

Zurich Classic of New Orleans

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TPC Louisiana

Rory McIlroy

Shane Lowry

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome the defending champions of the Zurich Classic of New Orleans, Rory McIlroy and Shane Lowry. Rory, a week and a half removed from winning the Masters, becoming the sixth player to get the Career Grand Slam. If we can talk a little bit about what the last week and a half has been like for you and also how you refocus now and you and Shane try to win this again.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, look, it's been an amazing few days after, and to be able to reflect on it and everything that happened and the magnitude of everything, I think the big thing for me is just how the whole journey sort of resonated with people and the people that have reached out to me. That's been absolutely amazing.

Look, it's not every day you get to fulfill one of your lifelong goals and dreams, and I've just really tried to enjoy everything that comes along with that.

I went to -- well, we first went to London with Erica and Poppy to see our new home that we're building there last week and then we made the trip over to Belfast to see my mom and dad and a few other people that are important to me over there. Yeah, just to be with them, to be with Erica and Poppy and my mom and dad and to see Michael Bannon, my lifelong coach, and spend a bit more time with Harry and his wife and just celebrate with the people that have been a part of this whole thing for my entire career, my entire life was absolutely amazing.

As you can hear, I've picked up a bit of a cold on the way, so feeling a little bit under the weather. But obviously it's been an amazing few days, but I'm excited and I'm happy to be here with my man, and we're looking forward to a great week and trying to defend.

THE MODERATOR: Shane, talk about your season up to this point, three top 10s, season best runner-up finish at Pebble Beach to this guy. If you can talk a little bit about your form coming into the week.

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, it's been decent. As a pro golfer, you want to get wins. You don't want place finishes. But I feel like my golf has been pretty consistent. I'm in a decent position in the FedExCup and am moving up the World Rankings. I'm happy where I'm at, but I kind of need to be patient from here.

I put myself in a decent position at Augusta a couple weeks ago but sort of had a poor last 20 holes. I was very happy with how the whole week went up until kind of the back nine on Sunday.

But I think, yeah, I'm looking forward to the rest of the year. Obviously I'm here. I'm happy we're here. I wasn't sure -- obviously when Rory did what he did a couple weeks ago, I wasn't sure how things were going to pan out, so I'm happy we're here and I'm looking forward to a great week.

Q. Rory, a year ago when you came here, maybe your game wasn't quite where you wanted yet and you were trying to get back on the board. It was just a very different time. How different is it right now, kind of where you are in your life and in your career to come here in a very different tone?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, if you had asked me a year ago if I'd be sitting here in this position and everything that's happened. But yeah, I honestly could not be in a better place in my life professionally, personally, all of it.

Yeah, it's amazing what a year can do. Yeah, this tournament last year was a really cool moment for both of us. I think it probably injected a little bit of joy back into golf for me in some way, which I think is really, really important, not to lose that.

Yeah, for me, I had a great year last year, and I think this tournament was sort of the catalyst to the really good golf that I played for the rest of the year.

Q. Rory, you mentioned earlier about how so many people connected with you about how your journey has resonated. Could you expand on that a little bit? I assume some of those were maybe even beyond golf,



some of those instances?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, very much beyond golf. I spoke to two Presidents the day after, which was pretty cool. Just people reaching out from all walks of life, whether it be sports, entertainment, culture. Just all of it.

People that you would never even think that would watch golf or would know what's going on, that was very, very humbling, I guess.

I think people can see themselves in the struggle at times, and everything that you sort of try to put into getting the best out of yourself in that journey. I think people watching someone finally get it done, something they've been trying to do for a decade plus, I think it resonated with a lot of people.

Q. Considering the whirlwind your life has been since April 13, what did it mean to you to follow through with this commitment, being defending champions and all that stuff, to come back here?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, we were talking about it yesterday on the flight here. Shane said to his caddie Darren on the back nine --

SHANE LOWRY: I said to my caddie on the 15th hole at Augusta, obviously I was done so I was watching the leaderboard, and I think he'd probably just made double on 13, and I said to Darren, I said, no matter what happens the next few holes, I think we're going to do well to get into New Orleans. If things didn't go his way, I don't think he'd want to be here, and I thought if things did go his way, he'd want to be somewhere else. But I'm happy he's here.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it was important to me to -- that was one of the things Shane said to me that night, like are you still wanting to come and play Zurich, and I said, absolutely. We're defending a title. We had so much fun last year here. Obviously it's important for me to honor that commitment.

