

Dubai Invitational

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

Dubai, UAE

Dubai Creek Resort

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

Q. Kicking off 2024, in Dubai where you've so much success in the past winning five tournaments. How excited to be here and looking forward to the task ahead?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I am. I'm looking forward to the next couple of weeks. This is a different way to start the season than previous ones. Obviously we played Abu Dhabi and then Dubai. Abu Dhabi now at the end of the year, which is exciting, because another big tournament at the end of the season could decide the season-long race.

This is a nice, maybe gentler introduction back into golf with this Pro-Am format this week at the Creek, and then obviously looking ahead to the Dubai Desert Classic next week also.

Q. Why particularly did you start next week and not next week at the Desert Classic?

RORY McILROY: I have a lot of friends in Dubai and I know a lot of the amateurs coming to play. I thought it would be a nice, as I said, gentle way to start the season and treat it more as a bit of a practise week and see where my game is and see if I need to make any adjustments going into next week, and obviously the bulk of the season, starting off in the States in California in a few weeks' time.

I just thought it was a good opportunity to get on the golf course, get a card in my hand but in a more relaxed setting, so I'm excited for that for the week.

Q. Since we last spoke, Jon Rahm has joined LIV. The talks have been extended to April to try to resolve the fractures in our game. You were saying yesterday your dream scenario is if 2022 tournament world tour with a truly global schedule. Tell us which tournaments you think should be involved in that?

RORY McILROY: I think informally, we sort of have most of that global schedule, anyway. If you look at what all the tournaments that all the top players play, informally, sort of without any structure without it between a few different

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tours, I think we have at least the majority of what a global tour would look like. We still need to make sure that the biggest tournaments are in America; obviously that's the biggest place that we play.

But also trying to elevate some of the other tournaments around the world: You know, trying to, Middle East, Continental Europe, U.K. and Ireland, the Far East, whether it be Japan, Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, South Africa. I mean, you've got a lot of different opportunities there.

I think if we really want to, if everyone is talking about growing the game and trying to, especially if these investors are going to come into our game and they want a return on their capital, I think everyone needs to start thinking more globally around it but globally in a holistic way but not really like this tour, that tour and another tour.

Like, okay, what is the best -- what is the best structure for elite professional golf, the top 70 to 100 guys in the world and what would that look like, especially if the game is going to look different going forward and everything is on the table. I just think it's worth having that conversation.

Q. You said with the proviso in mind that corporate America must be involved. Why is that so important to you?

RORY McILROY: Because they have the most money, basically. You know, they have proved over the last -- the PGA TOUR has proved over the last 20 or 30 years that corporate America is interested in the game of golf for a number of different reasons, and America is still a huge market for our game. Because America has become such a huge market, it's maybe not let other markets around the world thrive as well, and if we can sort of all start to work together a little bit more, I think a rising tide lifts all ships or all boats, and that's the mindset that I would, I guess, come to that thinking of what the best thing is for professional golf.

Q. To go to the far-flung corners of the world that you're talking about, would players need to be contracted to play a certain number of tour events in

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this new world tour idea?

RORY McILROY: When you look at different sports and the media landscape and how much these media companies are paying for sporting events, I think you have to be able to guarantee them the product that they are paying for.

So in my opinion, yeah, I would say that people would have to be contracted and sign up to a certain number of events every year; that the sponsors and media partners know that the guys they want to be there are going to be.

Q. Let's get back to you. Obviously a brilliant end to last year and winning your fifth Race to Dubai. What are the thoughts and inspirations going into this year, having reduced some of the clutter around you and taking some of those responsibilities away, how excited about the possibilities this year?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it is, it's nice to have a little bit more free time again, whether that's more time on the golf course and practising, or a bit more time with my family or doing other things that I enjoy doing. It's going to be nice.

Yeah, I'm excited for the year. This is my 18th full season on tour, which is mad to think about. But I'm as excited as I was for the first one. I think every new year, new year, new opportunities, new goals, and you know, my consistency's really been there over the last couple years, and without winning one of the big ones, and I think that's the final piece of the puzzle for me, especially coming out of COVID and sort of going through some dips in my game and then coming back up and playing so well the last couple years. The final piece of the puzzle is trying to knock off one of those four.

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