

U.S. Open Championship 2021

Saturday, June 19, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

Rory McIlroy

Flash Interview



Q. 4-under 67. Just a huge move up the leaderboard today. What do you take from today into tomorrow?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, it's definitely the best that I've played this week. I felt like I played well on Thursday, and 70 felt like the worst I could have shot. A little scrappy yesterday, but then today I hit a lot of fairways starting out, hit a lot of greens, gave myself a lot of birdie chances. Didn't actually make that many, but I just stayed really patient knowing that, if you're not making bogeys out there, you're not losing ground.

Stayed patient, was rewarded with a little bit of a fortunate birdie on 10 and then a really fortunate birdie on 12 with a chip-in.

But yeah, I just played a really solid round of golf. There was really one loose shot out there, which was the drive on 15, but apart from that, it's one of the best rounds of golf I've played in a while.

Q. Did you see the rattlesnake on 15?

RORY MCILROY: I didn't.

Q. Did you think about going down there to hit it at all?

RORY MCILROY: No, no, not at all.

Q. How big were the two putts on 15 and 16?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, huge, huge to keep momentum. As I said, this is the only tournament in the world where you fist pump a bogey. Only losing one there was a big deal, and getting it up-and-down out of the bunker on 16 and making that birdie on 18 just to get that shot back that I lost, really big.

I thought something like -- I thought like two 68s over the weekend from where I was after Friday was going to have a good chance. I've done the first part of that job. Now it's up to me tomorrow to go out and try to play a similar round of golf, and yeah, that's it.

Q. I feel like there were scores out there. You, Paul Casey, some others were able to go low. Depending on tomorrow, would you imagine they set it up similar, or would you imagine a little stiffer test?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I thought the golf course played short today. They played the up tee on 3 with a short pin, they played the up tee on 9, up tee on 13, up tee on 17, so the golf course played short. It didn't play as long as it can play. It means that all the par-5s are reachable for the guys, and I think that was part of the reason why you're seeing some better scores.

Q. What was the single biggest factor, if you can narrow it down, of cleaning up some of the birdies the first two days? It's incredible you had one bogey considering it was in the canyon.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I think just accepting hitting my approach shots to the middle of the green. I got pulled into being overly aggressive a couple of times out there yesterday, and I thought the pin positions were -- they've been a lot trickier the last two days, but I hit good drives yesterday on 14 and on 5, and going at pins and short-siding myself and making bogey from there.

They're just huge momentum killers, so accepting the fact, okay, I'm going to hit a wedge 20 feet away, I still have a decent chance of holing it, but if I don't, make par, move on. I think that's typical U.S. Open golf. You have to accept that middles of greens and pars are good, and I got into that mindset today.

Q. How would you rank being close going into Sunday compared to other majors in the last 10 years?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean, I'm trying to think of the last time where I really felt like I had a chance. Carnoustie in '18 felt like I maybe had half a chance, going into the final day at Pebble in 2019. But apart from that, there's been some good finishes but never felt like I was in the thick of things.

As I said, I'm just excited for the opportunity to have a



chance and be in one of the final groups.

Q. What does the next 20 hours look like before you tee off tomorrow?

RORY MCILROY: Not a whole lot. 11:34 is a weird tee time. Sort of too early to have lunch, and then you have a couple of bars on the course and then I'm starving, so I'll probably get some food. Yeah, just relax, maybe watch a couple of the groups coming in, see how the tournament is looking.

I've had the same chicken sandwich five nights in a row from room service, so I'll probably make it six nights in a row, I'll go to bed, I'll wake up, do my warm-up in the gym and get ready to go play again. That's about it.

Q. What's the chicken sandwich?

RORY MCILROY: It's rotisserie chicken, avocado, sun dried tomatoes, some garlic aioli and some holey bread. It's really good.

Q. Any first Father's Day plans tomorrow do you think?

RORY MCILROY: No, no, not that I'm aware of anyway. Not really. I mean, Mother's Day was pretty good to us a few weeks ago, so hopefully we can have the same result on Father's Day.

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