

U.S. Open Championship 2026

Thursday, June 18, 2026

Southampton, New York, USA

Shinnecock Hills Golf Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Rory McIlroy, 1-under 69. Maybe not the finish you wanted, but overall a great day. What do you take out of your round today?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think with the conditions today, anything under par or anything around even par is a good score. It was a day to really just keep yourself in the tournament and not shoot yourself out of it, which is exactly what I did eight years ago here.

So sort of went out with the mindset that pars were going to be good, and if you could pick up a couple of birdies here and there, that's always a bonus. But really just minimizing the mistakes. I did that for the most part today.

It's so tough. It's so difficult. I didn't feel like I hit two bad iron shots on the last two holes and put myself in pretty difficult spots and wasn't able to get it up-and-down, but overall a really good day.

Q. Rory, it sounds like the setup was about as benign as they could make it given what we thought was coming. Do you think that to be the case? What does that say, the fact the scoring is still pretty tough?

RORY McILROY: Look, the greens are pretty slow and quite receptive. I think they need to be at this point. It's a challenging golf course already, and you put 30-mile-an-hour winds on top of it, it tests the best players in the world pretty well.

Yeah, I think they were prudent with the course setup, and they made sure to -- I think especially with starting with 156 the first two days, you just want to get everyone around without too much issue. They've set the course up for that, at least today.

Q. Wondering, the last time we were here in 2018 with your U.S. Open clunkers, you've played a lot better since then. What did you need to improve from that stretch of how you have played to the U.S. Open you've turned into?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I think the big thing was I needed

to change my mindset. I've told this story before, but I played those two days in 2018, and then I got to the Travelers the next week. I remember like feeling so much in my comfort zone going to TPC River Highlands and thinking to myself, I've got this backwards. I should be in my comfort zone at Shinnecock and not here.

So it was really just -- it was an effort really -- I wouldn't say -- like it hasn't looked as if I've went and done a rebuild of my game, but it's felt like it in terms of the way I approach the game and the value I place on certain shots and certain skills within the game.

I remember flying back from Dubai at the end of 2018, and I would keep, like, a journal or a diary. I wrote in it that from 2019 going forward, I'm going to build my game to compete at the major championships and excel at the toughest tests that we have.

Again, working on the things that you need to do well to excel at these, which is flighting the ball, hitting your numbers, wedge play, short game, putting, which is all the stuff that I feel like I've improved over the last few years.

Q. Can you take us through the eagle on 5?

RORY McILROY: Driver, pitching wedge, putt. Yeah, I think I had 194 to the pin. I was -- it was like 10 to cover the false front. I think I had like 169. I was trying to pitch the ball like 180, and I ended up pitching the ball like 190. I carried that pitching wedge 190 yards. It just shows how strong the wind is out there.

Yeah, it's nice to have a wedge in your hand with second shots at par-5, and with the greens still being receptive, I could get the ball to stop on that green. Yeah, it was nice to hole the putt.

Q. There's a split between guys who are going down the hill on 10 versus laying back, and the guys I talked to who went down the hill said, well, obviously I just want to be closer. What's the argument for being back?

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RORY McILROY: I guess you can see the green. You can see where you want the ball to land. I was trying to get it down the hill today, and I didn't. Is there any of those in there (laughter)?

There's probably a few guys. It's sort of off the right with a tight -- you're sort of -- you're hoping that the ball just trickles over that hill and it can get down there. It was playing a little bit longer today. I mean, I was hitting 6-iron for my second shot. I would probably prefer to be down the hill, especially today hitting a wedge.

But the way we had that wind on Monday, I think, that comes out of the north where you get it straight down, I think that wind it's almost better to be up on top because you can come in from a bit more of a height, and you're able to stop the ball a little bit quicker.

Q. You mentioned that you didn't think you hit two bad irons on 8 and 9 coming in. What happened there?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, on 8 the ball just went completely through the wind. I was hitting a similar direction to the 7th hole, and I hit 6-iron on 7. It pitched whatever it pitched, 160 or 172, whatever it was.

I had 164 -- or 162 up to 164 on the 8th hole thinking it was playing like 190, 195. Hit a really good 6-iron that I thought was going to be the distance, and it just went through the wind.

Then on 9 on the right side of that fairway, you're sort of with your -- the ball's above your feet a little bit more. You're going with the slope with the right-to-left wind, and I just got it going on the wind a little bit too much. I didn't feel like it was a terrible shot, but you need to be very precise out there.

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