

FedEx St. Jude Championship

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Memphis, Tennessee, USA

TPC Southwind

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy to the FedExCup St. Jude Championship media center. You're entering the FedExCup at No. 3 in the standings, two wins this season, six top 10s. Overall opening thoughts on your regular season and the start of the Playoffs?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it was probably a slower start to the season than I would have liked. Really didn't feel like I got going until sort of April, May, and then I've played pretty good golf since then, a couple wins, a couple other opportunities to win, as well.

Overall reasonably happy with the way I've played this year. Obviously I've got three tournaments coming up to try to turn a pretty good year into a very good year.

Q. You just played nine. Can you give us some thoughts on the golf course?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, look, we've been coming back to Southwind for so long that it doesn't really change much from year to year. You sort of know what to expect when you get here. Bermuda, pretty grainy around the greens, very good green surfaces, some of the best greens we putt on all year.

It's sort of one of these golf courses where it demands a little more precision than maybe some other golf courses that we play throughout the year, and if you keep your ball in play and on the fairway, you're always going to have a decent chance to make birdies and shoot a good score.

Q. I'm taking it by your words that when you say it was an okay season or whatever, a lot of guys would just like to win one tournament. You won two. Is it fair to say you just have a different standard and expectation of yourself at this point, to make it a great season?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think not to -- I certainly don't want to sit up here and belittle my achievements at all this



year and what I've done, but at the same time, yeah, I expect a certain standard from myself.

Yeah, I've won a couple of times. I've had an opportunity to win a few more times than that and haven't been able to get over the line. So I would have liked to have added a couple more to that win column.

But as I said, there's still three tournaments left in this PGA TOUR season. I think I've actually got eight or nine tournaments left this year, but three on the PGA TOUR, to turn an okay season into a very good one.

I feel maybe a little similar to -- even the three years that I've won the FedExCup, 2016 I came into the Playoffs I think in 36th and was able to win, but then '19 and '22 I was a little further up and a little closer to the lead.

I think when the bulk of the season has come and gone and you've got this opportunity of three weeks to really, I guess, flip the script a little bit or change the narrative and what that season means, I think that's a motivating factor, and part of the reason that I've probably played well in the Playoffs for the last three years.

Q. How would you gauge your Olympic experience --

RORY McILROY: Amazing. I played Tokyo with COVID and no one there and everything, so it was a different experience. But we played the practice rounds at the start of the week in France with no spectators just because they didn't sell tickets for the practice rounds, and then you show up on Thursday and there's 30,000 people at the golf course. It was very cool.

I think to play in that atmosphere and in that environment, yeah, I said it at the end of the tournament, I think the Olympic Games is going to mean more and more to the game of golf as it goes along, going into '28 in LA, '32 in Brisbane, it's only going to become more important. You see like what Novak Djokovic said; he said winning that Olympic gold was the biggest sporting achievement of his career. I'm pretty sure in 10 or 20 years' time, someone in the world of golf may say that about an Olympic gold medal.



Q. You've won the FedExCup a couple of different ways. Do you have a preference for how it is now? Do you like this format? Did you like the old one? Would you like to see parts of either or?

RORY McILROY: I love this format because if it wasn't this format, then none of us would have a chance against Scottie because he's so far ahead. So I really like this format.

Q. In theory you would have, though, because of the way they rejiggered the points going in.

RORY McILROY: Absolutely, but still, he's so far ahead, and you don't expect Scottie to finish outside the top 5, either. But the way -- I think it makes the TOUR Championship more exciting from a consumer standpoint.

Is it the fairest reflection of who's been the best player of the year? Probably not. But I think at this point we're not in for totally fair, we're in for entertainment and for trying to put on the best product we possibly can.

Yeah, the first year that it was the starting strokes at TOUR Championship in 2019, I was able to win that one, and then in '22 again. I like this format. It sort of feels like it's a bit of a reset after the regular season. Everyone is not quite on a level playing field, but it feels a little more like that.

