

TOUR Championship

Saturday, August 29, 2026

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

Q. How were you able to turn it around here in the third round after the first two rounds? Nine birdies today and a 63 to battle your way back into this tournament.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think the difference today was I just putted a bit better. I putted a lot better. I think I lost maybe a combined three on the greens over the first two days and I probably gained over three on the greens today. So back to sort of even for the week.

The ball striking has been there. I think I was second in ball striking to Gary Woodland the first couple days. It was another good display today. Hit some nice iron shots, drove it well for the most part.

Look, it doesn't -- I still felt like I played okay the last couple days, just wasn't getting as much out of my game as I wanted to. I pieced it together today and ended up obviously with a better score.

Q. Maybe had to save a par at 9 as well. That was pretty impressive. Now you look to Sunday for a chance to win this trophy for the fourth time.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I got myself back in the tournament. We'll see what happens. We'll see how the leaders play the back nine. I feel like, if I'm within three or four of the lead going into tomorrow, we've seen what Cam did yesterday with a 62, goes out early. Bob did the same thing today with a 63, I shot a 63. There are scores out there.

If I'm like a few groups before the leaders go out, maybe I can get off to a fast start and at least give them something to think about.

Q. Many congratulations on a great round. How important is it that you've got yourself in the mix now? You're really in a position to potentially go on and win this for a fourth time, the FedExCup?

RORY McILROY: Look, it's great to have another



opportunity. I played in the final group last week with Wyndham and got myself in a really good position to try to win the tournament, and it didn't quite happen. To shoot a good one today to get myself right back in there second week in a row to try to win a tournament, they're good steps, positive steps, steps in the right direction.

Yeah, it's the last round of the PGA TOUR season. I've still got a lot of golf left this year, but it will be nice to go out and give it a really good run tomorrow to finish this season over in the States.

Q. We know you love playing golf in Georgia, a very special state to you. What is it that brings out the best in you in Georgia as a whole, but also this course as well?

RORY McILROY: I don't know. It has, Georgia's been good to me. I've won five times, I guess. I don't know, I've actually struggled on this course since it was redone a couple years ago, and I just am slowly figuring it out as the years go on and getting a little better at it.

Yeah, I think any time you go back to a place with good memories, you always seem to do a little bit better.

Q. Anything behind the putting improvement other than --

RORY McILROY: Honestly, I feel like I just left myself in better spots on the greens. I gave myself easier putts, putts that didn't break two ways, and I didn't have a ton -- I felt like, when I got it rolling there on the back nine, every putt was like a cup right or a cup left and feed it down the hill and led it. So I left myself simpler putts.

Q. I was just going to ask you, given your history with points, with starting strokes, with all the different formats, there had to have been a time where people after one day said it ain't happening. They were a long shot to begin with. They were a billion points behind or whatever. It just feels really, really more bunched than I'm used to seeing. I know the wind's not blowing but --

RORY McILROY: I think it's the golf course.

Q. Just the fact that it's doable?



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RORY McILROY: Well, I feel the old golf course before it was redone, it used to spread the field more, where this golf course is wider, the penalties of missing aren't maybe quite as high. So that's where you get the bunching of the leaders, a bit like Aronimink.

This tournament feels a lot like Aronimink over at the PGA, where there's a lot of people around the lead. It feels like you can make some birdies, but it's -- it's like a good score is 67 and a bad score is 71. There's like not a lot of separation of the field.

I think it's just because the big greens, the bigger targets, the bigger fairways, that sort of limits the amount of separation that you can have throughout the field, I think, especially when you get 30 of the best players in the world.

Q. That first day, 70 was last place.

RORY McILROY: Yeah.

Q. Have you ever seen that before here?

RORY McILROY: No, I've never seen before where last place is under par. It speaks to the standard of the golfers that are here, but it also speaks to the slightly different test that we are getting after the redesign as well.

Q. Talking about scores, what will be a winning one, do you guess?

RORY McILROY: It really depends on what the guys do this afternoon on the back nine. I would say, if I were to go out tomorrow and shoot the same score as I did today, I'd say that would have a very, very good chance.

Q. I know the format here is going to change in a couple years, TOUR Championship at least, but when you look and you see Scottie up there, Gotterup, Young, everyone, does this kind of feel like when they switched back to this format, like this is kind of what they were hoping to get?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, but I mean, it's not as if we didn't have that before. With the start, you had the best players of the year were up there and consistently stayed up there. I'm thinking like --

Q. There's just ten of them up there now, I guess. There's just a bunch of them up there now.

RORY McILROY: In '22, it was me and Scottie. '23 it was Viktor. '24 it was Scottie. I think this tournament, no matter what format it has been, it seems like they do a

good job of having the cream rise to the top.

Obviously there's been a lot of different iterations of it. This is a wonderful event, like on its own. It may be with the way the format is here now, it makes the events leading up to it less -- I don't want to say less meaningful, but less important in terms of everyone starts equal here, so it doesn't really matter as long as you're in the top 30.

Yeah, I think it's a good track. It's 30 of the best players in the world, and there's a lot to play for. So you're going to get the best guys up near the top.

Q. Earlier this week you talked a little bit about working with Brian on like Europe and some of those sorts of things behind the scenes. How would you characterize your relationship with the PGA TOUR and its direction right now compared to maybe what you did in the past?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I feel like I've formed a really good relationship with Brian without having it take up as much of my time as it has done before with being on the board or being on certain committees and stuff. I appreciate that he keeps me in the loop with everything.

Obviously there's been some extra conversations this year just about membership and minimums and all that, but we figured that out, which is fine.

But going forward, I think the PGA TOUR's commitment to the DP World Tour is wonderful, and some of the things and tournaments that they're trying to create at the end of the year, that's really, really exciting for a dual member especially, someone that is proud of coming from what once was the European Tour and trying to elevate some of these national opens and international golf.

So I certainly appreciate the willingness of Brian and the entire sort of team at the PGA TOUR to help elevate those and make them bigger and better tournaments.

Q. Over the course of your career, what do you think is the biggest thing you've learned just about maintaining stamina throughout a long golf season?

RORY McILROY: I think once you start to lose your enthusiasm to go to the course, it's time to take a break. Yeah, that would be my -- yeah, there's been -- look, I've turned up to events that I haven't necessarily wanted to be there because I feel like I should be there, and I've never -- like I never play my -- like if I'm going to show up to a tournament, I want to perform at my best and play my best, and there's been times when I haven't done that.



It's frustrating to me, but it's also at the same time like no one wants to see me just go through the motions and be out there. I feel like -- like this is my third week in a row. I rarely do that anymore. I feel like that's my limit, like if I had to tee it up again next week -- like when the playoffs used to be four events instead of three, that to me is tough.

I think the last time I played four in a row might have been in 2024, and in the fourth week, I was like I'm done. I'm never doing this again.

Again, I'm 37. I've been at this, this is my 18th or 19th year as a pro. Maybe my fuse is a little shorter than it used to be.

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