

# PGA Championship

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Rochester, New York, USA

Oak Hill Country Club

## Rory McIlroy

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Two-time PGA champion Rory McIlroy is joining us this morning at the 105th PGA Championship.

Rory, welcome to your 15th PGA Championship. As someone who is very familiar with Oak Hill, can you give us some thoughts on the East Course?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, certainly a lot different than the course we played for the 2013 championship. I think Andrew Green has done a phenomenal job. I guess sort of restoring it back to probably the way Donald Ross wanted the golf course to play and to set up. I think he's done a great job there.

I think Oak Hill has always been a great championship golf course, and from my eye, which is obviously very subjective, I think that there's only been improvements to the golf course since the last time a big tournament was played here.

What I've heard from most of the other guys that have played, there seems to be some really good reviews of it, so I'm excited to play it in a tournament and see how it holds up.

This golf course historically has held up very well, so I'm expecting no different this week.

**Q. What have you noticed about some of the setup changes to the golf course for this week, especially some of those chipping areas like on 15?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, certainly more runoffs. I feel when we come to golf courses, it's either one or the other. You get a course with a ton of runoffs and no other tests around the green, or you get to a course where there's a ton of long rough around the green and no real runoffs, where I feel like this has got a nice balance of the two.

Especially around some of the greens, too, you've got one side where there's a big runoff down to say the right side on 15, and then you've got that long rough on the left side

and the bunkers.

You sort of have to pick your poison, what side you want to miss on and sort of what you feel more comfortable, the lies that you're more comfortable chipping from.

I think they've done a really good job of getting the balance around the greens, of sort of providing different shot options for different misses.

**Q. How will you practice for that shot on 15 right?**

RORY McILROY: Hopefully I don't need it.

**Q. Rochester likes to embrace anyone with a connection to Rochester. You have that. What has it been like for you, and what do you expect it to be like this week?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's been really nice. I got a lot of support out there yesterday in the practice round, and yeah, I certainly know this area probably a little better than most of the people in the field.

Hopefully that support will help me and give me some momentum as the week goes on.

Yeah, it's nice to come back to somewhere that you're familiar with, that you've got obviously really good memories and sorta good karma.

**Q. How much do you view this as a hometown event, even though it's not obviously that? Does it have that kind of feeling for you this week, that you're coming to a place that you're way more familiar with than other places?**

RORY McILROY: A little bit; not a huge amount. This golf course is pretty -- it's not as if I have a ton of local knowledge here compared to everyone else. The last two days are the most I've really seen of this golf course over the last couple years.

I wouldn't say it's a hometown event, but it's hopefully going to get some more support than most of the others in



the field, which is nice.

**Q. We're coming up on the one-year anniversary of the first LIV Golf tournament. If you could look into your crystal ball three years from now, where do you think the professional game will be?**

RORY McILROY: I don't have a crystal ball.

**Q. You don't want to speculate?**

RORY McILROY: No.

**Q. You said after the Masters that you needed that break that you took. Having done so, has that sort of reenergized you? Obviously it was a good idea; do you think that's going to work in your favor this week?**

RORY McILROY: I don't know. I needed it at the time. Whether it works this week or not remains to be seen.

**Q. In terms of preparing for majors, do you think you've exhausted all the different ways to do it, i.e., play the week before, don't play the week before, practice a lot or don't practice a lot on the course? Do you think you've gone through them all and now it's just a case of finding the one that works?**

RORY McILROY: This is my 15th PGA Championship. If I haven't done it all by now, I don't know when I will.

**Q. When you get away from golf now, what do you do to try and switch off and forget about it? What do you really like doing?**

RORY McILROY: I don't know, actually. I don't know.

**Q. Do you watch football or rugby or --**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, big sports fan. Obviously enjoy watching that sort of stuff. But I don't necessarily view doing that stuff as necessary to get away from the game. I feel like I've got a pretty good balance. I've tried to have a pretty good balance, and for the most part, over the course of my career, I've never struggled to get away from it.

I've always had a good balance. I've got other interests outside of the game which keep me occupied and busy. There's no shortage of that.

**Q. Are you going to do anything slightly differently coming in this week? Any tweaks or slight changes?**

RORY McILROY: No. Look, golf is -- you're always going to have your ups and downs in the game. I mean, I have

to go out there and just hit good golf shots and respect the golf course and play the golf course the right way.

