

THE PLAYERS Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

Q. Not a total golf question, but I know you're a big sports fan. Caleb Williams, who's never seen a golf tournament in his life, became a golf fan through his coach at Southern Cal, so he specifically wanted to follow you and Spieth. You guys are fans of other things; what's it like to have a guy who's never played golf before, probably be the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft, and he wanted to follow your group?

RORY McILROY: Thank you for telling me what sport he played. (Laughter).

Yeah, it's really cool. I think golf is hopefully becoming more popular and more mainstream and sort of making it out of its little niche area that it has. Yeah, it is, it's very cool to have people out there following that take an interest in what we're doing out there, especially other athletes.

One of my favorite things to do is to go and watch other sporting events and sort of talk to other athletes, how they approach their sport and how they try to master their craft. It's always nice to hear when other athletes take an interest in us, as well.

Q. That scene on the 7th, was that necessary in your eyes, or was it all needless?

RORY McILROY: I think Jordan was just trying to make sure that I was doing the right thing. I mean, I was pretty sure that my ball had crossed where I was sort of dropping it. It's so hard, right, because there was no TV evidence. I was adamant. But I think, again, he was just trying to make sure that I was going to do the right thing.

If anything, I was being conservative with it. I think at the end of the day we're all trying to protect ourselves, protect the field, as well. I wouldn't say it was needless. I think he was just trying to make sure that what happened was the right thing.

Q. You talked yesterday about being kind of stuck in between two swings. It seemed like for most of the day it was much, much better, obviously with the two



exceptions. How much more comfortable was it today, and what did you find?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I'm not sure how the strokes gained approach stats look like, but it's probably been one of my best days in a while, which is really nice.

Yeah, the feeling is good with the irons, and the feeling with the driver and the 3-wood is just a little bit different, but as long as I remind myself on the tee box that okay, this is a wood, and I get on the fairway, and this is an iron, and I've got two different feels and two different thoughts, then it's okay.

Yeah, much, much improved on the approach play today, which was nice to see.

Q. (Question about the tee shot on 7).

RORY McILROY: Yeah, they were just a bit guidey, a bit uncommitted, more so than anything else.

Q. You called Sunday a wake-up call. What did it wake you up to?

RORY McILROY: Just I needed to clean up the technique a little bit, needed to clean up some things. Honestly, just needed to put the time in. I think when you play -- I've wanted to play a lot to start this year, and I have, but when you play a lot, you don't maybe get the time to practice all that much. At the same time, say I had a decent day on Sunday at Bay Hill and shot 70, for sure I would have taken Monday off here. But because of not shooting a decent score, I grinded on the range and figured something out and put the time in, and it's sort of already reaping benefits, so that's nice.

Q. I know it's golf, but is it awkward when you have that sort of conversation on the 7th?

RORY McILROY: I mean, I guess I started to doubt myself a little bit. I was like, okay, did I actually see what I thought I saw.

But I mean, as long as -- I was comfortable, and I was just making sure that Jordan and Viktor were comfortable, too.



Q. Seems a bit tough that they've got all these cameras all over the course and they've got a blind spot there.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it is a bit of a blind spot. I think the best view was from the tee, which was the view that we had.

Q. You saw it bounce?

RORY McILROY: I did, yeah. It was just a matter of whether it was above the line or below, and I thought I saw it pitch above the line.

Q. (Question about where the ball landed.)

RORY McILROY: Yeah. I mean, yeah, I think so.

Q. 18 was a similar situation.

RORY McILROY: 18 was a pretty similar situation. Again, adamant it crossed, it's just a matter of where it crosses. I think this golf course more than any other, it sort of produces those situations a little bit.

Again, like I feel like I'm one of the most conscientious golfers out here, so if I feel like I've done something wrong, it'll play on my conscience for the rest of the tournament. I'm a big believer in karma, and if you do something wrong, I feel like it's going to come around and bite you at some point.

I obviously don't try to do anything wrong out there, and play by the rules and do the right thing. I feel like I obviously did that those two drops.

Q. Two in the water and shoot 65, you couldn't have asked for much more, I would think?

RORY McILROY: It would be nice to shoot 62 and not have two in the water, I guess. (Laughter).

Q. The last few years you've had a tough start here which got you behind the 8-ball. How nice was it to get off to a hot start and attack a round?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it goes back to I didn't have many expectations going out there today because I was like, okay, feels good on the range and feels good in practice, but let's see how it is when you've got a card in your hand.

There's something to be said for that, just sort of lessening the expectations a little bit and going out there and seeing what happens. But yeah, it was obviously a great start.

Q. Is it hard to reset when there's been a long delay like that and get back into the rhythm?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, a little bit. It was disappointing not to get that up-and-down on 7, but that's probably why I give it a little mini-fist pump on 9 to feel like I got one of those shots back.

Yeah, you have to reset and you have to try to get back into the zone that you were in for the 15 previous holes.

Q. When you say you were maybe doubting what you saw with your own eyes in terms of determining where you needed to drop, how do you balance that between the input you're getting from your playing partners versus what you saw with your own eyes?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, exactly. I was adamant that I saw it bounce above the red line, but then when someone comes in and says, well, someone thought that it didn't. Then you're like -- it just puts some doubt in your mind. Again, it's up to you to be comfortable enough with your decision that you did see what you saw, I guess.

Q. Viktor and Jordan didn't speak to the media, but from your perspective, did you feel like everybody was comfortable after the round with the decisions made on the course on 18 and 7?

RORY McILROY: I think so, yeah. I'm comfortable. I think that's the most important thing.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports