

# Hero Dubai Desert Classic

Wednesday, 21 January, 2026

Dubai, UAE

Majlis Course at Emirates Golf Club

## Rory McIlroy

### Quick Quotes

**Q. 20 years, when you look back at the first one, 2009, your first win on tour, what are the emotions that that evokes and what does it mean to you?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it felt like I was waiting a long time for that first win. I lost in the playoff in Switzerland in the summer of 2008. I lost in the playoff in Hong Kong later that year.

So I'd been knocking on the door. I guess I was proud of myself. Yeah, just proud of myself, I kept my head down. I was working hard and just waiting for my chance. I got my next chance here, which is amazing. To win your first event of your professional career at such an iconic venue and tournament, and the list of winners and playing here as an amateur for a couple of years, it was a very nice one. Well, if you're going to pick -- I think if you were playing on The European Tour back then, if you were to pick your first one to get, that this is a good one.

**Q. Looking back at a year, what you would say is one of your career, career Grand Slam and away winning the Ryder Cup and everything in between, how do you now go about setting goals going forward and what drives those decisions?**

RORY McILROY: So I think -- I don't think I've been shy about the fact that there's certain weeks in this game that just mean more to me, especially at this point in my career. It's just making sure that my game is absolutely ready to go when those weeks come. But you obviously have to play more than that to stay sharp and to get your game in the right place.

So you know weeks like this are great because you're competing but you're also learning about your game and seeing what you can try to fix or get better at leading into the rest of the season.

I went through a stats review maybe three or four weeks ago after Australia, and stats-wise, you know, if you looked at my 2023 and 2024, they were better than my 2025, which is a good thing. The guys in '25 were incredibly



high, and obviously that's what made it the year that it was. But at the same time, there are certain things that I'd like to tidy up and get a little bit better at this year.

But that's constantly evolving. I've turned myself into one of the best putters in the world and my iron play maybe fell off at the back end of last year. It was very good for the first three or four months. So it's just a little things like that, and looking where you can maintain a high level and try to get a little bit better, and if you do that, this stuff usually takes care of itself. The wins will come, and getting into contention, and then it's really about just handling your nerves and the situation at that point.

**Q. So many incredible achievements across your career to this point. From your perspective, how much better can you be going forward?**

RORY McILROY: I still think I am getting better. I've said this -- I last won a major in 2014, it had been ten years, and I said to everyone, I really do believe that I'm a better player now than I was ten years ago. As long as I keep believing that and doing things to try to get better, or even if it's not to get better, to get better at certain aspects of the game -- putting would have been one of the weakest parts of my game ten years ago, and I've turned it into one of my strengths.

I think if you always approach the game in that way, there's endless possibilities in what you can do and how good you can get. But I do feel like I'm still -- I've reached a certain point in my career, and I love where I am. But every time that happens, the goal posts keep moving. There's something to achieve, something else. Until I get to the point where I see nothing else, I'll give up and do something else. But right now I'm obviously motivated to still try to be the best player that I can be.

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