

BMW Championship

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Bellerive Country Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference



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THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy to the interview room here at the 2026 BMW Championship. Rory is making his 16th start career start at the BMW Championship, our 2012 champion. Rory, welcome back to Bellerive. I know you've been here the last couple days and for the first time since 2018. Talk a little bit about the test of golf ahead of us this week.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I didn't -- I mean, I remember as I played the course yesterday and then today, like it started to come back to me a bit more. But, yeah, it's a, I feel like a lot of these courses that we go to for this tournament, the BMW they're like big, long, sort of modern golf courses, which I feel sets up well for me. Definitely this course gives you a little bit more room than Memphis did last week, so that's good for me at the minute. But, yeah, it's good to be back. BMW Championship I feel like they have done a really good job of sort of presenting this tournament all the way through. Yeah, I've historically done pretty well at this tournament. As I said, I feel like we go to golf courses where they set up well for me and I feel like that's the same this week. Obviously need to improve a little bit from where I was last week to have any sort of a chance. But the golf course is good, and looking forward it getting out there.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll take questions.

Q. In 2018 Brooks shot 63 I think in the second round. Tiger closed with a 64. Do you see those kinds of scores in this golf course right now?

RORY McILROY: I do at the minute because it's soft. Depending upon what the weather is over the next few days, if it does dry up a little bit then maybe it will present a bit more of a challenge. But I do think with how soft the conditions are the ball's not really doing much when it hits the greens. The fairways are quite wide and they will play just that little bit wider as well because of how soft it is. So, yeah, I could definitely see people go pretty low, especially at the start of the week.

Q. You've accomplished so much, what drives you to

try to win a tournament such as this?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think I've talked about this before, but I think if you come into events and you all you're thinking about is winning, then it's not, like there's a lot more to golf than that, right. It's not as binary as you win or you lose. I've had fifth place finishes that have felt like wins to me because I haven't played very well during the week, but I've got as much out of my game as I can. Look, if I somehow am able to put myself in a position to win this week, that would be amazing. But I think just seeing some progress this week from where I was last week would be a win for me. It's a process, it's a journey. Obviously you try to build up to those moments where you do put yourself in position to win, but I played 290, 280, 209 PGA TOUR events, I've won 30 of them. So there's a lot of times where you walk away where you don't win and you have to take the positives from those as well.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I need to start playing a bit better than I am now to have a chance, but, yeah.

Q. Scottie was asked about the possibility of LIV guys coming back and whether they bring value. In your opinion, are there guys that, if it goes away, that should be allowed back?

RORY McILROY: I mean, I would argue, have they brought value to LIV? You know? I think the PGA TOUR's in a really good spot.

Q. Obviously going into the Masters you didn't play for a few weeks and that strategy worked pretty well for you, obviously. Curious if you've had any difficulty with the balance of tournament golf and not tournament golf at this point of the year, or is just the Masters just such a different animal that you can't compare?

RORY McILROY: I think it's a different animal. I obviously played a lot up until I took the three weeks off. Obviously having to withdraw from Bay Hill wasn't ideal. Then playing with still a slight niggle in my back at THE PLAYERS wasn't ideal either. But, yeah, you're going back to a golf course that I've played since 2009, so -- and, yes, it's changed over the year, about you start to become very,



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very familiar with it. Yeah, I mean, yeah, as the years go on you try to, you know, life happens and things that you didn't have in your mid 20s you have in your mid 30s that you prioritize over golf, right. Prioritize things with your family or things that you don't want to miss. That's the stage of life where I'm at. Where, you know, not all my eggs are in the golf basket. There's other things that I want to do and there's other things that I feel like I have to do. Yeah, it's a balance. Some years I'll maybe play more, some years I'll maybe play where it's a little bit lighter. But it's just that balance of making sure that you play enough to stay sharp, but then also I guess having balance in your life that you feel like you're not missing out on other things that you want to do.

Q. Have you found that you have to though, you know, you took a break after the Open, you got to give yourself some down time, you've got a busy schedule after just these next two weeks. Is it hard to find that balance of practice, getting away from it, and even tournament golf?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I'm playing five of the next six weeks. So I'm going to play, over the course of a calendar year, I still play more than most of the top guys, because I play on both tours. But it's just, it's trying to find that balance. And then, yeah, trying to be home enough, trying to make sure you're home for -- it's Poppy's first day of school today. I would have loved to have been home for that, but I'm here. Just stuff like that, you know, that things I didn't have 10 years ago that I have these days. I'm in a different spot in my life.

