

# RBC Canadian Open

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Ancaster, Ontario, Canada

Hamilton Golf and Country Club

## Rory McIlroy

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy to the 2024 RBC Canadian Open, a two-time winner here. I'll start with your first appearance back at Hamilton since winning in 2019. How does it feel to be back?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it feels good to be back. A lot of great memories from that time. The place was buzzing. The Raptors were about to win an NBA championship. Yeah, it was my first Canadian Open and I was blown away by just the enthusiasm that the fans have, and it was such a great atmosphere to play in. Then, obviously, the year after, the world sort of shut down and we weren't able to come back for a couple years, but glad, obviously, that's behind us. I've had a couple of really good experiences at the Canadian Open after that too, but, yeah, it's good to be, it's sort of good to be back at the place where I guess this love affair with Canada started. So, yeah, looking forward to the week.

THE MODERATOR: Busy stretch of golf for you coming up, but you mentioned the love affair with Canada. How important is it for you to keep coming back to this tournament?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's really important. I think I've made it well known my, I guess, what I think of National Opens. I think that they're the oldest championships in our game and I think they're very, very important. I'm very proud of the fact that I've won quite a few of them. So, yeah, it's important to keep coming back, and again, like, to play in front of crowds like this is amazing and, yeah, it's always a pleasure to come back up here.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions out here.

**Q. What do you remember about the last round here that you played the 61 and the feelings and how rare are those feelings?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so, I remember the previous night getting the text message that I was going to be paired with Webb Simpson, and I liked that. I've always played well



with Webb. I've always gotten on with his caddie at the time, Paul Tesori, so I knew I was going to have a fun day the next day. I've always, for whatever reason, when I've been grouped with those guys I've always played well, so I felt good about it. I had had a few chances to win up until that point. I had won THE PLAYERS that year, but I had a chance to win Bay Hill, didn't. I had a chance to win Quail Hollow and didn't. I played in quite a few final groups and hadn't got the job done. I remember going out that day just thinking be as aggressive as you possibly can be. Make as many birdies, and just try to, my thought was, like, keep your foot down, like, keep your foot on the accelerator and keep going. Thankfully, got off to a really good start and kept it going until the point where 59 sort of entered the equation in the middle of the back nine. When I eagled 17, knowing that I needed to birdie the last to shoot 59 and blew a 5-iron right into the bunker and ended up making bogey, I had to remind myself when I tapped in to look happy, because I had just won a tournament. But I was sort of disappointed I didn't shoot 59. Not that I still think about it (smiling).

But, yeah, so, with the way the golf course is now, I don't think anyone's shooting 59 out there this week. It's a bit of a tougher test than it was. But, yeah, great memories. That final day was awesome. Yeah, those feelings, thankfully they have come along a little bit in my career, Quail Hollow a couple weeks ago was one of those in the final round, but they're few and far between, and when they do come you have to try to make the most of them.

**Q. What in particular makes the golf course a tougher test compared to 2019?**

RORY McILROY: I think some greens are a lot slopier. A lot of green complexes have more runoffs. Even though the greens are quite big, they play maybe a little bit smaller than they actually are. I just think, I think the penalties for missing are just a little more penal. You've got that longer rough around the bunkers, the rough is very, very thick this week. Then, yeah, you miss the green slightly and those really fast runoffs, the ball can run 20, 30 yards off the green, obviously it will be a tough to get it down from some of those places. I think there's a little bit more precision needed with this redesign.



**Q. There was some skeptics that, when you didn't have a title to defend for the first time in kind of a long time here, some of us thought maybe you wouldn't return without that title defense. Can you elaborate on the reasons why you are here this week?**

RORY McILROY: I think first and foremost I love playing here. I love playing in Canada. I love playing in front of the fans. I also think to support RBC and what they have done for the PGA TOUR and the game of golf, I think that's a real important part of it as well. RBC is a title sponsor to events, one signature event, one National Open. So they're a really important part of the TOUR in terms of from the sponsorship side, but also from trying to grow the game in Canada and support players on the TOUR, but also support amateur golf here as well, I think that's an important piece to it too.

**Q. You talked about the crowds here. How does the Canadian fan experience and support for you compare to other stops on the PGA TOUR?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, full disclosure here, and this isn't probably a good thing to say in Canada, but I've never been to a hockey game, but I would imagine that that's sort of what it feels like. It feels like you're playing in that sort of hockey environment, especially with the Rink hole. So, yeah, it's just more of a, I don't know, I'm very, very fortunate that I feel like I get good support most places that we go to play, but it's just, for whatever reason, it's just a little bit extra here in Canada.

