

THE PLAYERS Championship

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes

Q. What is the expected scoring average from the right trees on 18 and what did you face?

RORY McILROY: I don't know. Obviously it's a better place than left off the tee, so I was just trying to cut a 3-wood up into the wind to get it on to the fairway. But yeah, it's one of those, you hit it in there, all that stuff has been sort of cleared out over the years, and you're just hoping for a backswing and a gap, and I had both of those. Just trying to chip-and-run a 5-iron up around the front of the green and make 4 and get out of there. It was a bonus to get it up on the green and hole the putt was a lovely way to finish.

Q. Do you ever practice out of the pine straw? I guess you don't need to anymore.

RORY McILROY: Not really, no. I sort of like hitting off nice perfect flat lies on the driving range.

But no, you hit it in there, you get in, you assess the lie. You just sort of figure it out and you play from memory and experience. I've been in the pine straw a lot around here, at Augusta, a lot of places.

Yeah, you just try to judge the lie as best you can and go from there.

Q. It wasn't your first birdie from being out of position off the tee. Can you recall a round where you made that many birdies and have been --

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I certainly didn't drive it the way I wanted to. Didn't hit it in as many fairways as I would have liked.

Yeah, I think with the greens being so receptive, you can get away with it a little bit. I'm not going to be able to get away with it for the rest of the week. Sort of rode my luck out there a little bit. But I'm trying to hit this cut shot into play. Missing right off the tee here on any hole is way better than missing left. Just sort of hitting this cut sort of up into the wind, and obviously you don't need to hit it too



far here, so yeah, just going to go hit some balls here and figure it out and try to hit a few more fairways tomorrow.

Q. Did you feel like there was any progress from Sunday of Bay Hill to today?

RORY McILROY: I think a little clearer on my sort of strategy and what I want to do off the tee. Again, this is such a different test than Bay Hill and what it demands. The tee shots that I did stand up there with a driver and release, like 2, 16, like 15 even, they missed left. So just whatever way the pattern is in my swing at the minute, I'm trying to hold everything off. That's fine; that's what I did here in 2019 and it worked well. Hitting that cut shot into play here is never really going to get you into trouble.

Q. Can I ask you about the shenanigans with the kid on 17?

RORY McILROY: No, you can't.

Q. Why not?

RORY McILROY: Because I don't want you to (laughing).

Q. The whole thing was made stranger by the fact that it wasn't a civilian, that it was a player. Did you know that, and did it surprise you when you learned that?

RORY McILROY: I'm really happy that I shot 67 today.

Q. When did you feel like you had to just go with the fade and rely on that?

RORY McILROY: When I woke up this morning. That was sort of -- I think just from practice rounds and sort of seeing my patterns and trying to manage my game. Again, that shot is never going to get you in trouble here. It doesn't get you in trouble most places, but especially here.

Q. How much are you expecting the golf course to change over the next 24 to 48 hours, especially firmness-wise?

RORY McILROY: I don't know. The greens, I would have expected the greens to be a little firmer today than what they were. Every other -- like fairways and run-offs and the



surrounds of the greens are getting a little bit firmer, but the greens still feel a little bit mushy. Hopefully it firms up. I'd really like it to. Obviously it puts a premium on getting the ball in play, something that I didn't do as well today.

But I would like the conditions to get a little firmer as the week goes on. Maybe a little bit of wind and more dry conditions, it'll get there by the weekend.

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