

# TOUR Championship

Sunday, August 28, 2022

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

## Rory McIlroy

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to welcome the now three-time FedExCup champion, Rory McIlroy, to the media center here at the TOUR Championship.

It's been a memorable day at East Lake Golf Club to say the least. Just some opening comments on this day.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, you know, I got back out here today to finish my third round. I had two holes left and finished those the exact way I wanted to, with two birdies, and thought I'd be maybe three, four back going into the final day, and then he reels off four birdies in the last six holes, and I'm six behind.

Honestly, I wasn't really giving myself much of a chance teeing off in the fourth round. I thought silver lining was I was playing in the last group so I could at least keep an eye on what he was doing if things didn't quite work out for him, and thankfully I was in that last group because I was able to put some pressure on him early on, and then that coupled with him not having his best stuff today was actually -- I felt like going into the back nine, not that it was mine to lose, but I had all the momentum.

Going out today, I was like, if I can get it within three going into the back nine, I thought that that would be a really good front nine holes. I think we were tied for the lead on the 10th tee.

Yeah, incredible day, incredible week. 4-over through two holes, 10 shots out of the lead, at that point to claw my way back and end up winning the tournament, incredible. Just a real -- really proud of my resilience and how I sort of handled that start and just sort of stuck my head down and kept going all week and took advantage of the opportunity that I was given today.

**Q. Could you speak a little bit about the comment about Tom Kim overcoming his quad start? And also, wasn't resilience sort of the story of your season with the four top 10s in the majors and no wins? Was this sort of a fitting way to win?**



RORY McILROY: I thought so. Yeah, I have to give Tom Kim a little bit of credit because he started with a quad at Greensboro and ended up winning a few weeks ago. For whatever reason, that just sort of popped into my mind on Thursday.

Yeah, look, I've said all along this year, this season felt very, very similar to 2019. I played great golf. I had some good wins but didn't pick off a major, but I felt like -- Harry said it to me on the 18th green today. He goes, all the good golf you played this year, you deserve this.

Yeah, look, it's really cool to do something in golf that no one has ever done before. Obviously the history of the FedExCup isn't as long as the history of some other tournaments, but to be walking out of here three times a champion, it's very, very satisfying and something that I'm incredibly proud of.

**Q. Rory, I know you don't want to compare the three of them; they all mean something different. But given what this year has been like just for you not only competitively but off the golf course, does it hold any special meaning being able to do it here?**

RORY McILROY: I think so. Look, it's been a tumultuous time for the world of men's professional golf in particular. I've been right in the middle of it. I've picked a great time to go on the PGA TOUR board.

But yeah, I've been in the thick of things. I guess every chance I get, I'm trying to defend what I feel is the best place to play elite professional golf in the world. It's in some ways fitting that I was able to get this done today to sort of round off a year that has been very, very challenging and different.

Yeah, they're all sort of different. It's been nice. Back in 2019 I took down the No. 1 player in the world in Brooks Koepka. This year I took down the No. 1 player in the world in Scottie Scheffler. So I know that my best stuff is good enough to win any tournament against anybody on any golf course. That's something I can take away from today.

**Q. To stay on that theme, I know you've been asked this a ton, but is there any way that you could talk**



**about if it's been some kind of a burden, even though it's coming out willingly? You get asked about it a lot. You're a four-time major champion, a former World No. 1, and people are looking at you as the guy who's kind of the loudest voice. Does that wear on you after a while?**

RORY McILROY: No, I don't think so, because if you believe in something I think you have to speak up, and I believe very strongly about this. I really do.

I hate what it's doing to the game of golf. I hate it. I really do. Like it's going to be hard for me to stomach going to Wentworth in a couple of weeks' time and seeing 18 of them there. That just doesn't sit right with me.

So yeah, I feel strongly. I believe what I'm saying are the right things, and I think when you believe that what you're saying is the right things, you're happy to stick your neck out on the line.

**Q. Do you get any sense that those who also believe strongly almost defer to you?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, in a way, I guess. Yeah. I don't mind that, though.

**Q. Apologies for dumbing down this conversation, but I did want to ask you about that chip on 16 if you don't mind. What were you hoping for, and what did you see when it was coming out?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it came out a little hot and a little further left than -- a little hot and a little further left than I wanted it to. With whatever way the green was, it was obviously very lucky to hit the pin, but I thought for -- I was certain it was going to miss the hole on the left-hand side. But just sort of the grain held it and it hit the pin, and it obviously ended up being closer than it would have.

But I took advantage of that little break with a good putt to make par there, and that was the first time in the whole tournament that I had the outright lead. On the 70th hole is a nice time to take the lead of a golf tournament.

Yeah, or the 52nd hole if you play somewhere else.

Yeah, so all good.

**Q. Scottie said that a lot of the emotion afterward was not because of the amount of money at stake but because of the prestige and just because of the title. Having now won this three times, can you relate to that sentiment at all?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, a hundred percent. I think no one -- Scottie Scheffler is going to win the Player of the Year. There's no doubt about that. You know, it would have been fitting for him to end his breakout season with a FedExCup title.