But no, there's nothing drastic that I need to change. I've been working a little bit on my swing the last couple of weeks trying to get that back in order. If I can execute the way I feel I know that I can, then I should be okay.

**Q. Swing-wise, is there something X's and O's that you point to as maybe explaining the last couple starts and disappointing results?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, just club getting a little bit out of position at the top and then sort of the sequence of events that follow from there. Club face was getting a bit too open on the way back, really struggling to square it on the way down, and then sort of re-closure was getting a little too fast, throwing my hands on it, and sorta started to get the miss going both ways, especially at Quail Hollow.

So trying to sort of tighten the start lines up a little bit, keep a little bit more strength in the club face, feel a little bit more squareness throughout the swing. That's sort of what I've been working on over the last week or so.

**Q. Is the process of that still FaceTiming with Michael or --**

RORY McILROY: No, Michael has been in Florida the last week. He's here with me this week. Again, I'm certainly not a rookie at this point. I know what my tendencies are and I know what the feelings are to try to sort of get it back on a good path.

**Q. When you think about what you knew about western New York earlier in your life, did you have any impressions of it, and have you adopted any western New York pastimes such as the Buffalo Bills or any kind of cultural things around here?**

RORY McILROY: It certainly makes it easier to root for the Bills when Josh Allen is throwing the football. Not really. I didn't know a ton about this part of the world pre-2014, 2013, I guess, the first time we played here. I've only had one garbage plate in my life. I haven't went overboard with that.

Look, I've spent summers here, I've spent falls here, I've spent a few Christmases here. I really love the seasons. We live in Florida. We don't get that.

So it's nice to come up here and see the leaves change in October and have the snow at Christmastime.

There's certainly parts of it that I've really enjoyed and will

continue to enjoy.

**Q. Have you met Josh Allen?**

RORY McILROY: I haven't. I know he's a big golf fan. I haven't met him. I think he played Pebble Beach pro-am this year, but I didn't play there. Yeah, I'd obviously love to meet him.

**Q. Following up on that, you said your connection multiple times before has grown here in Rochester. Can you describe what that looks like, what that feels like to you beyond a memory and time spent here?**

RORY McILROY: I feel like I've sort of gotten to know what the -- I think when people hear New York, they think of New York City and New Yorkers, and feel like the people and the culture up here is not like that very much.

I feel like it feels a bit more like Midwest rather than like New York City. It's a little more of, I guess, a relaxed lifestyle up here, which is nice. A lot of outdoorsy stuff and you can hike and ski and there's a ton of stuff to do around the finger lakes. I've gotten to know all of that stuff, which is quite nice.

Obviously the connection here is family and extended family, and for the most part that's the extent of it.

**Q. Any additional pressure coming from that, or more of a hometown advantage?**

RORY McILROY: No, I think Erica has sort of taken on the burden of pressure, getting everyone tickets and things like that, so that's been her department this week.

**Q. I know when they announced that they were going to move the PGA to May, which was the one that could have been dicey on the future schedule. They're probably going to luck out. But in general, do you think they could maybe ever come back here for a PGA Championship in the future, and do you like the PGA in May as opposed to August?**

RORY McILROY: I mean, look, if we're guaranteed a week like this every time in May, then that would be awesome. I know we're playing Aronimink in a couple of years' time, which could potentially be a little chilly, as well.

Do I like it in May? Look, the only thing about May is that -- maybe in the future it'll start to exclude places like this in the northeast to host this championship, so that's a shame.

The northeast is sort of my favorite golf to play in this country. I love the golf courses up here and I love the

tradition, and a lot of the historic golf course architects started their journeys up here and have built some amazing golf courses.

It would be a shame if we weren't able to come back here.

I always liked in August that this was glory's last shot and there was a real identity there. Not saying that it's lost any of that identity in terms of its still a major championship, but I feel like having it be the last major of the year maybe just gave it a little bit of something that it doesn't quite have right now.

**Q. You'll face a pretty thorough test out there this week. What's the biggest thing this golf course asks of a player?**

RORY McILROY: Discipline, I think. You've got to keep it out of those fairway bunkers. They're very, very penal. What Andrew Green has done with the green complexes and sort of spread them out and you see all these extra sections, back rights and back lefts, I think it's going to be really -- if someone can keep their discipline and not start firing at those pins and know that middles of the greens is a pretty good leave on most holes, I think that's the -- it's a long golf course, and par and length is going to be an advantage.