Q. You were really grinding on the range yesterday before your practice round. Maybe out there longer than anyone else. Was that just you putting in work or is there something in particular you're trying to find in your golf swing?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I've definitely gotten into some bad habits in my golf swing over the past few months. Yeah, as you play tournament golf, you start, the golf swing takes a back seat and all you're really trying to do is hit shots and be visual and be instinctive. But as you do that you can start to revert back into some bad habits. And I've certainly done that this year. Like, I took some time off at the end of 2024 to work on my golf swing, and I came out early in 2025 and I played really, really well. I won three events pretty early in the season. I feel like that was down to the work that I did at the end of 2024. And I feel like I have to do some of that work again. So it's a bit of a work in progress. But I spent the day at home in Florida on Monday, worked with my coach Michael and Harry, and we definitely, I feel like we're heading into the right direction. But, yeah, I have this feeling in my golf swing that I just, I

need to, I just need to engrain, and I just need to hit a ton of balls while doing it. Whether it be with the head cover under my right arm or I've made a couple of clubs up with like different grips to try to feel like where my hands should be halfway back. So I just have to hit a ton of balls to try to get that ingrained.

That's what's hard. It's hard to do that for three hours on the range and then try to go on the golf course and play like that as well. So I think the more reps I can get on the range the more comfortable it will end up becoming when I get out on the course.

Q. Alex Fitzpatrick, he didn't make a start on TOUR until the end of April, is going to make the TOUR Championship. Just what you think of him as a person, and the play that he's been able to hit the ground running right when he got out here?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's been amazing. I've known Alex a long time. Basically as long as I've known Matt. We always knew Alex was a really good player. He played the Walker Cup at Seminole and I got to spend a little bit of time with him as he was prepping for that. Then he's been on the European Tour for the last couple of years. And, yeah, like he's always been very, very talented. He plays the game a little bit differently than his brother. Sort of approaches the game a little bit differently as well. Isn't quite as analytical as Matt is. But he's done fantastically well. I think that's where I would love the TOUR to be. You get these young guys, and you give them an opportunity. Like, Alex obviously got that opportunity. He played Zurich, won Zurich with his brother, but then was in the Signature Events. And I think he rattled off like three or four top 10s in the Signature Events as well. So, like, giving young guys a chance. I think the PGA TOUR U program is an amazing thing as well. I think being able to give -- and then you look at Jackson Koivun, Michael Brennan, Michael Thorbjornsen, you look at all these young guys coming through, that's an amazing thing for the TOUR, and I think the more young guys that can get that chance the better.

Q. Do you feel like it's just ebbs and flows of young players? Before that three-week stretch we had had a run where young players hadn't quite succeeded as much coming right out front. Now a month goes by and there's a bunch of 'em playing well. Is that just kind of the ebbs and flows of youth in the game?

RORY McILROY: I think it is. But I think the youth have to be given the opportunities. There has to be clear defined pathways. Which I think are there right now. I think that's a great thing.

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Q. Two things. One is a loaded question: If a player's won the Masters and the TOUR Championship, is that a Player of the Year resume?

RORY McILROY: (Laughing). No.

Q. No?

RORY McILROY: No. I'm not the Player of the Year. No chance. Scottie is.

Q. There you go.

RORY McILROY: Well, sorry, there's two weeks to go, but I firsthand watched him for the first two days last week, and he if he keeps playing like that, we're -- you know, if he gains nine strokes on the greens every week, we're all F'd.

Q. Secondly, given your efforts early in the development of LIV Golf, if they should, if this week should be its last week, do you take any personal satisfaction from having sort of, I guess, helped to win the battle, if you want to call it that, I don't know. How do you feel about it?

RORY McILROY: It's a hard one. Like, I think I feel like I've kept my position consistent that LIV has never been a good thing for the game. So, and whatever 2.0 looks like, if it even happens, you know, they say they're trying to be more collaborative and all that. But I, this is, this is the best platform for the top professional golfers in the world.

Yeah, were there some things at the start of LIV that the PGA TOUR could have done better? Sure. But I think that, you know, the guys that went, or you look, you think back to the start with, like, say, Phil was unhappy with some stuff or whatever it was. Like, surely that just warranted a conversation instead of blowing the entire professional game up and doing something else.

So I don't take any personal satisfaction of people like losing jobs. Like, that, that doesn't, that doesn't seem right. I've always felt like this is the best place to play professional golf. And I'm pretty sure if the PGA TOUR were handed 6 billion dollars it would have done a better job with it.

Q. You're in this baseball crazy town of St. Louis. In baseball we have the closer, and if he has a bad night, gives up a game winning home run, the closer always says, The key to my success is a short memory. I'm wondering, after what happened in Memphis, can you take us through that, is the key for you a short memory or how do you see that?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, absolutely. I think in all sports you have to have a short memory. Good and bad. I think if you, like if you dwell on your failures too much, that's a bad thing. But I think if you dwell on your successes as well, that's not a great thing either. Because every week, every month, every year there's new goals and new targets and new things that you want to achieve. So, yeah, as Ted Lasso says, Be a goldfish.

But I, but there are things that you need to, like I need to remember things from Memphis because I need to know what to learn from and what to work on. So, yes, you learn from your failures and then you try to do better the next time. And I feel like over the course of my 18-, 19-year career I've been able to do that pretty well.