Q. Something totally different, looking back from Quail Hollow on, there's really not much let-up in the schedule. The Signature Events -- I know there's one that you didn't play, but still, pretty busy. If you have to work on something, how do you do it? Is there time even? Do you just realize I've got to kind of just stick with what I have and not mess around too much? I'm looking at a guy like Viktor who's struggled this year and trying to play his way through it.

RORY McILROY: So I would say the first three months of the year is where you can work on things. Even though we've got some big events, I think it's still -- I think there's three months where you can work on things. I think there's a six-month period where you just have to manage what you have. I don't think there's time to really change things. Then I think there's a three-month window at the end of the season where you can work on things again. I think that's the way I -- it's like three months where it's like prep and sort of getting yourself ready for the bulk of the season, six months where you try to leave it alone and manage what you have, and three months at the end of the year is sort of how I like to look at it.

Q. (No microphone.)

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I definitely feel like I found a couple of things in New Orleans actually. I specifically remember being on the range in New Orleans and getting a couple of feelings in my swing. Those are the feelings that I've sort of carried with me throughout the last three months.

Q. You've become an architecture aficionado. What was your reaction to what Andrew Green did at Oak Hill and what do you think he can do for East Lake?

RORY McILROY: I really liked what he did at Oak Hill. Yeah, the only thing I would say about Oak Hill was he maybe made the fairways a little too narrow, or the PGA -- whoever set it up. I think what he's done at Congressional is really cool, as well.

I think to -- I've seen some pictures of East Lake, but I haven't -- obviously haven't been there, but I've heard about some of the things that he's tried to do. He's got a certain look. Those bunker faces and everything. I thought he's done a -- I guess the three courses that I've played that he's done work on, I've really enjoyed them, so I'm looking forward to seeing East Lake.

Q. What was the swing thought at Zurich?

RORY McILROY: Sort of feeling like I initiate my backswing feeling like my left shoulder goes down to get the club maybe a little more up and then just to try to support it with my right arm a little bit on the way back.

Q. Being at the Olympics for all Scottie has done this year, where does that 29 at Le Golf National rank?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's up there. I thought I was on course for a 29, as well, at one point. But for him to just keep it going, yeah, he's amazing even when you think he's not really in the tournament or he's sort of on the fringes of contention. He always seems to find a way to hit the shots or hole the putts.

I've described Scottie as relentless, and this is just another example of that. He's had an incredible couple of years. It was sort of like once he won that first one, it's just like the flood gates have opened and he's found a next gear and a next level.

As a golf fan, it's really cool to see.

Q. On that same note, Xander and Scottie have both had historic years. If you could choose to have one of those this year, which one would you choose for yourself and why?

RORY McILROY: Scottie's. I think winning the Masters, an Olympic gold medal, winning, whatever it is, six times, it's pretty hard to top that.

Q. I've got to circle back on something. I talked to somebody yesterday about the amount of time that he was spending on transaction committee stuff, and I wonder if that impedes your ability to work on things because I hear it's Monday, Wednesday, Friday and there's always and a lot of different Zoom meetings and so forth.

RORY McILROY: No, I haven't been on a transaction committee call since June maybe, the Memorial. The players aren't expected to hop on those Monday, Wednesday, Friday calls. I actually haven't been on one -- it's been wonderful. It's been great.

Q. You called yourself the Nearly Man after Paris. Do you feel like you need to do anything differently to not have that label that you gave yourself, or just keep giving yourself chances?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I just have to finish off tournaments better. There's been glimpses where I have done it. Like Quail Hollow, for example.

But obviously the U.S. Open, Olympics. Yeah, it's just sort of -- I feel like this year and maybe the last couple years I've just found a way to hit the wrong shot at the wrong time. That might go into preparation and trying to practice a little more under pressure at home.

I mean, you go through these things in golf, and you go through these little challenges, and you just have to try to figure out a way to get through it, and my challenge right now is that. It's really good but not quite good enough to sort of take home the silverware. It's just something I'm having to work through.

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