Q. Rory, obviously coming off such an emotional win and earning that first Career Grand Slam, in your first event since doing that, how eager are you to get back out there since then, and how do you think that experience has altered your confidence as a golfer now finally earning that?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I'm eager to get back out there. I think this is the perfect atmosphere to do it in.

I think that's a part of the reason that I wanted to honor the commitment to be here is because it's a fun event to be out

there with Shane. I also know that it's not all on me; he has to do some of the work, too. Maybe a lot of it the next two days.

But yeah, it is, it's a perfect tournament to come back to, just good positive vibes from last year. I don't know if it gives me more confidence. I've always been very confident in my abilities as a golfer. I do think that the whole day on Sunday at Augusta, I don't think I'll have to ever play a harder round of golf in my life. I certainly don't want to be placed back on that 15th tee box on that Sunday afternoon. So I think to be able to get through that and produce the shots when I needed to, that obviously gives me confidence, and I can always draw back on that experience.

Q. Your golf ball change has made a lot of news the last couple months. Given that you guys have to play the same golf ball for two rounds, have you decided which ball you're going to be using this year for the alternate shot, and what goes into getting ready to play one another's golf balls?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I'd say we'll probably just do the same thing as we did last year. If Shane is hitting the approach into the green, I'll probably hit his golf ball off the tee, and then vice versa, he'll hit my golf ball off the tee if I'm hitting the approach.

SHANE LOWRY: We did some testing yesterday morning back home when we delayed our trip. I went down to the range, and we both practice at the same place so both our golf balls are there, and we did some testing and they're pretty similar. We could either use either-or's, but it's foursomes -- like we played a lot of foursomes growing up, obviously Ryder Cups and stuff, so you kind of figure out how to do it. You drive each other's golf ball and then -- because driving is not the issue. Especially when it gets windier, the wind is swirling, you want to have control of your ball.

I think we figured it out last year, and we'll do it this year.

Q. Rory, I'd imagine a couple big goals that you may have formally set out for yourself at the beginning of the season have now been checked off. Will you wait until the end of the year to reestablish what goals you would have for the remainder of 2025? And Shane, you're also going to be defending champion when we go back to Portrush. What are some of your goals for 2025?

SHANE LOWRY: I think Rory's goals are -- who cares anymore.

RORY McILROY: I care.

SHANE LOWRY: He can take it easy for a while. But no, going back to Portrush is going to be incredible. Rory going back as the Masters champion now is going to take a little bit of heat off me again, so I'm pretty happy with that. It's going to be a great tournament.

I think I seen something yesterday where 278,000 people are going to attend the Open this year at Portrush. I think a million people applied for tickets. It's going to be an incredible event, and I'm just going to be happy to be a part of it.

Q. Shane, you obviously were in contention trying to win two weeks ago. You had 20, 30 minutes from when you finished to when Rory finishes. What is that time of you are processing what you need to process but then you were there for that moment with him?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, honestly it was the weirdest day ever for me because obviously I'm going out there, and I get off to a decent start, birdie the 2nd to get to 6-under, and I'm sort of thinking, Masters Sunday -- I'm watching Justin Rose do what he did in front of me. He's the group in front of me. So yeah, very strange day, and then I just had a bad day. Then you get to watch one of your really close friends do what he does.

But I was out of it for a long time and I was watching the leaderboard going around, then come in, and I have to deal with my own disappointments first. I actually went to the locker room for like 15 minutes just to gather my own thoughts, watched a bit of the golf, watched what he was doing out there. And yeah, then after that, look, I'm just happy for him. I know what he's been through the last -- certainly the last 10 years since the Grand Slam was on, the pressure that's been put on him by -- not so much by himself but by everyone outside has been pretty tough and he's had to deal with a lot of disappointment, so it was pretty cool to see him do that.

I think what everyone saw on the 18th green that day was just pure relief. I was very happy for him.

Honestly, it was one of the weirdest days ever for me because you're out there trying to win the Masters yourself, but then when one of your close friends does it, you have no choice but to be happy for him because it is a great occasion. I think it's a great occasion for golf, for everybody in golf.

At the end of the day, it's history. Sixth person ever to do the Grand Slam is no joke. It's something that -- obviously Jordan has a chance to do it in a couple of weeks. But will

it ever be done again? Who knows. It's a pretty tough thing to do, and Rory has found that out over the last 15 years.

