



# Rory McIlroy

## Press Conference

### Sunday, April 12, 2026

THE MODERATOR: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It's a privilege to welcome our 2026 Masters champion, Rory McIlroy. Congratulations on winning the 90th Masters, Rory.

RORY McILROY: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Last year you completed the career grand slam, and this year became the fourth player to defend your title. Could you share your emotions after going back to back?

RORY McILROY: I thought it was so difficult to win last year because of trying to win the Masters and the grand slam, and then this year I realized it's just really difficult to win the Masters. I tried to convince myself it was both.

Yeah, just incredible. I obviously did the bulk of my work on Thursday and Friday. I don't think I would have believed anyone if they said to me all you have to do is shoot even-par for the weekend and you'll win. I definitely thought I was going to need to go out there and at least shoot a couple of under-par scores.

The course in the afternoon -- yesterday the course was gettable pretty much all day, but today the wind was up a little bit. It was gusty. It made things definitely a little more tricky, especially on the back nine.

Yeah, I just had to hang in there. I did a decent green session last night and tried to figure a couple of things out, and I definitely hit my irons better today. I think I struck the ball better today overall, which was good to see, but I still needed to rely on my short game those last few holes.

The up-and-down on 16 and the up-and-down on 17 were huge.

Yeah, just absolutely delighted to be able to get it done. Having a six-shot lead going into the weekend, it would have been a bitter pill to swallow if I wasn't able to get myself over the finish line.

**Q. Rory, the tee shot on 12, can you just take us through what you were trying to do, and if that was the line you were going for, what club you hit, all that stuff.**

RORY McILROY: It was in off the left. That was where the wind was. I waited -- this is going back to one of my first-ever practice rounds here. I played a practice round with Tom Watson in 2009, and he said to me on the 12th tee he always waited until he felt where the wind should be and then just hit it. You know, just hit it as soon as you can.

That's what I did on 12. It was all over the place. When I stood up on the tee, it felt like it was off the right, and I looked at the 11th flag, it was blowing right to left. But I was patient, and I waited to feel where the wind should have been coming from, and I knew it was just a perfect 3/4 9-iron.

I aimed it at the middle of the bunker. Probably didn't anticipate it to drift as far right as it did. That's why you give yourself a little bit of margin for error. That was a really good golf shot at the right time and probably a golf shot I

wouldn't have been able to hit yesterday if I didn't go to the range and try to figure a few things out and try to neutralize the ball flight a little bit.

Yeah, absolutely huge, huge shot in the tournament.

**Q. Congratulations again. You've given us something to talk about this year. Walk us through the third shot on 15.**

RORY McILROY: So I wanted to lay back to where I could put enough spin on the ball. You're coming off that downslope to a very, very firm green, and I thought if I left myself too short of a yardage, then a wedge shot could skip through the green, especially with the wind being behind our back.

So I laid it up to a number that was like -- I think I had 108 or 107 to the pin, trying to pitch it like 100, seven or eight paces short and just let it skip up, which is a perfect 3/4 lob wedge for me with that little bit of help.

I think sometimes like you're going off a downslope, it's in a little bit of a valley area, and with wedge shots in particular with the wind, instead of the wind carrying the ball, it sort of knocked it down, and it didn't carry anywhere near as far as it needed to. Thankfully it hung up. It was pretty close to coming back into the water. Thanking my lucky stars with that one.

**Q. Congratulations, Rory. What do you think this tournament and this golf course has taught you about life?**

RORY McILROY: Good things come to those who wait maybe. Just keep going. I find myself in a very similar position today to where I was in the last round last year, two or three behind, but I played solid golf after that.

I was 4-under for an 11-hole stretch there, which is what I needed to do to give myself that cushion going up the last. I just tried really hard to focus on myself. I thought, if I could get to 14-under, I thought that everyone else would struggle to get to that score. So that was the number I had in my head. I got to 13 on the last and had that two-shot cushion.

I didn't quite get there, but yeah, just keep going. Keep your head down and keep it going. If you put the hours in and work on the right things, eventually it will come good for you.

**Q. Along the same lines, Rory, this game has such odd mystery to it. What is it about this game where the player is never exactly the same one day to the next?**

RORY McILROY: It's very -- you have a lot of time to think. You're out there a long time. There's a long time between shots. There's a long time between rounds.

