

Men's Olympic Golf Competition

Thursday, 29 July 2021

Saitama City, Saitama, Japan

Kasumigaseki Country Club

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

Q. How would you describe the round?

RORY MCILROY: It was okay. I feel like I played better than the score suggests. It was sort of an inefficient scoring day, so I drove it into the middle of the fairway on the three par-5s on made three pars. From those positions I should be making birdies. But overall I played pretty good, drove it well, that's the best I probably drove it in a while. Short game just wasn't quite as sharp as I needed to be on those par-5s and a couple other holes. But yeah 2-under wasn't terrible, it wasn't anything to jump up-and-down about, but it was okay.

Q. Did it feel different at all today than any other tournament you played in?

RORY MCILROY: Not really. It's golf, you're going out to try to shoot the best score possible. Not really.

Q. Was there any sense of being in the Olympic games?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean I certainly feel that, I feel like this, you're part of something that's way bigger than yourself or even your sport. I think that's the thing that we're staying in a hotel and the U.S. basketball team are there. We got a couple of German athletes. We're on the range today and we heard that Ireland won the gold medal in the rowing. So we're trying to concentrate a lot on what you're do you think but you're also really interested in everything else that's going on around you. So I think that's the very cool part about it. You're competing in Olympic games but 30 minutes down the road everyone else is competing as well. I think that's the thing that maybe not being in the Olympics last time is that I didn't understand, like when your sport is in the Olympics and you're all a part of something that's a bit bigger than yourself, your sport and that's a great thing.

Q. You never played in a playing group like this where one of the guy needs to medal to an individual military



service. What was it like for you to be a part of something like that, knowing that one of the guys playing with you has pressure that's just different?

RORY MCILROY: It's funny, the one thing I said so K.J. Choi is a part of their team manager or whatever. I was sort of looking over to him, I saw him on the course a few times, like, geez, I'm sure K.J. would have loved to have played in the Olympic games to try to get out of that as well, right? That's a difficult one. I think they have to try to treat it like every other event and but it is, it's a lot of pressure on them and it's certainly a different culture than what we're used to, so it's hard to really put yourself in their shoes. But yeah, I mean it's not as if I was paying any more attention to Sungjae just because of that, but it's a, it looms over the event a little bit. Sungjae and Siwoo have a little bit more to play for this week.

Q. From a bigger perspective, bigger picture about pressure you won all these major, you played all these Sundays, you had to hit putts, drives, when it matters and that's real pressure. But this is a whole different kind of pressure. Without like saying like I understand what Sungjae is going through, could you even try to compare that kind of pressure?

RORY MCILROY: I don't, I don't know what -- hey, look maybe they want to do military service, who knows? Maybe they, you know, I don't know, I've never heard them talk about it before. All I know is that a couple of guys that I know of that have played the PGA TOUR that have went and done it they have come back and haven't rediscovered the form that put them on the PGA TOUR. So yeah, at the end of the day it's golf and yeah you don't want to lose two years of your career for sure. Yeah, it's just, it's different. It's very hard for me to put myself in their shoes and try to articulate what they're feeling or because I play golf for a living, I don't really pressure is not, like this is real life pressure, I guess. We have fake pressure in sports. It's not life or debt.

Q. Simone Biles the other day and in that press conference, I mean that was just one of the most amazing things I've seen in 30 years covering sport. You're someone who knows about having the pressure



of a kind of a nation on your shoulders wherever you go people in Northern Ireland and Ireland, they're big on to how you do and they are happy also, I mean, depending upon how you perform. I wonder if you can understand how she felt?

RORY MCILROY: A hundred percent. I think as well I -- so I live in the United States and anything that came on the TV NBC or commercials about the Olympics, it was Simone Biles, it was Simone Biles Olympics, right? So to have the weight of, what is it, total six million people combined in the island of Ireland. You got 300 whatever million, so the weight on her shoulders is massive. And just as I thought Naomi Osaka was right to do what she did at the French Open and take that time off and get herself in the right place, I a hundred percent agree with what Simone is doing as well. I mean you have to put yourself in the best position physically and mentally and to be at your best and if you don't feel like you're at that or you're in that position then you're going to have to make those decisions and but I'm certainly very impressed with, especially those two women to do what they did and put themselves first.

Q. It's kind of like when you go to the Masters it's a nightmare for you because it's the one you haven't won and you get all the questions about can you do it this time?

RORY MCILROY: But like that's a part of sport. That's a part of what, it's part of the job. Is it unpleasant at times for me? Yes. But I mean it's, that's just a part of what I do and where I find myself in my career and I think I watched the press conference where Serena was trying to describe how Naomi was -- and some people just have thicker skin than some others and can maybe just handle it a little better and are predisposed to handle it better, but some people have to know when enough's enough and I'm glad that at least the conversation has started. There's been a few athletes that have really spoken up, Michael Phelps, Kevin Love, Naomi Osaka, Simone Biles. I mean the conversation, it's not taboo anymore people can talk about it just as somebody has a knee or elbow injury, if you don't feel right 100 percent right mentally that's an injury too.

Q. Why do you think it was taboo?

RORY MCILROY: I think in sports there's still this notion of just like powering through it and digging in and you're not a competitor unless you get through these things. So I think that's probably part of it. But then when you hear the most decorated Olympian ever talk about his struggles and then probably the greatest gymnast ever talk about her struggles, then it encourages more people that have felt that way to come out and share how they felt.

Q. Have you had anything like that?

RORY MCILROY: No, not to that point, no. But again, as I said, some people are just predisposed to let things slide off a little easier than some other people.

Q. Things like the reading and things like that, were they preemptive though to kind of get ahead of it?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, definitely. I think as well I certainly have a few more tools in my mental tool box to deal with things than I maybe had a few years ago. Again it's just trying to put yourself in an environment that you can thrive in and that's the bottom line. And someone like Naomi Osaka was trying to put herself in that environment at the French Open and I think the whole sports world was behind her decision, I know it didn't play out the way she wanted it too, but it certainly started a great conversation.

Q. (No Microphone.)

RORY MCILROY: It's hot and humid. I spent the last week in Florida after The Open Championship, so I sort of got used to it. But, yeah, it's hot and you just got to keep hydrated and it was a long day too with the delay as well, so looking forward to getting some dinner and a good night's sleep and get back at it tomorrow.

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