

BMW PGA Championship

Wednesday, 7 September, 2022

Virginia Water, Surrey, England

Wentworth Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

TOM CARLISLE: Delighted to be joined by Rory McIlroy here at the BMW PGA Championship. You've had four top 10s here plus your win in 2014 as well. How much do you enjoy getting reacquainted with the West Course?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's nice to be back. I haven't played here since 2019, and sort of COVID through a spinner into the works in '20, and even sort of into 2021 as well.

It's nice to be back. Even though I won this tournament in May, I've enjoyed it more in September. I think the golf course plays sort of a little better for me in September. It plays a little longer. I can hit a few more drivers.

But yeah, nice to be back. I'm on a little run here with Italy next week and the Dunhill a little bit after that. Nice to get back on European soil and play a few.

Q. What percentage of your FedExCup prize money would you give us if we didn't mention a certain topic in this press conference?

RORY McILROY: Oh, I want you to. I want you to. Give me it all. It's fine.

Q. What did you make of -- I presume you attended the player meeting last night. What did you make of what Keith said?

RORY McILROY: I didn't attend the player meeting. I've been in the middle of this for a year and a half, so there's no -- not no need for me to go but I know everything that's going on. Wasn't really a situation I wanted to get myself in knowing who was going to be in that room. So I sort of removed myself from it and let them thrash it out.

Yeah, look, I've been in the middle of it for a long time here and I know exactly what's happening and what's coming down the pipeline. So I didn't really feel like it was needed for me to be there.

Q. You said previously that you would find it hard to



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stomach the 17 or 18 LIV players being here this week. How have you found it so far?

RORY McILROY: It's been -- I mean, I haven't many of them to be honest. Look, it is what it is. They are here. They are playing the golf tournament. My opinion is they shouldn't be here but again that's just my opinion. But we are all going to tee it up on the first tee tomorrow and we are all going to go play 72 holes, which is a novelty for them at this point, and then we'll go from there.

Q. And I did want to ask a golf question. How motivated are you coming towards the end of a long season? How motivated are you to still get out here and trying to win more titles?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, no one has won the FedExCup and Race to Dubai in the same year, so that's something that I'm trying to go for. I've been close before. Haven't quite gotten over the line, so that's something that I want to do. I last won The Race to Dubai back in 2015. I haven't played as much in Europe as I did before that. But I'm No. 1 in the points list. I have a good chance so I want to try to make the most of it.

Q. Obviously with all that's been going on with LIV and it's impact on the golf ecosystem, what-have-you, we've heard you speak at length at how the PGA TOUR can react to it and how it's going to be going forward. We have not heard you speak about the impact on the DP World Tour. What do you see that impact being, and how can this organisation, The European Tour as was, counter what is going on at the moment?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I think, again, the strategic alliance or partnership with the PGA TOUR has been a massive help to The European Tour in terms of the prize funds that are going to be played for over the next five years, guaranteed prize funds.

I think that partnership sort of helps -- it helps the rank-and-file in Europe knowing they are going to be teeing it up every week and playing for more money, essentially. And you know, it's a pathway to the most competitive tour in the world.

You know, there's ten cards that are going to be allocated



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to European Tour members every year going to the PGA TOUR and that's such a great thing. It's a better pathway than there's ever been. I think about how much better I became as a golfer by going and playing over there. To have these young Europeans having that opportunity, I'm just thinking about Ryder Cup and the future, and like how much better prepared they are going to be for that. I mean, that's going to be such a great thing going forward. So I'm excited about it. I'm very bullish about it.

Q. But equally, obviously, you know, there's talk of 20 tournaments next year, with the 20 million, and that to attract all of the top players such as yourself. It then becomes very hard to see how a European calendar kind of fits in with those demands that you guys have signed up to now.

RORY McILROY: I mean, I think what's going to happen is 2023 is going to look pretty similar to how the last few years have looked but 2023 is going to be a bridge to 2024; '24 is when there's going to be a lot of stuff happening schedule-wise.

I think that's when you're going to start to see the benefits of this partnership. There's a lot of dominos that all, and you make one thing happen, but then smells happens over here. There's a lot of moving parts to this. I think by giving everyone 15 months to get their head around it and put their heads together and come up with what I think is going to be an unbelievable calendar for golf in 2024, I think that's a great thing.

Q. When those discussions are happening and you're privy to them, are you sitting at the table fighting for Europe's corner?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I am because if we are talking about 20 this and you canning about elevated events and brick the best people together, I think for the benefit of the global game, a handful of those events need to be in Europe. I've said that from the start. This has to be -- this can't be American-centric. This has to be with this region in mind, with wherever we want to go and play, I think that has to happen but I think the partnership between the PGA TOUR and The European Tour is mutual beneficial because I think by partnering with the DP World Tour, the PGA TOUR unlocks that global nature of the game that they have not really been able to get a stronghold over, and I think by partnering together, I think you're going to see more of that, which is great.

Q. Just going on from that, with the restructuring, is it going to be easier or more difficult for you to do a run like this one, three out of four weeks going forward?

RORY McILROY: I think what you're going to see is you're going to see probably the bigger European events incorporated into that January to August time frame. So I think it's going to, you know, the two tours are going to run side-by-side and yeah, am I going to go play in the, I don't know, Dutch Open? Probably not. But I haven't played the Dutch Open in ten years, not to pick on that tournament.