I think it is -- of all the big sports, I do think it is the most mental. It's the most challenging mentally. I think it's hard to stay in the same mental space for four days in a row because even -- I was in a great mental space, like say on the 13th tee shot, for example. All of my practice rounds up here, the weeks leading into it, Monday, Tuesday, great. I hit two left on Wednesday off the tee. Then Thursday, Friday, Saturday, I didn't sniff hitting the fairway.

So it's just there's little things that happen that just start to make you second guess things. It's just very hard to stay on the right -- not in the right spot mentally, but the same spot mentally for a long period of time.

**Q. I was just curious to ask how was it having your parents in attendance for this? How did that change the emotional experience for you today?**

RORY McILROY: I caught myself on the golf course a couple of times thinking about them, and I was like no, not yet, not yet. Yeah, it's really cool to have them here.

They missed it last year, and the first thing I wanted to do was fly home to see them because I obviously wouldn't be sitting up here if it wasn't for them. I had to sort of convince them to come this year because they thought the reason I won last year was because they weren't here.

I said on the putting green that I'm glad we proved that wrong, so they can keep coming as long as they want.

Yeah, it's amazing to have them here. I'm excited to celebrate with them tonight.

**Q. When John Carr congratulated you, I think his words were "Never a dull moment." Given you had a six-shot lead and then two shots behind today, did that hit the nail on the head?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I don't make it easy. I used to make it easy back in my early 20s when I was winning these things by eight shots.

No, it's just it's hard. It's hard to win golf tournaments. Yeah, especially around here. You've had maybe a couple of runaway winners over the years, but it always seems to be a very tight finish at this golf course. I think it's the nature of the golf course, it's the nature of what's at stake.

Yeah, like I walked into the dining in the locker room yesterday, and I sat with Shane and Tyrrell, and they were both saying, geez, like when we finished, we were like one or two behind, and then all of a sudden we're seven behind. I said, boys, there's a long way to go. There's a lot of -- a lot can happen in a golf tournament over 36 holes or even 18 holes.

I certainly didn't think I was home and dry after Friday night, and I knew I still needed work to do. But I still thought I would need to shoot under-par to get the job done, but thankfully I did enough.

**Q. Can you just grade the different parts of your game throughout the week? Driving, irons, around the greens, putting. I'm curious what is your conception of how you played versus how you think you could have played? I know things started to go a little bit awry here and there, but what's your overall assessment?**

RORY McILROY: I would say I felt like I didn't drive the ball great. I drove it better today. I would say I'd give it like a B-minus. I'd say for three days my irons were really good, Thursday, Friday, and today I felt like I hit some better iron shots. Yesterday was really poor. So I'd say I'd give that a B. Then my scrambling and my short game and my putting, that's what won me the tournament this week.

Even the chip on 17 wasn't that easy today. That was a really, really good chip shot. So, yeah, I'd give my short game and my putting an A-plus.

**Q. Can you explain the situation hitting balls Saturday night and sort of what you were able to work out and how that might have helped you today?**

RORY McILROY: My path was just getting a little bit too far to the right with every club in the bag. So I was just hitting too much of a draw. Then when the path is coming from that far inside, if you don't keep your body moving at all, the ball is just going to go dead left.

So I focused on hitting like quite a few cut shots, focused on really trying to open up my lower body through impact. When I do that, it helps me stabilize the club face and start the ball more on line with more of a neutral flight.

That was really the feel that I tried to get last night, and that was the feel I brought into today. Starting at the 1st hole, I hit some much better iron shots.

**Q. It looked like on 13 that you're kind of intentionally hanging back from walking up to your ball too fast. Just want to know what was going on there, and just kind of generally what was going through your head on 13?**

RORY McILROY: I don't know what had happened, but Cam was pulled in behind the hedges by a couple of referees to talk about something that may or may not have happened on the course. I don't know what it was about. I didn't ask him.

I thought, instead of me getting up there and waiting at my ball forever, I'd just hang back until Cam came back out. I don't really like that second shot anyway, so I don't need to be up there looking at it for too long. So I just tried to hang back -- you know, just so I could get to the ball and go through my normal routine and not be waiting up there for what I would feel like is forever.

