

RBC Canadian Open

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

St. George's Golf & Country Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy to the interview room here at the RBC Canadian Open. Making his second start at this event with a pretty good winning percentage. If you can take us back to your win in 2019 and what you remember from that week.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, it would be nice to keep that percentage up this week, for sure. Yeah, it's great to be back in Canada first and foremost. It's obviously been awhile since this championship's been played. I think everyone I've spoken to, everyone that I've seen out on the golf course is really excited for the Canadian Open to be back. And just for live sporting events in general to be back on in this country.

So yeah, excited to be back, excited to finally defend my title from three years ago at Hamilton. And yeah, wonderful memories from that week. I was playing really well coming into it, got myself in another position after the Saturday night and then just really took advantage of that position on Sunday and sort of went out with the mindset of being aggressive and really trying to take the tournament by the scruff of the neck, I guess, and I was able to do that.

It was a really fun day, I had a chance to shoot 59 there on the back nine, which was really cool. It's not a position you find yourself in very often, so it was just some great memories, some great golf played and certainly one of the highlights of 2019 for me.

THE MODERATOR: Now we're at St. George's, you just played 18 holes, just comment on this golf course.

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, a few similarities to Hamilton in a way. The greens are probably a little more undulating and slopy here than Hamilton. Probably the golf course in general just has a little more movement to it.

But, yeah, I love it, it's a great setup. It's penal if you miss the fairways, it's thick rough. You have to keep the ball below the hole on the greens. It's a really good golf course. I liked it. I think as the week progresses, I've only played 18 holes, I'll learn a little bit more about it as the



week goes on. But yeah, you got to put it in position off the tee and then you just have to be really smart with your second shots.

You can be too aggressive. I left the ball, not knowing today, above a few of the hole positions and it's hard to get those putts within 10 feet. So it really is about keeping the ball below the hole. The guy that does that the best this week is probably going to come out on top.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. If you wouldn't mind I would like to address the elephant in the room the Saudi-backed LIV Tour that will start at the same time as this Canadian Open. There are some big names that have been confirmed just in the last few days, even the last few hours. What do you make of it, what do you make of the fuss that's being made about it?

RORY MCILROY: I think my stance on it has been pretty clear from the start. It's not something that I want to participate in. I certainly understand the guys that have went. I understand what their goals and their ambitions are in their life. I'm not, certainly not knocking anyone for going. It's their life, it's their decision, they can live it the way they want to.

But for me I want to play on the PGA TOUR against the best players in the world. And I think for me, speaking to a few people yesterday and one of the comments was, anything, any decision that you make in your life that's purely for money usually doesn't end up going the right way. Obviously money is a deciding factor in a lot of things in this world, but if it's purely for money it's not, never seems to, you know, it never seems to go the way you want it to.

And I've had that before a couple of times in my life and there's other things that are a part of it too. But it's a weird time in professional golf, and I said it a couple weeks ago, we're just going to have to see how this season plays out and if any other guys decide to go another direction than the established tours, I guess, and see what the, I guess see what the consequences are.



But I guess for me right now, I can only speak personally, it's not something that I envision ever doing. I'm happy playing on the PGA TOUR and I have a nice schedule that I can pick for myself. I can spend a lot of time at home with my family if I want to, prioritize the majors, and yeah, there's nothing about my schedule or my life or my earning or anything that I would change.

Q. Can you talk about the last round at Hamilton last time and maybe something like the last round you had at Augusta this year. How easy is it for you to kind of recreate the feels that you had during those rounds, the ease of which those rounds took place? Is that something that you can call upon or you try to call upon?

RORY MCILROY: I think if it was that easy I would do it more often, I guess. Sometimes you just find yourself in these, whether it be these mental states or this place where everything sort of matches up. The mental state, physically you're in a good place, you're swinging it well, having the confidence to play the shots and take the shots on.

You're always, I think, out on TOUR we're never, I mean very, very rarely, maybe that day in Hamilton, maybe the last round at Augusta, that we're operating on a hundred percent. There's always 10 or 15 percent lacking in one area or another and you're always having to fight against it and you're always having to manage your game.

Whether it be physically or mentally and trying to clear negative thoughts or whatever it may be. So the days that come along that you are operating at a hundred percent it's nice and you have to take advantage of those. But I would say more often than not there's, you know, you just have to make due with that 85 or 90 percent and get the most out of that.

