It's a weird time in golf, and hopefully over the next couple years we can resolve it in some sort of way.

But right now, look, I'm a golfer. I play golf. I maybe put myself in a conversation too much at times. But I can't help myself because I feel strongly about it. But it's up to the powers that be to try to come to some sort of, not resolution, I don't think that's the right word but a strategy going forward so that the game can drive at the highest level.

BRIONY CARLYON: Thank you, Rory, for your time and all the best this week.

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