

U.S. Open Championship 2022

Thursday, June 16, 2022

Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

Rory McIlroy

Flash Interview



THE MODERATOR: Rory McIlroy, 3-under 67. Rory, maybe not the way you wanted to finish but a good round here. Just talk us through it.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, a really solid start. You'd take 67 around this golf course any day. Even though I'm standing up here slightly frustrated that I bogeyed the last, it's a great start to the tournament.

I felt like I did most things well today. I certainly putted well, and I hit the ball in the right spots, and I hit a lot of greens, gave myself plenty of chances. Just basically did everything that you need to do at a U.S. Open.

Yeah, overall really pleased about the start. That's now two majors in a row that I've started well, and hopefully just keep going from here.

Q. For being tied for the lead, shooting 3-under, you seem pretty fired up out there, like you had a little extra edge. How would you describe your mindset today?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, maybe a little bit. I think once I played our front nine, the back side, in 2-under par, no bogeys, I think I sort of was, okay, let's try to play this round without a bogey. That was sort of the mindset. I did that for 17 holes, which was great, and then just -- I was sort of in two minds about what shot to hit on the second shot on 9 and missed the green where you just can't miss it.

I didn't do that all day. If I missed it, I missed it in the right spot, played for the fat part of the greens, and there I just -- that's why I was frustrated, because you miss it left, it's a pretty simple up-and-down. You make par, you move on.

But it's fine. It's something to learn from. Sitting here talking about the bad stuff when 17 of the holes were really good. I am, I'm happy with the start. I thought my mindset was really good out there.

Q. You've sort of become the moral compass of the professional game and all this energy and rhetoric

around the TOUR versus LIV, does that inspire you to want to make a statement with your golf clubs?

RORY McILROY: Not really. It's been eight years since I won a major, and I just want to get my hands on one again.

Q. What stands out more for you, the par saves on 2 and 5 or the birdies?

RORY McILROY: The par saves on 2 and 5.

Q. Can you talk us through how difficult they were and what you hit there?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think one of the things over the years that I maybe haven't done as well at U.S. Opens is when I've put myself in those sort of positions, like in that long rough on 2 or where I've found myself on 5, trying to be a little too heroic with the first shot and leaving it in there or just sort of completely getting it wrong, and then all of a sudden you're scrambling to make a double.

I think walking up to those greens, I was accepting of the fact that just give yourself a putt of 10, 15, 20 feet for par, and I feel like I'm putting well enough that I'll have a chance to make those. That was sort of the mindset.

To hole two putts like that and keep momentum going, that was huge, especially on 5. It's a drivable par-4, you're thinking of making birdie on it, and all of a sudden you're scrambling for par. It was nice to make that putt there.

Q. Have you by any chance had any time with Lee Trevino?

RORY McILROY: Not much. No, not much.

Q. It was hard not to notice that some of your frustrations came out after that long wait on 5. Did that play anything into it?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, the guys in front of us were playing so slow. They were like a hole or hole and a half behind the group in front of them. So yeah, that was a little frustrating, too.



Q. You went on a little run after you started getting fired up; did that help you?

RORY McILROY: I don't know that waiting on shots helps, but yeah, I made a nice birdie on 7 and a nice birdie on 8, which are two of the easier holes on the course.

Q. It's obvious you want to get off to a good start, which is something you hadn't done much in majors before the PGA last month. How does it change things when you're able to do that?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it does. You feel like you're right in the tournament from the start of the week, which is nice. I'm going into tomorrow with the mindset of let's keep it going, rather than where is the cut line or whatever, if you don't get off to a great start those thoughts start to creep in, okay, what do I need to just be here for the weekend. It's certainly a different mindset when you get off to a good start, and yeah, I've just got to keep it going.

Q. Just how difficult was that second shot on 5 with the stance, et cetera, and just talk us through that and the reaction.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I feel -- again, you're going to encounter things at a U.S. Open, whether they be lies or stuff like that, that you just don't really encounter any other week. It's hard not to get frustrated because I'm walking up there going like, just come back into the bunker. The thickest rough on the course is around the edges of the bunkers.

So I was sort of cursing the USGA whenever I was going up to the ball, and then yeah, but it's one of those things it happens here, it doesn't really happen anywhere else. You just have to accept it. I gave the sand a couple of whacks because I'd already messed it up so it wasn't like it was much more work for Harry, and then I just reset and played a decent bunker shot, and then it was really nice to hole that putt.

But yeah, you're going to encounter things this week that you don't usually come across the other weeks of the year, and you just have to try to accept them as best you can.

Q. Since you have been described as the conscience of your sport, how do you feel about being placed on that kind of pedestal?

RORY McILROY: I'm just being me. I'm living my life. I'm doing what I think is right and trying to play the best golf that I possibly can. I wasn't asked to be put here. I wasn't trying to be in this position. I'm just being me.

Q. When you're an athlete known for keeping your composure the way you are, do you think it's okay once in a while to show that competitive anger on the golf course just to remind people how much it means to you?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, of course. Almost to remind yourself sometimes how much it means to you, as well.

Again, some of these reactions that maybe you saw out there today, whether it be hitting the sand on 5 or the club throw on 9, you just have to be so precise and so exact at this golf tournament maybe compared to some others that any little thing that doesn't quite go right, you're sort of putting yourself behind the 8-ball.

The margins are just so fine in this tournament, and I think you can sort of see that out there with some of the reactions.

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