

FedEx St. Jude Championship

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Memphis, Tennessee, USA

TPC Southwind

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

Q. How are you dealing with the heat out there today, and how fun was it to play with some amateurs?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, the heat is -- you know, it's hot. That's always the way when you come to Memphis in August, that's the way it's going to be.

It's not like -- yeah, I think the weekend is going to be a little tougher than these last few days, but it's fine. We're playing in two-balls. We're going to be out there for probably like 4 hours. It's not like you're in that heat for 5-1/2, 6 hours with a full field. So I guess that's a positive.

First time I've been back since the changes to the golf course. I like what they've done with everything and the greens and changing the grass and the fairways. Yeah, it's going to be a good week.

Q. You mentioned the first time you've been back in a while. Just want to hear your thoughts on the potential changes in 2028 when this tournament takes a different form.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I'm not part of those conversations, so I don't know. All I can say is FedEx have obviously been an incredible partner of the PGA TOUR. St. Jude have been an incredible charity partner, and I think anyone here is very proud of the fact that the TOUR has been able to raise a lot of money for St. Jude Children's Hospital.

It's obviously been a staple on the PGA TOUR for a long time, even going back to when we played the week before the U.S. Open when I first started to come here. Hopefully it gets figured out and it's still a part of the schedule in some way.

Q. Obviously you didn't play here last year, back last year. How excited are you to be back at this course?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, a few different things went into



that decision. I think having four weeks off going into the last two events of the year was probably going to be a little too much for me in terms of wanting to be competitive. So this is a good week -- obviously I want to play well, but it's also a good week to just see where my game is, do a lot of practice, or as much as I can in the heat.

Yeah, I think it's important to be here. It's the TOUR's playoffs, and I think it's important for all the players to be here. I've had some good conversations with Brian Rolapp over the last couple weeks. Yeah, I think it's important for me to be here and show support and looking forward to teeing it up.

Q. To kind of follow up on the question, I know there's three big events left, but if you had to vote today for Player of the Year, who would you vote for?

RORY McILROY: Oh, geez, it's a hard one because I think right now it's objectively there's no one that really stands out, but subjectively it depends what you value.

So if you value winning the biggest tournaments, you would say it could be Cameron Young and Wyndham Clark in terms of one won THE PLAYERS, one won the U.S. Open. Obviously Matt Fitzpatrick has had a great year. Scottie's had an unbelievably consistent year without the wins that he's had the last couple years.

Again, it all depends on what you value, I guess. I guess I value like the bigger tournaments and guys having the bigger moments. It doesn't really answer your question who I would vote for, but I guess it's sort of what do you value?

Q. Kind of a random question. On like a stock drive, how much curve are you looking for? How much is too much? How much is too little? What's kind of a sweet spot for that?

RORY McILROY: I don't think there's ever too little. I think, if you can get your driver not to curve, that would be a good thing. I think you're never curving it enough to be into a lot of trouble, so maybe like sort of edge of fairway to edge of fairway type of thing, and then you're maybe trying to shape it one way or another and have it go with the



wind.

Yeah, you'd like to think you're not moving it any more than like 10 to 15 yards, like 30 to 45 feet, something like that.

Q. On the range yesterday, you and Michael just seemed like you were going through some feels with your right arm. Just wanted to learn more about that.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, just sometimes I like the feeling of being able to release it, so like rotating enough of my lower body to then be able to feel like I shake hands with the target type of thing. Sometimes if I don't turn enough, my right arm thrusts out the ways, instead of like down the line, and that was really what we were talking about.

So just making sure my body rotation is enough to then feel like I can shake hands with the target basically.

Q. The 5th hole on this course is the hardest hole on the course. What do you see from the tee box? What makes it so difficult, and how do you plan to attack it this week?

RORY McILROY: All of a sudden, it's like 30 yards longer than it used to be. I got on the tee box yesterday, and I was like this hole was tough enough beforehand. In a way it makes the drive a touch easier because you don't have to flirt with the right side as much.

Yeah, it's a straightaway tee shot for the most part. Maybe you've got to maybe just bleed it a little bit left to right, but it's all about getting the ball in the fairway. From the fairway on this golf course, you can attack it. It's a long, skinny green. You've got to be accurate with your second shot as well.

Yeah, it's a hole that you make a par on and run to the 6th tee, that's for sure.

Q. What's the mentality for this crazy three-week stretch starting the playoffs? Is it different than a regular season start? Is it comparable to the majors? Where does it stand?

RORY McILROY: I almost try to view the Playoffs as one big, long tournament, like a 12-round event. You've got to pace yourself. It's three long weeks. We're going from here to St. Louis to Atlanta. Every week is going to feel a bit like this. It's going to be hot and sweaty. So you want to be able to conserve energy as well.

Yeah, I've always tried to treat it like one big, long golf tournament and sort of get into the rhythm of it and go from there. I've been lucky enough to do pretty well on these

things over the years. So try to add another one to the list.

Q. Can you remember an excruciatingly hot round of golf you played where it wasn't maybe how you fared? Anything in your past stand out?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I've played a lot in like Southeast Asia, like at the start of my career. So Singapore, Malaysia. There's been times where it's just been absolutely miserable. Like this is hot here, but it's not like the humidity that you get in some of those places is just next level. This is bearable compared to some places.

Q. Just lots of water and hydrate?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, electrolytes, water, and keep going.

Q. You got some help from a little caddie when you started out. Was she talking your ear off?

RORY McILROY: She was. She's 7, and Poppy is just about to turn 6, so I feel like I've got a good handle on how to talk to someone that age. Just asking her what she likes to do, and she's telling me she loves watching Disney+, and I was asking her what her favorite show was. She said Bluey. I think I've seen every single Bluey episode, so I was asking her what her favorite episode was.

Yeah, it's like when you get a little person like that and you know how to handle her. I feel like I'm getting better at knowing how to handle them. It's fun.

Q. You kind of mentioned you've been playing this event since it was the week before the U.S. Open. What's the biggest thing you've learned over the years about TPC Southwind as you've had some up-and-down performances?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's been a weird one for me because I've had some really good weeks and had chances to win, and there's been times when I haven't just quite felt it or seen the golf course the right way.

There's a couple of different things. I think when you get back here -- like I think the last time I putted on Bermuda greens was the start of May at Quail Hollow. You've got to get used to Bermuda greens again, reading grain, that's a big part of it. And Bermuda rough as well.

Again, we play a little bit of Bermuda through the spring, and we don't see it again until this time of year, and we play on a couple different grasses. So just sort of getting used to that stuff, I think, is the biggest challenge this week.



Q. Rory, two-parter. Who's the biggest celebrity in your contact list, and who's a celebrity you want to give a golf lesson to?

RORY McILROY: Biggest celebrity in my contact list? It's probably Michael Jordan, probably. And our biggest -- like I would say LeBron. LeBron's really gotten into golf the last, and he's the most unbelievably gifted athlete, but it doesn't look like it when he's on the golf course. I'd love to give him a lesson (laughter).

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