I think he deserved -- he deserves this maybe more than I deserve it. He played an unbelievable season. He didn't have his best stuff today, and I played well and took advantage of that.

Scottie will have plenty more chances to win FedExCups. Hell of a player, hell of a competitor. Even better person. Love his family.

Look, it's hard. You don't really know what to say on the 18th green because he's had such a great year, but he'll be back, and he's a great player, and I told him this certainly isn't the last time that we're going to have these battles on the golf course.

**Q. How will you celebrate and just totally get away from the game of golf?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I have a whopping one week off coming up and then I go to Europe for three out of four weeks, playing quite a bit over there. But maybe that's a little less intense than what we've just been through the last three weeks in the Playoffs here. Yeah, I've got a little bit of downtime sort of November, December, and I'm looking forward to that.

Again, I think when you win and when you do things, it energizes you more than anything else. It makes you want to do it more.

Look, it's been a long few weeks and I'm looking forward to just chilling for a few days, but yeah, it gets you excited to get out there and play again because you're playing well and you want to have this feeling more often.

**Q. Do you think golf is a little more stable next year and that you can maybe get back to just focusing on tournaments?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, that would be lovely. I think it probably will. I think after today, I'm not sure what -- I've been out on the golf course and I don't really know what's been going on, but yeah, I think, as well, I just need to -- as much as I'm a willing participant in all of this, I sometimes do need to remove myself for the sake of my golf game, and I tried to do that.

We had a board call on Tuesday morning here and then had all the announcements up here on Wednesday, and

then once that was over and done with, I was like, I just need to focus on playing good golf this week. Just trying to find that balance, and I was able to find it this week.

**Q. You mentioned obviously a lot going on outside of the TOUR, obviously, and then coming into this final round being down seven strokes, what do you use to focus, to lock in, to make the kind of run you did today?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, again, as I said at the start, I didn't really give myself much of a chance going out in the final round there. My focus was to try to get within three of Scottie going into the back nine. That sort of happened pretty quickly.

Then I hit a terrible shot into the first hole and made bogey, but didn't lose any ground because Scottie three-putted that first. It was sort of a slow start for both of us, but then I sort of kicked it into gear and made some nice birdies after that.

Yeah, as I said, I think once I got to the back nine and we were tied, then it's a different mindset. You have to reframe. You have to think about things a little differently.

I played a good back nine. I didn't play a great back nine, but I holed a couple of really crucial putts at the right time, especially that long one across the 15th green and then getting that little stroke of luck on 16, and those are the sort of things you need to happen to win golf tournaments, especially when you're starting the day six shots back.

**Q. How did you avoid or did you have any kind of a hangover after The Open, and how do you pick yourself back up from that really in pretty short time to have to try to focus on this again after that?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I took two weeks off from golf. After that we went down to -- myself, Erica and Poppy, we went down to London, spent two weeks in London after The Open, around the London area, and I just sort of got away from it.

Yeah, there's nothing really you can do. You find yourself sitting there and thinking about it or thinking back on things, but I guess at that point, I started to get pretty involved with some of the plans that like Tiger and I were coming up with, so I was able to jump into something else that sort of took my mind off it, as well.

It was nice to have the family time, but it was also nice to stay busy and keep my mind active with other things, as well.

**Q. I think Scottie said the two of you had lunch together before going out. What do you discuss before you go out and play for \$18 million?**

RORY McILROY: We talked about the restaurants in Dubai. We were talking -- Collin Morikawa and I were talking sort of about our schedules going forward, and Scottie sat down, and we were just talking about Dubai at the end of the year and sort of just trying to describe the place to Scottie in a way. I'm trying to think what else we talked about.

I don't know, I mean, anything but the golf and the money. I mean, we were just sitting there having a conversation.

We've seen a lot of each other this week. The physios we use are set up in the same room in the clubhouse, so we see each other getting treatment and all sorts of stuff.

But yeah, that's one of the cool things about the game. You can sit down with a competitor before you go out to play and have a bite to eat and have a chat, and it's fine. It's actually quite refreshing.

**Q. If you stop to think about the two Sundays you've had in Georgia this year and the way you've flipped the top of the scoreboard, how would you contrast the experiences?**

RORY McILROY: I think similarly happy leaving both venues. You know, I obviously didn't get the win at Augusta, but I played a great final round. As I said, it was one of the only Sunday evenings driving back from Augusta National where I've had a smile on my face.

I've driven away from East Lake quite a few times with a smile on my face.

Yeah, in a way sort of similar, but I said to Scottie we're 1-1 in Georgia. He got the one in April and I got this one, and we'll do it all over again in a few months' time.

**Q. At what point today did you sense that this wasn't going to be -- that Scottie was off his game?**

RORY McILROY: Probably the three-putt on 1. I thought that was -- he left the first putt six feet short, and then he missed the one -- yeah, I'd say that the putt on 1, and then he hit a tee shot on 4 that just didn't seem like a Scottie Scheffler drive.

I guess those two sort of made me think that I probably had a chance after that.