**Q. What were your conversations like with Harry today, especially coming up 18 after your tee shot?**

RORY McILROY: It wasn't really -- there wasn't much to say. I think we were both just hoping that my ball wasn't in a really bad spot or behind a tree. I was just hoping that I had a swing.

No, it was pretty quiet out there. It was pretty tense. We were just -- I was sort of talking about, okay, after the 6th hole, let's try to get back to even-par for the day after nine. He was trying to encourage me, telling me there's plenty of time left, just try to keep hitting fairways and greens.

There wasn't a ton of talk out there. I think we both knew what we needed to do. I just needed to step up and execute.

**Q. You were pretty open last year after you won about taking some time to really kind of soak it in before getting back to the grind. Is this going to be the same or different, do you think?**

RORY McILROY: I think different. Different. Yeah, I said at the start of the weekend here I felt like the grand slam was the destination, and I realized it wasn't. I'm on this journey to -- I don't know, I just won my sixth major, and I feel like I'm in a really good spot with my game and my body.

I don't want to put a number on it, but I feel like this win is just -- I don't want to say a stop on the journey, but yeah, it's just a part of the journey. I still have things I want to achieve, but I still want to enjoy it as well.

I've waited so long to win the Masters, and all of a sudden I win two in a row. So I still want to enjoy it. I've got a couple of weeks off before I go back to play competitive golf, but I don't think I'll go through that lull of motivation or the sort of things that I was feeling last year post winning this tournament.

**Q. You've kind of avoided numbers goals throughout your life, but you have said you would like to be considered the greatest European of all time. I'm just curious, we'll debate it forever, but how does it feel to at least be in that conversation now?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it -- like today I tie Nick, so yeah, there's obviously going to be that conversation, and that debate is going to be hard. But it's a cool conversation to be a part of.

Again, it took me 10 years to win my fifth major, and then my sixth one's come pretty soon after it. I'm not putting a number on it, but I certainly don't want to stop here.

**Q. I just wonder if you can compare and contrast in the moment the emotion last year versus this year of winning here. Not just the moment you won, but the process of trying to win.**

RORY McILROY: It felt similar. I felt like I was a lot more controlled over the last few holes. I made really good swings, hit some good tee shots, hit the 17th fairway for the first time this week, which was a good swing, which I needed to do.

Once I got that ball up-and-down from the back of 16, I just said to myself on 17 tee, I just need four more good swings. I made one (laughter). But somehow I got it done.

**Q. And in the moment when you win?**

RORY McILROY: In the moment, I think when the ball trickled by and I marked it there from two inches or whatever, I just looked at the back of the green, and I give it one of these because I saw my mom and dad and Erica and Poppy, and I was just like I can't believe I've just done it again.

Yeah, more joy, more -- yeah. Not as emotional, but just, wow, it's amazing. I can't believe I did it again.

**Q. Last year you said you set a target of 68, I think, going into Sunday. Was there something similar in your mind going into today? Did it develop as the day went on? Were you watching the scoreboard more?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, same target. I thought, if I could get to 15-under at the start of the day, that would be a good goal. Again, late on a Sunday afternoon, the golf course gets tricky.

I think as well I set myself these targets because it means that I don't need to look at the scoreboard too much then. I'm really just trying to focus on myself. But yeah, after the poor start, the double on 4 and the bogey on 6, I looked up and saw where I was. I think I was -- obviously I had Cam there playing alongside me that I could see where he was, and he missed that short putt on 6 for par as well. So I was two behind going to the 7th tee.

I sort of thought, okay, if I can just get back to even-par through nine, then at that point I thought, okay, if I could shoot 33 or 32 on the back nine, I'll have a really good chance.

I think the setting of targets is just, it's a mechanism for me to not look at the scoreboard too much because I can find myself -- I was out there today looking at Shane's score because I was interested to see, if I didn't win today, I wish I would have been putting the Green Jacket on him.

So like I'm looking for other people as well to see how they're doing, but most of the time I know that doesn't serve me. So these targets are more to just keep me from looking at it too much.

**Q. You were behind Cam. You were behind Justin. You had Scottie breathing down your neck. At what point did this feel unlikely to happen to be a success story for you today?**

RORY McILROY: I don't know if it ever felt that way. I think, if I hadn't birdied the 7th and 8th holes, that I would have started to have to push a little bit. But I think the birdies on 7 and 8, Justin bogeying 11 and 12, I feel like -- and then me birdieing 12, I never felt like I was out of it. I never felt like I had to press at all.

