

# U.S. Open Championship 2024

Thursday, June 13, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 2)

## Rory McIlroy

### Flash Interview



**THE MODERATOR:** Welcome back to the interview area. We're here with Rory McIlroy. 5-under 65, bogey free. How were you able to keep a clean card out there?

**RORY MCILROY:** Yeah, I think I was saying at the start of the week, my approach at the U.S. Opens over the last few years have -- I guess I've had some success by the sort of mindset that I've brought in, especially last year at LACC. The golf course is a little different to what it was last year, but still the same strategy, same mindset.

Just trying to hit it into the middles of greens and giving yourself chances every single time, taking your medicine if you do hit it into trouble.

My short game was good early on. I chipped in at 5 and had a really good up-and-down on 6, another really good up-and-down on 8. But apart from that, I think I hit every other green. It was a really controlled round of golf.

#### **Q. 15 greens in regulation. How important is it to stay pin high out there?**

**RORY MCILROY:** Yeah, that's the other thing. You've got to get lucky. I had a lot of really good numbers today where I could just go ahead and hit full shots. Whenever you're hitting full shots into these greens, the ball is going to stop a little quicker than if you have to take something off or hit little three-quarter shots.

Some days you have good numbers and some days you don't, and for the most part today, I've had good numbers.

#### **Q. At the Masters you were talking about watching Scottie and how he made it look so easy. Another big pairing today. Was it nice to be the one putting on the show?**

**RORY MCILROY:** I guess, in a way. It's not just the Masters that we've been watching Scottie do his thing. But yeah, absolutely.

I enjoy playing in these groups. When you've been out here for, whatever it is, 16 or 17 years, sometimes you

need a little extra to get the juices going, and being in a group like that definitely helps.

#### **Q. You referenced again that stretch of U.S. Opens where you didn't have it going so well. Were you not embracing what the U.S. Open is during those years, and what finally got you back on track?**

**RORY MCILROY:** No, I didn't. If you look at the U.S. Open that I did win in '11, it was more like a PGA Championship rather than a U.S. Open, typical U.S. Open setup.

I really don't think I embraced U.S. Open setups probably 10 years into my U.S. Open career. Played my first one in '09, and I think I really changed my mindset around them in 2019, that one in Pebble, and then since then I've -- I've also started to enjoy this style of golf a lot more.

It's a lot different than the golf that we play week in, week out. I really appreciate that, and I've started to appreciate golf course architecture more and more as the years have went on, and I've started to read more about it and understand why golf course architects do certain things and design courses the way that they do.

Just becoming more of a student of the game again, and I think because of that I've started to embrace golf courses like this and setups like this.

#### **Q. There was a lot of talk at the start of the week about possibly borderline greens. Tiger used the phrase "war of attrition." How did you feel the setup was today? Do you think they got it just about spot on?**

**RORY MCILROY:** Yeah, I think so. I think we got lucky, as well. There was a lot of humidity early in the day, and then there was quite a lot of cloud cover the whole way through the day so it kept the golf course from getting too fiery.

Selfishly for me, getting back out there in the morning, it's going to be nice. Hopefully the clouds clear away and it's a nice clear day for the guys in the afternoon.



But it definitely wasn't quite as fiery as I expected it to be this afternoon, which has yielded some decent scores.

**Q. I don't recall you walking in a lot of putts all that often, but on 18, you walked that one right in. How satisfying is it to have that walk-off birdie at the end and get a share of the lead?**

RORY MCILROY: I thought I'd left it short. That's why I walked off it. Full disclosure. It looked good, though.

I think there was a stretch there on the back nine, I birdied 10 and then hit a good shot into 11, made par, good shot into 12, made par, good shot into 13, made par, good shot into 14, made par, and I was on this run of hitting it to 20 feet and two-putting.

I actually had a good two-putt on 15. But I just felt like my patience -- I could have got a little impatience, but I felt like my patience was rewarded there with birdies on two of the last three holes. It was really nice to finish like that. As I said, a nice bit of momentum going into the morning round tomorrow.

**Q. Did you watch any of the morning to see anything about the golf course?**

RORY MCILROY: No, I don't like watching -- I just don't like watching coverage before I go out to play.

**Q. You had a great chance to win last year's U.S. Open. I'm wondering what's changed in your golf game and your emotional makeup since then?**

RORY MCILROY: Nothing. Same person.

**Q. Anything in your game, anything technical?**

RORY MCILROY: No. Not really, no. I feel like I'm the same player. I was hitting the ball really good. I'd say if anything, I'd say my iron play is maybe a touch better this year than it was last year, just looking at the stats. But overall I feel like I'm pretty much the same golfer.

**Q. This course obviously brings out some -- requires some different shots and puts you in some weird spots. What does it bring out in you as a golfer or in your game that you find exciting. Just gives us a different look than what we play week in, week out. It's different. It's exciting. You have to be a little more creative and imaginative.**

It sort of brings me back to links golf when I was a kid a little bit. The greens are a bit more sort of slopy and there's a bit more movement on them. But there's options.

You can chip it. You can putt it.

I'd love if we played more golf courses like this.

**Q. I know you always come into this week with a plan and some thoughtfulness. Is there a specific theme for this week that you've returned to mentally to reorient yourself?**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think just super conservative with my strategy and my game. I think with my demeanor, just trying to be super stoic. Just trying to be as even-keeled as I possibly can be. I really feel like that's the thing that has served me well in these U.S. Opens over the past few years.

Just trying to be 100 percent committed to the shots and 100 percent committed to having a good attitude.

**Q. You've often spoken about the need for good starts to major championships. I just wonder how gratifying this feels to have posted the score that you have.**

RORY MCILROY: Yeah. It's been good. I went through a run there for a while where my starts at major championships weren't very good. Probably got myself a little too worked up at the start of the week.

But yeah, even back to the PGA, I opened with a 5-under there at Valhalla. Felt like I played okay. First day at Augusta, even going all the way back to this tournament last year, opened with a low one. Wasn't quite as low as Rickie and Xander, but it was nice to open up with a low one and feel like you're right in the tournament from the first day.

Certainly the major championships that I've won or the ones that I've played well at, I've always seemed to get off to a good start, and it's nice to get off to another one.

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