

The 150th Open

Mixed Zone

Saturday, 16 July 2022

Rory McIlroy



Q. Well played again today. How pleased are you with that performance?

RORY MCILROY: I thought it was really good. I missed some opportunities early. Watching Viktor hole a couple of long ones early on. But stayed really patient. Got my first birdie of the day on 5. And I feel like my patience was rewarded around the turn with a couple of birdies and that hole-out on 10.

But overall, really good day. We sort of fed off each other, and navigated the last few holes well. It was sort of tricky coming in there.

So, yeah, overall, when you're a couple off the lead going into the third day of The Open and you go out and shoot a 6-under you're always going to be pleased with that.

Q. What was it like to play in that amazing atmosphere today? So many people cheering for you especially when the eagle went in on 10.

RORY MCILROY: The support that I've gotten this week has been absolutely incredible. I appreciate it and I feel it out there. But at the same time I'm trying my hardest just to stay in my own little world because that's the best way for me to get the best out of myself.

I try to acknowledge as much as I can but I'm just trying to stay in my process, stay in my own little bubble and I just have to do that for one more day.

Q. How confident are you of finishing the job tomorrow?

RORY MCILROY: I just have to just stick to my game plan, stick to the process. The more people bring up the result, the more I'm just going to harp on about process and sticking to my game plan, because that's the only thing I can do, and I've done that well for the last three days. And it's put me in this position. I just need to do it for one more day.

Q. There seems to be a measure of control about everything you're doing, even with the aggression that you can express with the driver. But you seem to have, even between the ears, everything nicely down low and under control?

RORY MCILROY: I'm trying to play with discipline. I'm trying to play the percentages. Where they've put some of these pin positions this week, it's about playing away from them, taking your 30-footer, knowing that par is a good score on a lot of holes.

And then it's about taking advantage of the birdie holes the drivable par-4s and par-5s. And that's been the key to this week and it will be the key to tomorrow as well.

Q. It's been, what, eight years since you've been in as controlling a position, if that's the right way of putting it, in a major championship. Do you remember what you used to feel like when you were in this position, or do you have a new philosophy, the new mature Rory that you are?

RORY MCILROY: I'm playing a golf tournament and I've got myself in a great position after three days. I finished off enough golf tournaments in my time to feel like I know what to do tomorrow.

Q. Can you take us through 17, second shot, and the Road shot?

RORY MCILROY: I was saying to Harry, if I had the lie that Viktor had I could have tried to play a similar shot and go with the pin or even go left. But it was sort of on the edge of an old divot. And honestly like if I went left with it, I could have seen myself put it in the burn over there in the left. So I tried to pitch a -- I had 127 to the front -- I tried to pitch a wedge about 135. And it just came out really hot on me and obviously got up and over the green.

And from there, it could have been way worse. It could have been up against the wall. It could have been anywhere. So to chip it onto the green and take two putts, I was happy enough to get out of there with a 5.

Q. When you played that second shot on 18 with the putter, is that what you would advise a lot of your amateur partners to do as well?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah. It's nice, you get the putter out of your bag a lot around here. Yeah, I mean if it's good enough for me it's good enough for anyone, I think.



Q. Do you think it's easier to play patiently because you're so confident in your own game right now?

RORY MCILROY: I think so. And I think it's easy to be patient around here, especially those first few holes because you know you've got chances coming up. You've got the par-5. We have three drivable par-4s.

And I played well going out, I just didn't convert the chances I gave myself. It was easy to stay patient because I knew I had all that coming up. But I think with how controlled I am and how much belief I have in myself at the minute, it is maybe a touch easier to stay patient.

Q. Have you played a pro event with this many drivable 4s?

RORY MCILROY: Not compared to this -- sorry, apart from this golf course? No. I've played a ton of Dunhill Links and another Open here. But no.

Q. We saw you and Viktor have to wait for one of the holes become and a bit chatty. Could you tell us a bit what you guys were chatting about?

RORY MCILROY: Talked about a whole bunch of stuff. Talked about footwear. Talked about what he did the last couple of weeks. He went back home to Norway. He's going back to Norway after this. Just kept it nice and loose.

Q. Do you guys know each other well? You'll be with each other 36 straight holes.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, we got very close at the Ryder Cup last year. And I played a practise round with Viktor when he was still an amateur at the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach in 2019. I've gotten to know him pretty well over the last few years.