But I think even more of an advantage is making sure that you're hitting into these greens from the fairways. It's a combination of everything, but I think discipline is going to be a huge factor this week.

**Q. Is it kind of funny how that works out sometimes, where you talk about it pre-tournament and the challenge of it when the actual rounds go?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, no, for sure. It's like -- I look at a golf course like this and I think it's quite similar to what we faced at Winged Foot in 2020 in terms of long golf course: long rough, pretty narrow fairways, but there's a lot of openings into the greens. You can run the ball up. The fairways are pretty firm and those aprons are certainly running.

There's two different trains of thought of how to play that. It's playing from the fairway and being able to get a little closer to those tight corners, or you can just get it up there as far as possible and try and run it up the front of the green, which basically most greens allow you to do.

Obviously there's a certain style of play that worked pretty well in 2020 at Winged Foot, and I guess, as I said, it remains to be seen what sort of golf wins this week.

**Q. When we spoke to you prior to Augusta, you spoke about sort of feeling like you had all of the ingredients in place, and obviously that week didn't go as you would have wanted, but how long does it take to get over the hangover of something like Augusta? And where is your game at now, do you feel like you're close in terms of title winning?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, golf is golf, and it happens and you're going to have bad days. I don't feel like the -- it wasn't really the performance of Augusta that's hard to get over, it's just more the -- it's the mental aspect and the deflation of it and sort of trying to get your mind in the right place to start going forward again, I guess.

I think I'm close. I think I've made some good strides even from Quail Hollow a couple weeks ago. I'm seeing some better things, better start lines, certainly just some better golf shots. A little more sure of where I'm going to start the ball and sort of a more consistent shot pattern.

But yeah, look, we'll get out there and see and play. I expect to go out there, and if I can execute the way that I feel like I can, then I still believe that I'm one of the best players in the world and I can produce good golf to have a chance of winning this week.

**Q. You mentioned earlier about sort of a two-way miss at Quail Hollow. That's obviously quite a terrifying prospect for someone in your position. Is that straightened out, or is that ongoing?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's better than it was. Again, like with the face coming down so open on the way down and having to try to close it so quickly to get it squared up, you're talking it's timing and fractions of seconds between the ball going 20 yards right or it going 20 yards left.

Getting a little more consistency with sort of face angle on the way down, that's been better.

I would expect this week to not have to deal with that so much.

**Q. You mentioned earlier about not having a crystal ball; obviously we all asked you a lot of questions about LIV, and you've spoken yourself recently about the burden of that. Is it going to be a conscious thing for you going forward to try and sidestep that narrative?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah.

**Q. At this stage of your career, what defines success and failure, and is that dynamic something you always**

**have to recalibrate?**

RORY McILROY: Like if I don't win another tournament for the rest of my career, I still see my career as a success. I still stand up here as a successful person in my eyes. That's what defines that.

**Q. Is there any insight you can give us to what you're working on in your mental game right now?**

RORY McILROY: Less expectations. Just sort of trying to sort of be in a good spot with taking what comes and not thinking about things too much, not getting ahead of myself. Just trying to go out there, play a good first hole of the tournament, and then once I do that, try to play a good second hole and just sort of go from there.

**Q. Do you like the quick-fire nature of majors now? They seem to come very fast.**

RORY McILROY: I think it's a double-edged sword. If you're in really good form, you can start -- it's not as if -- we've always had a pretty short major season from April to back in the day in August.

With this tournament now it's April to the sort of third week in July, yeah, I mean, I don't know. I don't know if I'd like to see them spaced more apart or if it's good the way it is.

As I said, if you're in really good form it means you're coming in and you've got four opportunities sort of back-to-back, especially I feel like this -- there's been a bit of time between this tournament and the Masters, but especially like here to U.S. Open to the Open Championship, it's like you can get on a roll there and get some momentum and you can maybe knock a few off in pretty quick succession if you're on your game.

**Q. Two-part question. Do you ever go back and look at events you've won, and specifically this one in 2014? Do you ever go back and watch it?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, sometimes.

**Q. There was a ruthlessness about the way you were that final day. Are you still that way?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah. I mean, again, I find being that way pretty exhausting in life in general, to be that ruthless and that -- it's not as if I can't get into that mode, but I don't feel like I need to be that way to be successful on the golf course.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time day, Rory. We appreciate it.