I knew that there was some important shots coming up, but I really just felt, okay, if I just don't make any bogeys, if I just sort of limit the mistakes over these next few holes, knowing with how the back nine of the Masters goes and people are inevitably going to make a couple of mistakes here and there, I felt like if I was the one not to make the mistake, then I would be in a good spot.

**Q. Did Bob Rotella or anyone in your circle say anything last night that put your mind at ease?**

RORY McILROY: Bob and I correspond every day. We talked a couple of days ago, and he sent me a note last night, just a couple little reminders of things, but yeah.

**Q. Will you celebrate differently this time around than last year?**

RORY McILROY: I don't think so. We lose a lot more in golf than we win. So I think when the winning comes around, you have to celebrate it to the fullest.

I'll have a good time tonight, and I'll probably have a sore head flying back to Florida tomorrow morning.

**Q. It was stressful to watch, but you didn't look all that stressed or flustered yourself. What was the moment of greatest stress, do you think, during the day, and how did you get through that moment?**

RORY McILROY: I'd say walking off the 18th tee not knowing where my ball was. I think that was the moment of greatest stress. It could go anywhere. It could be anywhere.

There was a few others. I thought my second putt on 11 was huge to avoid making bogey there. That green, I felt, was a lot slower than the rest of the greens this week just because it was new and definitely different characteristics in terms

of the -- yeah, the slopes of that green are so different than what it used to be.

Cam and I both left our putts short there, but I held a really good second putt, which was a big point in the day, I felt.

**Q. You talked so much coming into this week about your preparation. I'm curious if this is the most prepared you feel you've been before a major championship and what you can take from your prep for this that you're going to try to implement moving forward?**

RORY McILROY: I joked last week and going into this week that this place feels like my home course. I haven't played anywhere else in the last two or three weeks really. I felt prepared in that way. I felt prepared that wherever I hit it on the golf course, I sort of know what to do. I know where to miss. I'm pretty comfortable with all the shots around the greens.

Yeah, I think it is, it's a good blueprint -- I said this earlier in the week, I'm not going to take three weeks off before every major, but to get to the major venues early, do your preparation, play. And not just play and look at things, but actually play. Go out there with one ball, shoot a score, and try to do it that way.

I think, when I've talked to Jack Nicklaus over the years how he prepared for majors, and he would go the week before, and he would simulate a tournament. He'd play one ball for four days, shoot scores. So then when he got to the tournament, it was sort of -- it felt second nature to him.

I did a little bit of that leading up to here, and I think that's certainly a good way to prepare going into the next majors.

**Q. You kind of essentially seized the lead in the tournament on Amen Corner. Just wondering what your mentality was going to that daunting three-hole stretch and if that mentality was different than you had in years past?**

RORY McILROY: I've always -- historically, I think I've played the 12th hole pretty well. I hit a good shot in there last year. I made a 3 -- I just stood up and made a really good swing and made a -- it's not a hole that you're trying to birdie. It was a bonus that I did birdie it.

Even going back to last year, I had that three- or four-shot cushion going to the 13th tee, and I started to be a little defensive. I hit 3-wood off the tee, tried to play it as a three-shotter. That came back to bite me a little bit.

So today I stayed aggressive. Even though I hit three really poor tee shots on 13 the first three days, I just stayed aggressive, and finally I made a good swing and hit a good tee shot and left myself an 8-iron in, which it could have been a more routine birdie if I had a better second shot, but I was able to put it down there to within 8 feet and hole that putt.

I think staying aggressive and staying committed, especially on those two holes, definitely served me this week.

THE MODERATOR: Before we go, could you take us through which clubs you used for the birdies and bogeys today.

RORY McILROY: Yes, absolutely. Birdie on 3, hit driver into the left greenside bunker, splashed a lob wedge out, and held that putt.

The double bogey on 4, I hit a 5-iron off the tee.

The birdie on 7, I hit a driver and a sand wedge.

The birdie on 8, I hit a driver and a 6-iron.

The birdie on 12, I hit a 9-iron.

The birdie on 13, a driver and an 8-iron.

And the bogey on the last, I hit a driver and an 8-iron for my second shot.

THE MODERATOR: Rory, thank you and congratulations on your incredible back-to-back accomplishments.