Q. Would you elaborate on why you think the PGA TOUR's in a great position, and what would you like to see them do with the one and a half billion that they have?

RORY McILROY: I think they're in a great position because I think the emphasis now is on getting the -- like, people tune into the PGA TOUR because they want to see elite competition. And they want to see things that are meaningful and things that matter. I think with the creation of the 2028 schedule and things that the FCC are doing, with Brian and the rest of the team, I think like the weeks will be more meaningful and they will feel like they matter more.

I think also the closer collaboration with the DP World Tour, obviously the Asian Tour is now being brought back into the fold. I think everyone's started to work together a little more closely. Yeah, I think, I just think they're in a really good spot.

What would I like to see them do with the one and a half billion? I've said this to Brian, I've said it to people that work for him, Dhruv and whoever else, the PGA TOUR has got an unbelievable marketing platform. They're on TV basically every week of the year. I think if they could spend that money and try to own more of the golf space. You think about the recreational game, and how much that's booming. They had to get rid of a tee times business during COVID because the reserves got pretty low because of everything that happened. You go down the path of buying part of a tee times website again. You go down the path of like Versant, who I'm involved with, they just bought Full Swing, the tracking company, for 530 million. Like, if another, say a Trackman or a Foresight or whatever came up to buy, being able to put money into that, and then plugging it into this unbelievable platform that you have, the PGA TOUR, and being able to scale it that way.

So, like from a business perspective, there's a lot that they could do with the one and a half billion. I think they could own more of the golf space, professional and recreational. And now that all the players have equity in the TOUR, I think that's the way to grow the enterprise value of the business.

I mean, I think we all know that by the time the media rights cycle comes up in 2030, if Brian gets the same deal as Jay got in 2020, that would probably be a good deal. With the way everything's going in terms of linear TV, streaming. Like I, you know -- he's talked about this, NFL is going to take more of the media rights going forward with their deal.

So the other sports are really just fighting for the scraps that the NFL leave. So if he can get the same deal that we got in 2020, that would be amazing.

So, in terms of like growing the enterprise value of the business, media rights, sponsorships. Yes, sponsors are going to step up and pay for these Championship Series events, but that money's going straight back into, like, the tournaments and, honestly, the players' pockets. But to actually grow the business and grow the enterprise value, they just need to, they need to own more of the game on both sides, professional and recreational.

Q. Going back to your answer about the LIV players coming back. Don't you think it would help to have Bryson, Jon Rahm, maybe some other player, for the next media rights, to be able to say all the best players play here?

RORY McILROY: Eventually, yeah, maybe. But I don't think it's -- I mean, look, eventually they will. Look, if they play the golf and they, you know, I'm pretty sure -- I'm not part of these discussions, but I'm pretty sure they're not going to be welcomed back straight away. If they were offered this returning member program back in February, the one that Brooks took, then, yeah, maybe. But that has sort of come and gone. And I think it was said at the time that the deal that they might get going forward, if they do decide to come back, isn't going to be as good as the one that Brooks got. So, yeah, I would say it's going to be a tough, tough road back.

Q. Weird one here, but as a guy who benefits from it, do you think there's too much money in golf right now? Prize money, I guess I mean.

RORY McILROY: No, because I think it's whatever the market's willing to pay. And we're getting sponsors to step up and pay for these titles of these Championship Series events. So, obviously these companies see value in putting that money up. So, I don't think so. Again, it's, you

know, if someone is willing to pay that, then that's the market value and, yeah, so, no.

Q. I started there to get to this: As we go forward to whatever the post-season's going to look like in 2028, how much should bonus money, prize money, that part of it, be an incentive?

RORY McILROY: Well, I think, I mean, I think it's an incentive. We are professional golfers. Like, we're not just Bobby Jones out there, not playing for prize money. So, like, I mean, we turned pro to make money playing golf. I mean, that's a part of it. But I don't think it should be front and center in terms of, like, what we're talking about, right. Like, it should be about other things. Like, I think we should -- you know, I had a conversation with Brian about this yesterday. We should play into the history of, this is the Western Open. This was started in 1899. Like, we should play into that history. That should be what we are talking about when we come to these tournaments.

Yes, BMW are putting up the money and that's amazing that they do, and they support golf all over the world. But this tournament has so much history, and I think that some of that as we've gotten into, like, commercializing the PGA TOUR, has gotten lost. But I think there's a way to thread that needle and be able to do both.

Q. I want to follow-up on what you were talking about with your swing feels and how you said you built up clubs with different grips. Can you elaborate on what you were doing? Are you talking about a different grip, different wraps, changing where the rib is?

RORY McILROY: No, it's, so you know that Flat Cat putter grip? So you basically put that on a club at a 45-degree angle. So, like halfway back your right hand sits on the flat part of the grip, like on top, like where you would sort of want your grip to be, like where you want your right hand. I want my right hand on top of the club halfway back. So the Flat Cat just gives you that feeling of where it needs to be.

Q. And you hit balls with that?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, no, you hit balls with that.

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