

DP World India Championship

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New Delhi, Delhi, India

Delhi GC

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference



DP WORLD INDIA CHAMPIONSHIP

CLARE BODEL: Welcome Rory to the Media Centre here at Delhi Golf Club. You've been here for a couple of days now, your first trip to India. Wonder if you can tell us your first impressions.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's great to be here, first and foremost. India is a country that I've wanted to travel to for a long time.

Yeah, it's a very vibrant place. I haven't had a chance to see a lot of the country or a lot of the city, but the welcome has been incredible and everyone that I've met has been wonderful and welcoming. So I really appreciate that.

Yeah, I'm excited to play a golf tournament in a place that I've never played before. 18-odd years into a professional career and to still be able to do things for the first time is something that excites me.

And yeah, I've watched this tournament -- obviously, it's a new tournament, but I've watched tournaments on this golf course over the years on TV, and you know, the course certainly lives up to its reputation.

So excited to get out there and take it on this week. Yeah, just excited to feet going and can't wait to play in front of a lot of Indian fans that will hopefully be out there over the next few days.

Q. You see the welcome, all the posters. Taking you back to the U.S. and the fans boo'ing, did it change you as you come to another place?

RORY McILROY: No, I don't think so. Obviously it's been two weeks, and I've been following the sort of narrative coming out of the Ryder Cup just like everyone else.

But unfortunately, I think it takes away from what we focused on which is what an incredible performance it was by The European Team.

Obviously as I'm playing my matches, I'm focused on trying to win my point. You know, you see that the other guys are winning their matches or they are doing well but you don't

realize how well they are playing.

So just over the last two weeks, being able to watch the highlights and just see, especially those first two days, in the foursomes and the four-balls how got European Team were. The Americans would hit it close; we hit it closer. The Americans hole a putt and we hole a putt on top it and it happened every single time.

The unfortunate thing is people aren't remembering that and they are remembering the week for the wrong reason. I would like to shift the narrative and focus on how good The European Team were and how proud I was to be part of that team to win an away Ryder Cup.

Q. First of all, congratulations again: Masters, green jacket and the Ryder Cup. My two stock questions, when is the next major and when are you coming to India? At the start of the year, you told us the Indian Open fits in nicely with your schedule.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it absolutely does. I would say as time goes on, my schedule will get hopefully more international. Because that's what I've enjoyed doing. I've always said that.

But I think over the last few years, I've enjoyed it even more. I've enjoyed the travel. I've enjoyed getting to play in front of people that I've never played in front of before. But it does, it fits really nicely.

You know, because there is -- I'll always go back and play The Irish Open and Wentworth in September, and then you sort of have especially in non-Ryder Cup years, you've got some choices to make where you want to play, how much do you want to play, do you want to take some time off.

But this event certainly fits into a nice part of the year.

Q. Do you have any bucket list apart from playing four days here, do you have anything you want to do in India?

RORY McILROY: I'd love to go and see a cricket game. I'd love to go watch a cricket match. I don't think there's



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anything on until next month maybe. I'd love to come back and do that. I mean, I'm a bit of a sicko; I love sitting down and watching test matches.

I'm going to be in Australia later this year, and The Ashes is going to be on. So that's something I'm quite excited -- I don't think I'll be able to get to a game but I'd love to do that.

Obviously the Taj Mahal, love to come back at some time in years to come, bring back the family and experience that together. It's obviously a very, very big country and a lot to see. We're just around Delhi but you head south, and you head to a lot of other wonderful places. I hear down on the sort of southwest coast is beautiful. There's so much to see. It's such a big country.

I guess my immediate thing I'm hoping for right now, as you say, play a first good two days and at least be here for the weekend and hopefully enjoy the weekend after that.

Q. This golf course, what do you think of it? And we all know how you drive the ball. How much of an advantage is that, where are you with the driver, and is that the smartest play on this golf course?

RORY McILROY: I'd say that the next time I hit my driver will be in Abu Dhabi. (Laughter) I don't think I'll hit a driver this week. I just don't feel like the risk is worth the reward. I'd rather leave myself two or three clubs back and hit a 7-iron into a par 4 instead of hitting a wedge where if you just get it off-line here and the ball is gone. You're hitting it into jungle and you're not going to be able to get it out. You can rack up a very big number very quickly.

So being strategic and being smart with your play off the tee, especially, is very important. I can see why S.S.P. has done so well around here. You just keep hitting it down the middle, hit it 260, 250, 260 every single time, and if you do that, then you can do very well around this golf course.

Q. And the second question, has the Indian philosophy ever figured? Because I've heard stories that you read the Bhagavad Gita before the Masters and took some of the learnings from that. Is that true?

RORY McILROY: Look, there's very little I haven't tried to try to win the Masters (laughter) if I heard they had good ideas on the moon, I would probably read those, two.

Yeah, I guess I've gravitated more towards stoicism and the ancient Greeks and that sort of stuff more than anything else.

But yeah, again, I think India has a wonderful culture. I

think the people are unbelievably welcoming and hospitable, and gentle, I guess would be -- and it's a pleasure to be here and a pleasure to hopefully not -- golf has become quite a big sport in this country, but hopefully I can help it become even bigger.

Q. Coming back for the Indian Open, do you see it happening now that you've ticked off so many boxes the last few months?