Q. If the frame of mind isn't right could a guy let a putt like that get to you, like (indiscernible) did three or four holes in a row with long putts?

RORY MCILROY: Yes, for sure because every time I stepped up to my 10-footer and he just holed a 30-footer, I was like, uh. Certainly if the frame of mind isn't right then it could get to you. But thankfully today the frame of mind was in the right place.

Q. The hole-out on 10, was it as impressive to you as it was for us?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, that hole was sort of perched up on a little crown there. And I was just trying to get it somewhat close. I was -- anything inside 10 feet I felt was going to be a really good shot. It just came out perfectly. I think it was the first bunker I put it in this week. And it was a nice result.

But, yeah, I said in one of the interviews it was skill to get it somewhere close, but it was luck that it went in the hole. You need a little bit of luck every now and again, especially in these big tournaments. And that was a nice bonus.

Q. Do you expect it to be a straight shootout with Viktor tomorrow or will someone spring a surprise from behind, do you think?

RORY MCILROY: I think we've seen it all week. People can go out and 30, 31, whatever it is. I think for me it's expect the unexpected. But at the same time, I have to focus on myself. If I go out and I post a good number, I can't worry about if it's Viktor or if it's the two Camerons, if it's whoever it is. I just have to do my thing. And I've been doing my thing for the last three days and it's put me in a good position.

Q. When you holed the bunker shot on 10 did you feel it was a bunker-shot moment, that you almost had to quell your excitement?

RORY MCILROY: A little bit. I tried not to be too animated because D.J. and Scotty were trying to hit their tee shots on 11. I didn't want to rile the crowd up too much because they wanted obviously to hit their tee shots. But it was, it was a big moment for sure.

Q. You talked about in between shots drinking things in, taking things in major championships. Was there a moment there today that you allowed yourself to do that with kind of the crowds and everything that was going on?

RORY MCILROY: I think all week I've been trying to do that. The galleries have been massive. The ovations coming on the greens, with the big grandstands. Walking up 18 and that whole scene and trying to look for my parents and Erica and Poppy in the windows of the Rusacks, because I know what rooms we're staying in.

I think it's appreciating the moment as well and appreciating the fact that it's unbelievably cool to have a chance to win The Open at St Andrews. It's what dreams are made of. And I'm going to try to make a dream come true tomorrow.

Q. Why do you think you've adopted this process-oriented approach?

RORY MCILROY: Because it makes me play better. But it really does. Going all the way back to Augusta in 2011, I got out of my process. I got out of what I did for three days and it was a tough lesson. It was a really tough pill to swallow.

And I went to Congressional, and that's all I focused on all week. I sort of called it my little cocoon, just trying to stay in

my little cocoon for the whole week. And that's what I've been trying to do this week as well.

Q. (Indiscernible) that the last couple of years?

RORY MCILROY: No, it's just the golf that I've played within the cocoon the last year has been a bit better.

Q. How will you spend the next 24 hours?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, there's no rugby to watch this morning. Tomorrow morning, unfortunately. I watched two rugby matches this morning, which was great. Got a little emotional when Ireland won, actually. It was an unbelievable achievement for them.

Yeah, put the phone away. The tee times here are late. So I've been sort of taking a little midmorning nap the last couple of days. Just try to do the same thing again. I usually get to the golf course three hours before and do a gym session and get some treatment, physio and lunch and everything else. I get my day in pretty well with just keeping myself busy. And certainly phone away and just sort of get into my routine.

Q. Tomorrow, do you think you'll carry on being chatty and friendly or getting more serious with a major on the line?

RORY MCILROY: Certainly wasn't a lot of chat going on through the last few holes this evening either. But I think it's the nature of the golf course. And those holes coming in are pretty tricky. And it takes massive concentration as well to sort of navigate them. But, yeah, I'm not adverse to having a chat on the way around. It's fine. It probably keeps both of us a little loose.

But you can tell there's moments when to talk, and moments not to. And that was the case today as well.

Q. The experience at the top of the leaderboard, you've banked majors, they haven't. Will that matter tomorrow?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think so. But at the same time those players are playing great golf to be in this position.

So I'm not going to take anything for granted. I don't feel like I can fall back in any sort of experience. Just like being here before and I've done it. But nothing's given to you and I have to go out there and earn it just like I've earned everything else in my career.

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