Yeah, I was just happy for him.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, goals, I think one shared goal that we both have is winning at Bethpage. That would be an unbelievable way to cap off the year.

But yeah, the one thing I feel like would help me to get over the line at Augusta was really trying to focus on -- we both work with Bob Rotella, but basically the one thing I try to do after the end of every round is look myself in the mirror and say that's how I want to feel when I play golf. If that's my goal for the rest of my career and I can go after every round and I can look in the mirror and I can say that to myself, then the results will take care of themselves.

Q. For both of you, what is the difference in confidence gained between winning individually and winning as a team?

SHANE LOWRY: Like obviously winning individually you've done it all yourself. Obviously you've got your team of people around you and you get a lot of satisfaction from that. But I think winning as a team was honestly one of the coolest experiences you can have. Anytime you win -- I know last year we won this tournament, and Rory obviously played great, but I knew I played my part, as well. So you're kind of going away thinking, we've both done pretty well to win this tournament.

I feel like there was a certain stage during the tournament last year where my confidence wasn't great because I didn't feel like I was helping the team as much as I would have liked, but when I looked back, I actually did well. It was the back nine on Saturday. The front nine we opened up and I did a bit of the work at the start and then Rory turned into Rory McIlroy for the last 10 holes and he birdied seven of the last 10 or something like that. I sort of didn't feel great going to bed that night. I felt like I didn't do much that day. But when I look back on it, yeah.

So confidence is -- winning just breeds confidence, and I think, yeah, obviously as an individual it's much more confidence, but as a team, it does -- it certainly helped me last season. I felt like I kicked off after this tournament last season and played pretty well, and it certainly helped him since then, as well.

RORY McILROY: I certainly think it's more fun to win as a team. It's a shared experience. I think that's a big part of it.

But yeah, I think we can both look back to last year here and think about the times when -- like Shane used a new putter here last year for the first time, but he holed that putt in regulation which got us into -- hey, I've certainly missed shorter. But just stuff like that. He was struggling with his putting. He came here with a new putter. He holed a three-footer but under pressure to -- that's an important thing. Those little things can help kick you on to the rest of the year.

Q. Shane, as an elite competitor, what do you think is the healthiest and most productive way to process or deal with all that goes with being on Rory's team, especially this year?

SHANE LOWRY: For me? As in what pressures are on me this week?

Q. Yeah, obviously people are looking at Rory coming off the Masters, Career Grand Slam. How do you view your role in this and dealing with everything that goes with playing alongside someone that's just accomplished that?

SHANE LOWRY: Yeah, I think the most important -- obviously we're here. We flew together last year here, and we said we're here to pick up 400 FedExCup points each, and that's why we're here this week. And that's why we are here again this week. But we are here to have a good time, as well. I'm not saying a good time like we're going to be down on Bourbon Street every night, but we're here to enjoy it.

Golf at times -- it might not seem it now for Rory who's accomplished what he has this year so far. Golf at times can be monotonous. Tour golf can be tough and a slog and week in and week out playing 72 holes on your own, so when you get a tournament like this, it just changes it up and it's just much more fun to play and you have each other out there, and especially with our caddies get on very well. We all get on very well, the four of us together.

I think coming here this week, it's obviously going to be pretty cool. I was very excited that Rory still decided to come here because I just want to see what it's going to be like this week. I'm sure the crowds are going to be huge. I'm sure it's going to be very exciting. I hope we can get ourselves into contention.

But just being Rory's partner this week, yeah, it is going to be pretty cool. Obviously he's playing great golf. I know he's not done much practicing the last two weeks, so I am going to have to step up.

But I'm sure we'll be fine. It's just a cool thing.

I've known Rory for years and we're good friends, so if I was sitting beside another guy that had just completed the Grand Slam and I was his partner this week, it might feel a little bit different, but I know him so well that nothing fazes me being around him, so yeah.

Q. Rory, any thoughts on that dynamic?

RORY McILROY: No, not really. Look, we're going to basically hit the same amount of shots this week, so our roles are both as important as each other's. Yeah, look, today is a pretty important day for me. I need to start hitting some balls again and getting back into it.

Once I got back from Ireland on Sunday, then when I woke up Monday morning, I could barely get out of bed; I was feeling that bad.

I think just to be here and feeling better is an achievement. But I need to put a little bit of practice and a bit of work in today to make sure that I don't let this man down this week.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thanks for your time. Best of luck this week.

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