

Hero Dubai Desert Classic

Wednesday, 15 January, 2025

Dubai, UAE

Majlis Course at Emirates Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference



A Rolex Series Event



Q. We saw you very emotional at the end of last year when you tied Severiano Ballesteros with six Race to Dubai titles and you've now been awarded today with the Seve Ballesteros Award for being the player's Player of the Year. What's the significance of that to you?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I think the player's player of the year, the Seve Ballesteros Award, is very meaningful to the players because it's voted on by your peers that you play with and against week-in, week-out, and they are out there competing on the same golf courses and maybe have more of an appreciation for what you've done for the year.

So I've always felt like when you get those awards, whether it be in Europe or America, it's a really nice compliment from your fellow players that you feel like they really know what went on last year.

Yeah, it's really cool. Anything with Seve's name on it is really cool. I said it in the press conference, but I think as Europeans, we're so lucky to have him to rally around, whether it's at the Ryder Cup or just in general. Like he did so much for the game of golf, in Europe, especially. So any time you can get mentioned alongside him is obviously very important.

Q. What are the improvements you're looking to see from what we witnessed last year?

RORY McILROY: I would say short game was very up and down last year. I had some really good weeks, and then I'd have some sort of stinkers, as well, around the greens. I want to try to just get that a little bit more consistent.

Off the tee is great. That's something I continue to just try to keep as strong as possible. And then there's a few yardage bands. Like I felt like my wedges, especially at the end of last year, were getting really good with some of the stuff I've been working on with my swing. 175 to 200, that proximity was down a little bit.

So that's something I'm trying to work on. And then putting inside six feet was amazing, the best I've ever done from that range last year. Putting from like 12 to 18 feet, those sort of mid-range ones, that you hit it to that distance a lot for birdies, I could do with a little improvement on that.

Look, I always do a deep dive at the end of the year with the stats and see where I can improve. It's fresh in my mind because I did it last week. There's definitely some stuff that I can improve but it's little things. I feel like my game is in good shape, and the things that I was working on with my swing at the end of last year and continuing on to this year I think will help me with the wedges and my iron play.

And then I think with the short game, it's just a matter of just a little bit more practise and a little more diligence with what I'm doing and drills when I'm at home on off weeks.

There's always stuff to work on. We're never going to get it absolutely right in this game. I think that's why we keep coming back and trying to keep improving.

Q. Your game has proved itself to fit pretty much every test you can face across this sport but particularly this one. Why is that?

RORY McILROY: I think there's a huge premium on driving the ball well here. It's something I've been able to do over the course of my career here at the Emirates.

And honestly over the last couple years, I think that the setup of the golf course around the greens, like talking about short game earlier, but around the greens, I feel like I've always excelled in the longer runs, hitting the ones that just need to land on the green and trundle down to the hole, I've always been okay at those.

I think the driving, the golf course setup -- as well, you just come back to a place that you're comfortable at and you've had good memories on. All that sort of plays into it.

But yeah, I think first and foremost, just really comfortable on the golf course, and you know, the driver being such a weapon for me off the tee.



Q. TGL, new era and different look to what golf might be. What are your thoughts you? Were there at the first one with Tiger and you'll be there as we move forward, 2-under the belt now. What is the sort of purpose of it? Who is it for and what do you think of it?

RORY McILROY: It's to try to engage a younger demographic into the game. We're certainly not trying to replace tournament golf. This is hopefully going to be complimentary to what we do week-in, week-out, and if we can get some more younger people and people, that sort of TikTok generation into the game of golf and condense it into a bite-size version that they can enjoy and relate to in another way, that's really what we are trying to do here.

Look, we obviously understand that this is very different than anything that's been done before, and we also understand it's not going to be for everyone. So if you're a complete traditionalist of the game, it's probably not for you, but that's fine. That's not the audience that we're going for.

But it's been fun. The players have had a lot of fun. I think the TV audiences are starting to grasp it hopefully and starting to grasp of the format. It was Jupiter and L.A. last night, and L.A. won pretty convincingly. We're still waiting for a match that's really competitive going into the singles, and hopefully that happens next week.

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