RORY McILROY: It's hard, because the Indian Open, is it March or April time? March? It's such a hard time of the year to make it work. We're over in the States playing THE players or Bay Hill or getting ready for the Masters. It's hard to travel across all those time zones and come back again and be in the right place physically and mentally to try to go into the first major of the year.

I'd love to play the DLF. I think it's become, like, this infamous golf course around the world, just the bunkering, and that 17th hole seems to be just an absolute menace of a golf hole. I'd love to get there and play at some point. I don't think I'll be able to make it happen this week.

But again, if it was something where I come back next year to this event, or at least I'll know the golf course here. So it might give me a free day to go and play the DLF on the Monday or the Tuesday.

Q. Did you see the banners with Peter Thomson? Have you played one of his courses before?

RORY McILROY: He obviously hit it very straight. I know he won five Open Championships. I actually don't know if I've played any other Peter Thomson golf courses. Yeah, this could be the first one.

Q. I didn't want to bring up the Ryder Cup, but your comments about how it; should be at a higher standard, but can golf grow as a universal character as opposed to taking on flavors of different places?

RORY McILROY: I think it can. I think it can definitely grow. But you also want to keep traditions and the values that make golf, golf.

And I think it's -- yeah, you don't want -- you don't want to, you don't want your sport to be unwelcoming to newcomers. I absolutely get that. But you also don't want newcomers coming into the game and ruining centuries of traditions and values of what this game represents or what it up holds, as well.

I think there has to be a balance. But I certainly think that golf can grow but it can grow in a way where the people

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that are coming into the game still respect and acknowledge that this is a little bit different than maybe other sports.

And I think that's okay. I don't -- you know, I say it in America all the time: Golf doesn't need to be the NFL. It doesn't need to be these other sports. Golf is golf, and that's fine.

And I think you can see, I think the one great thing about golf, as well, is it's more of a participation sport than other games or sports that are predominately, like, say, American football or basketball. Those are sports that are mostly watched by people where golf and in some ways cricket in this country, they are games that are played.

So, look, I'd love more people to watch golf. That would be amazing. But I would be more interested in getting more people to play the game, and I think when people play the game, then they learn and they can acknowledge what golf is, what it represents, and the sort of etiquette and the values that you need to adhere to when you play the game.

Q. Many congratulations on everything you've achieved in your career so far. You're one of the greatest athletes of our generation, and like you said, being treated as a professional -- when you talk about the landscape of sport, very different from what it is right now -- do you think gone are the days when people watched sport for the pure joy of it, just for the love of it, as opposed to now watching sport to have an opinion about the player, about the coach, about everything that happens? I specifically ask this because obviously after what happened in Ryder Cup and how out of hand the situation got, do you think the landscape watching sport, enjoying watching sport, has changed to now having an opinion?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I would say -- it's a great question. I would say that deep down at its core, the essence of watching sport, it's the realist reality show that we have. We don't know the outcome. We don't know what's going to happen, and that's amazing. There's very little content on TV nowadays that can actually do that.

So my sport will always be what it is, and I think the majority of sports fans watch it because of that. But yes, there are -- you know, you start to see -- look, it's a big business, and big business and money comes from having opinions on things; and the more eyeballs things are ultimately a good thing, if it can be harnessed the right pay.

But yeah, it's definitely changed. When it's people watch sport for the gambling aspect and they put money on games, that is something that especially in America, that's

a changing landscape.

But I think at its core, watching sport, whatever that is, is still very pure and it's still pure competition, and I think that's an amazing thing.

But yeah, as an athlete and knowing that you're going to get criticized for your performances, good or bad or whatever it is, I think at this point in time and in this modern world, that's -- I wouldn't say it's a price to pay but yeah, you just -- it is what it is.

I think athletes nowadays have to do a better job of blocking out the noise. So not going on social media. Trying not to read anything about yourself. Easier said than done. But I think the more athletes in this day and age, if they can do that, I think it's better. I think it's better for their performance. I think it's better for their mental health, and I think it's better for their longevity in a given sport, as well.

Q. Having you here in India, it's a dream come true. Luke Donald described you as the absolute leader in The European Team's locker room. Is there any possibility of you taking up the European side of things as a captain?

RORY McILROY: Sometime, yes. Certainly not 2027. I hope I'm still playing at that point. But yeah, I would love to be The European Team Captain at some point. But that will be beyond my playing days, or at least when my playing days are coming to an end and I'm not good enough to make the team or I make way for the new generation to come along.

Hopefully that's not in 2027. (Laughter) Hopefully I'm still good enough to play and put points on the board for Europe.

But yeah, absolutely, I would love to be a captain one day, and I feel very fortunate that I've had a front row seat playing under some of the best captains in history in the Ryder Cup.

I think what Luke Donald has done the last two Ryder Cups has revolutionised the captaincy within Europe. And I feel like Paul McGinley in Gleneagles in 2014, he was a wonderful captain, and I learned a lot from him. And there's been wonderful captains between them, as well. All of them have been wonderful.

But I think the time and the effort and the dedication that Luke Donald has put into the last four years, it's been absolutely amazing. He has 100 percent respect of the entire team and everyone that's worked for him and all be

behind him. If I can be nearly as good as a captain as Luke Donald, I'll have done a good job.

So hopefully one day in the future, but I'd say not until the mid-2030s, hopefully, if I can keep playing well.

CLARE BODEL: On that note, thank you, everyone.

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