**Q. You've won from ahead, you've won from behind,**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**but why do you think you thrive so well as the chaser?**

RORY McILROY: Because I think out of anyone in the field, I care the least about the money. That's probably it.

**Q. You go back a few days ago, you're up here and you're part of a big presentation and you're being asked all these outside questions that have nothing to do with your game, and then you play and you go into today and you said you don't feel like you have a chance, and then a few hours later you're on 18 green. I think to anyone here, that seems like it would be a crazy whirlwind. To you, is that -- how do you describe those five days?**

RORY McILROY: So yeah, in a way, it's my life. I don't really know any different. In all honesty, golf has been the escape for me over the last few weeks. It's been, I get inside the ropes, no one can get to me, and it's my escape from this other stuff that's going on.

But yeah, I mean, I guess I'm able to switch on and off pretty well, and I can compartmentalize things, and whatever we're talking about with Scottie before we go out to play, I can leave it there and go and just try to focus on the task at hand.

I've had to learn that the hard way over the years, too, but I've had a lot of experience, and this is my 15th year on TOUR. I have a lot of good experiences, bad experiences, things to learn from, and I think just all of that combined helps me sort of navigate where we are right now.

**Q. In a game that's so hyper individualistic, what's this summer been like when everyone is kind of in everyone else's business and wondering what you're doing, and it almost got tribal, if that's the right word?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it has got a little tribal. I certainly have that feeling at times.

Yeah, it's been different. But in a way, there's been a really -- there's been a great thing that's happened, and that's that the 20 whatever of us that met in that room in Delaware all committed, most of us, maybe 22 out of the 23, committed to each other and committed to guys, what can we do to make the TOUR the best possible product so that we can all benefit.

I think that was a huge turning point in all of this, and I think all of us getting on the same page, that -- look, there's opportunity in every challenge, and that was an opportunity for us to all get together. And as you said, it is so individualized, but how can we all sort of work together to move the thing forward.

**Q. For someone who's accomplished what you have in golf, what's more valuable to you, the \$18 million or having won that?**

RORY McILROY: Having won. I mean, there's a lot of cool things that come along with winning the FedExCup. The trophy, I have three sterling silver Calamity Jane replicas in my house, which is really cool. To think about here at East Lake and Bobby Jones, the greatest amateur player to ever play the game, the sort of history and traditions of the game of golf. He sort of exemplified all that.

Look, the money is the money. It's great, and we are professional golfers, we play golf for a living. That is a part of it. But I think at this point in my career, the winning and the journey and the emotions and who I do it with mean more than the check.

**Q. Secondly, as it relates to Scottie, can you think back to '14 when you had a pretty decent year and came in as the top seed and had Player of the Year and didn't win the FedExCup? Did it feel like as big a let-down, and how long did it take you to realize you had a Claret Jug and a Wanamaker Trophy and all that good stuff?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's harder at the time. I think with the luxury of hindsight -- I came in here No. 1 seed in 2012; didn't win. Came in here No. 1 seed in 2014; didn't win.

But the more times -- look, Jack Nicklaus won 18 major championships, but he's had 37 seconds and thirds, so the more times you just put yourself in the position, the law of averages suggests that you're going to get it done at some point, and that's sort of what I've done in this tournament.

I just put myself in position each and every year, and whenever -- you'll take your opportunities some years; some years you won't. But if you just keep putting yourself there, you're bound to end up with a few of them.

**Q. Rory, you had that great moment with Poppy at the PGA Championship where you told her, hey, that's when daddy was good, and since then you've won twice and obviously a lot of other things this season. Do you think you can look at her and be like, hey, I think daddy is good again?**

RORY McILROY: I think daddy was still good at that point, but maybe a little better now than he was a few months ago.

Yeah, look, I want my daughter to see me play well and



win golf tournaments, and I want to be the best version of myself in front of her. There's a part of that that's being a father and being a husband, but it's also being a golfer is a huge part of my life, so I want her to be proud of who I am as a golfer, too.

Look, there was truth in that statement, but she probably just went to bed now, so I'll see her in the morning, but it's cool to be able to do these things and celebrate it with them and make it known that they're a part of the journey and they're so valuable to all of this, as well.

**Q. Remember the last time you won that trophy in 2019, you weren't able to celebrate properly because you needed to hop on a plane going to Switzerland in order to play the tournament there. You were just talking about celebration; can you share some thoughts how you want to celebrate this third trophy tonight? Maybe you double it because you couldn't do it last time properly?**

RORY McILROY: Maybe tomorrow when we get home. We'll stay here tonight in Atlanta. It'll probably be a quiet night. But I had a conversation with Shane Lowry yesterday, and it's Poppy's birthday on Wednesday and his kids are going to come around our house for Poppy's birthday.

He said, I'll see you next week and we can celebrate with the FedExCup. I was like, yeah, whatever. I was eight back at the time. I was like, yeah, I'll just see you next week.

Lo and behold, we might find a few really nice bottles of red wine tomorrow night in my wine cellar and open them up and have a good time.

**Q. Shane knows how to celebrate.**

RORY McILROY: He does. He'll lead me in the right direction.

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