**Q. Wanted to ask you a question regarding being on TOUR and how long it takes as a kind of an individual contractor, I guess, to assemble around you the team that you feel kind of gives you the best chance for success. Obviously swing coach, but trainer and maybe a mental-type approach, those kind of elements, just as you go through your career maybe what does it take to kind of hit on all those elements?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think it ebbs and flows throughout the course of your career. I think it's absolutely imperative to have a great team around you. I'm incredibly lucky that I do. But everyone's different. Some people have bigger teams. Some people have smaller teams. Some people like having a lot of people around at golf tournaments. Some people don't. It's really up to the individual. I have a great team that I can lean on, but whenever I get to a tournament venue I try to keep the entourage pretty small. But it's important. I think with how competitive the game is now and you have to do everything right from a swing coach, to short game, to putting, to mental, to physical, training, diet, all of those things combined, because the margins out here are so

small, and you just don't want to feel like you're giving anyone an advantage in any way. So, yeah, it's incredibly competitive and I think because of that you're seeing more and more guys try to assemble these teams around them that give them the best chance for success.

**Q. Taking the week off after Valhalla ahead of this hectic stretch now, was it a chance to switch off a bit and what are the kind of focus for you in terms of the game coming back in this week ahead of four huge weeks?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I certainly switched off. I went to one of my best friend's weddings in Italy for four days, which was a lot of fun, good to see a lot of people from home I haven't seen in a long time. Yeah, it was actually a really good trip, I needed it. Then I had a lovely, I had a great weekend at home. Spent time with my family and with Poppy and, yeah, it was awesome. So I needed that reset. I'm playing four weeks in a row here, so, yeah, I'm ready to go, but, yeah, it's been a busy stretch and I'm sort of easing my way back into it. I probably hit a grand total of probably 150 balls last week. So, not that I feel rusty, I feel like I've played enough golf to keep myself taken over, but, yeah, last week was a good week to just reset and sort of start again.

**Q. What do you remember about last year's final hole? I don't know if you saw it live or if you were flying at the time or what are your thoughts about that putt?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I was on my way from the golf course to the airport and I listened to it on the radio, so I heard the call on the radio which was like, full disclosure, I was hoping Tommy would get his first PGA TOUR win, but Nick had other plans (smiling). But yeah, just absolutely incredible. The fact that a Canadian hadn't won this National Open in 60 something years, and the way that Nick did it, that putt at the end, the scene, like just all of it. The celebrations, Adam Hadwin getting absolutely smoked by the security guard, like just all of it was incredible. This tournament deserved it, in all honesty. It deserved a finish like that because of not just what had happened at the start of the week last year, but also what had happened the week or the year previous as well, it deserved a finish like that. Even though Tommy didn't win, I was so glad that it did end the way it did.

**Q. Since Dustin Johnson sort of pulled the chute on RBC at St. George's, you've sort of been at the center of the LIV hurricane. Wondering if it has distracted from your golf game or personal life?**

RORY McILROY: I don't think so. I think, in hindsight, I wish I hadn't have gotten involved or not hadn't have



gotten involved, hadn't have gotten as deeply involved in it, and I've articulated that. I've said that I certainly, I hold no grudge, I hold no resentment over the guys that chose to go and play on LIV. Everyone's got their own decisions to make and everyone is, has the right to make those decisions. My whole thing is I'm just disappointed to what it's done to, not to the game of golf, the game of golf will be fine, but men's professional golf and this sort of divide we have at the minute. Hopefully, we're on a path to sorting that out and getting that to come back together, but, yeah, I mean, in hindsight, hindsight's always 20/20, but in hindsight I wish I hadn't have gotten as deeply involved as I have.

**Q. On such sad news last weekend with Grayson Murray's passing. When you hear that news, what goes through your mind, and what are the things to kind of take from that and make sure to hold on to?**

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, it's incredibly sad, first and foremost, and I think we're all thinking of Grayson's family and hoping that they're doing okay and getting through this incredibly tough period. Yeah, I think, you know, it's cliché, but it puts everything in perspective. It puts everything -- you know, at the end of the day, you know, golf is golf and, yeah, we play it for a living, but it pales in comparison to the things that actually matter in life.

That's a, I've had to realize that at times and I'm still sort of working my way through that in terms of not making golf the be-all end-all for me. I think it slaps you in the face when something like that happens last week. As I said, it's incredibly sad and everyone has to remember out here that we go out and we do things that a lot of people can't, but at the end of the day we're still human beings, and we're vulnerable and we're fragile, and I think if there's a lesson for anyone out there it's just to be kinder to each other.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for your time, Rory and best of luck this week.

RORY McILROY: Thank you.

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