You know, you think about what happened at The Scottish Open this year, and that was a co-sanctioned event. I think you're going to see quite a bit more of that going forward.

Q. So overall, will we see more or less of you over here?

RORY McILROY: Probably the same. I think, look, three of the four majors are played in America. America is the -- it is sort of the centre of the golf universe right now and it has been that way for a long time. But if we can sort of shift the scales of balance to incorporate some -- you know, you've basically got three -- you've got here, The Open and the Scottish Open, really, are like three massive event over here. If we can sort of get that to half a dozen or pushing up closer to that double-digit mark, I think that would be a great outcome.

Q. You touched briefly on The Ryder Cup and you were very emotive in your speech at the end of the last one, rule all. Three of those players on that team now, LIV Golf members, I'm thinking of Westy, Sergio, Poults, incredibly disruptive in this period, your relationship with them does it survive and how does it survive going forward?

RORY McILROY: I don't know. I have no idea. I wouldn't say I've got much of a relationship with them at the minute. But again, like if you're just talking about Ryder Cup, like that's not the future of The Ryder Cup Team. They are -- they have played in probably a combined 25 Ryder Cups, 30 Ryder Cups, whatever it is. It's time that -- and that's why I was talking about these ten cards going to the U.S. and preparing guys to play at the top level of professional golf. Like that's the future of The Ryder Cup, the Højgaards, Bobby Mac, whoever else is coming up. Like they are the future of The Ryder Cup Team. That's what we should be like thinking about and talking about.

Q. Sure. But not sadness on your part or theirs, with a seemed an amazing relationship is no more?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, but like I haven't done anything different. They are the ones that have made that decision. So I can sit here and keep my head held high and say I haven't done anything differently.

Q. For some reason on social media, people question your loyalty to the DP World Tour because of your relationship with the PGA TOUR and your PAC role, etc.?

RORY McILROY: I'm loyal to golf, that's the thing. Golf was here way before we all were and golf will be around much longer. Golf is going to survive regardless. Like we are just a little blip on the continuum of this game.

But you want to make sure that you leave the game in a better place than you found it. I think that's where my loyalty lies.

Again, like I'm an ambitious person. I want to play where the best players are playing and for last decade or more, the last players have predominately played in the United States.

Q. Do you see a way back for LIV Golf players somewhere down the line if they decided that wasn't for them and they wanted to come back to the traditional tours?

RORY McILROY: I mean, they can always go through Q-School, yeah.

Q. It was very interesting to hear you say just now with a smile on your face, bring it on, in answer to Phil's question. You seem very comfortable being in the forefront of all this and the spokesman for it. Golf Magazine design has recently described you as the voice of reason and Seth Waugh, obviously a friend of yours, spoke very, very well about you and your growth horizontally as well as vertically. Why are you so comfortable in this?

RORY McILROY: I don't know. I'm speaking up for what I believe in. I guess that's the only thing I can say. Again, I'm speaking up because I believe in the game of golf, and look, the other side will say the exact same thing. But I don't see how having 48 cherry-picked players is growing the game in any way. There has to be pathways. There has to be meritocracy. There has to be -- you need to give someone the ambitious or opportunity Todd know that if they are playing on The Challenge Tour that whatever it is, in a year's time, two years' time or five years' that they can be challenging for major championships which are the pinnacle of our sport.

There is this pyramid and this funnel that has been so good for golf for so many years, and I don't think it's a broken system. So whenever something like this comes along that is incredibly disruptive and they are saying things about

how golf needs to change, it doesn't need to change. Golf is the most wonderful game in the world. It doesn't.

Yeah, could there be things that we could do to make it more entertaining from a TV product perspective, of course. That's something that I think we can do from inside the walls. I don't think we need to go outside of what we have already to figure that out.

But the game of golf post-COVID has been thriving, and I just want to make sure that it continues to thrive. It's incredibly divisive, and does it bring more eyeballs on to golf? Probably, because people are interested in the soap opera of it all, but that's not golf. The most interesting thing about LIV is the rumours and who is going and who is not going. It's not the golf right now. It might be at some stage, but right now what it is, it's the rumour mill that's fuelling it. So when you come back here and you play DP World Tour or PGA TOUR, you're watching the golf and you're watching who is going to win tournaments and have context and mean something. That's why I'm speaking up.

Q. Even by my standards, a pretty left field question. A colleague has asked me to ask you, if Jay Monahan came to you and said we are having a bit of trouble with The Presidents Cup, it's one-sided, would you consider playing for the rest of the world, would you play?

RORY McILROY: 100 per cent. It's at Quail Hollow. Have you seen me play Quail Hollow? I'd love to play. Actually I said that to Trevor many times. Trevor and I have even had some chats recently because a couple of his team have decided not to play for him, so I said to him, I'm available if you can get me in. I'm sure there might be some Australian or some South African in me somewhere, I don't know.

Yeah, I'd love to play if I could. But obviously that's not an option.

Q. If come Sunday, down the stretch, you find yourself in contention and the man to the side of you is a LIV player, would there be more incentive to win?

RORY McILROY: I mean, I'll be trying to win a golf tournament regardless. They are going to be pretty tired on Sunday; it will be the fourth day.

But no, look, I'll be trying to win a golf tournament regardless. My focus is I'm in a great position in The Race to Dubai and I want to finish the season off well because I think it would be a really cool double to do.

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