Q. You've spoken before about how important National Opens are to you. Maybe rehash a bit why they're important to you and do you think that that's one of the reasons you, something you can only find on the PGA TOUR and is there a reason maybe some of your peers don't see them in the same light you do?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, I mean, I'm, I guess, a self-confessed golf nerd, historian, traditionalist. Some of the oldest events in our, or most of the oldest events in our game are National Opens. And I've been very fortunate enough to win quite a few. Here, Irish Open, U.S. Open, Australian Open, I was beaten in a playoff in the South African Open. I won the Hong Kong Open which you want to argue whether that's a National Open or not.

But I always look back at my Australian Open win and I think when you -- one of the great things about our game is you can in some way compare yourself to historical figures. Figures that I've never met before, but I look at a trophy that my name's on and Walter Hagan's name is on there or Gene Sarazen or Byron Nelson or Ben Hogan or Jack Nicklaus or Arnold Palmer or whoever it is. And I think that's one of the coolest things about our sport that not a lot of other sports can sort of tap into.

As a golf historian and traditionalist, I like that stuff. I like sitting down with the Claret Jug at home and looking at the names on the trophy. Like that is so cool.

And you look at the Canadian Open trophy and you look at the names that are on that. You're putting your name in history by winning these national championships and that's, honestly, it's something that money can't buy or it's something that money can't give you.

Q. You're the defending this week, you're not Canadian, of course, but there's a lot of people out there who are really excited to see you this week. Do you mind being almost the face of the tournament? Do you relish that position?

RORY MCILROY: I would rather that than the alternative. Everyone says, Oh, you must get so sick of taking photos with everyone. And I said, Well it beats no one asking for a photo, I guess.

I like it. I've worked hard to get to this position and yeah, I mean if I didn't like the attention I would go and I would play another sport or I would get another job or whatever. But there's a lot of things that come along with being one of the top players in the game and yeah, I do relish it. I like that, I like being in that position.

Q. I'll keep this a bit lighter than a LIV golf follow-up question. I saw a couple weeks ago on social media you had a great post with your daughter at the PGA Championship where she pointed at your picture and said, That's when daddy was good. Which I found was funny. So what do you think your daughter would think if daddy manages to repeat here this week?

RORY MCILROY: She would probably just want to go back to the aquarium she was at yesterday (laughing). At this point she still isn't, still doesn't understand that much. She knows that I turn up on TV every once in a while and hit some golf shots, but I'm happy when she's happy and if she's happy being out here or happy seeing me play golf, then that makes me feel good.

Q. (No Microphone.)

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

RORY MCILROY: I didn't. I was playing in the rain at Glen Abbey yesterday. But they did. My wife and daughter.

Q. In getting to know RBC the last two or three years since you won at Hamilton, just wondering how impressed you are by the depth of their involvement in golf at all levels, including the professional game?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, RBC's support of the professional game, yeah, everywhere now has been, it's immensely appreciated. Obviously being the title sponsor of the Heritage down in Hilton Head. Obviously being the title sponsor here of the Canadian Open. Supporting a lot of professional golfers from this country and from other places around the world.

Even partnering -- I did a day yesterday and I didn't realize that they have partnered with Harold Varner to try to bring golf to under-served communities. I think that's really important. I think the more we can make golf accessible, the better. If RBC is helping do that in this country then that's a really great thing.

So, yeah, I've been really impressed with the continued support that they have shown golf, not just at the professional level, but at all levels.

Q. Can you weigh in on LIV Golf deciding to start its schedule this week opposite one of the oldest golf tournaments in the world, that's had a two-year absence, that you're the defending champion at?

RORY MCILROY: I mean, I understand why they -- I maybe don't understand why they chose this date, I understand why they chose the location. It's sort of goading the PGA TOUR into allowing releases for that event. It's not in the United States, it's a conflicting event, but we get releases for conflicting events.

There's a lot of things that they have done that don't make sense to me. So, no, I can't, it's very hard for me to put myself in their mind and think things through logically and get to the place where they have gotten to, I guess.

So, no, yeah, again, for the game in general I think it's just, it's a shame that it's going to fracture the game. I think if anything we need to make this -- the professional game is the window shop into golf. If the general public are confused about who is playing where and what tournament's on this week and who is, you know, oh, he plays there, okay, and he doesn't get into these events. It just becomes so confusing.

I think everything needs to try to become more cohesive

and I think it was on a pretty good trajectory until this happened.

Q. Several of the top golfers are playing here this week, yourself, Scottie Scheffler, JT. What does it say just about the event that it's able to attract some of the top golfers in the world?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, so I think there's a few different aspects to why. I think the date change has helped. I think a lot of guys like playing the week before a major championship now. So I think that really helps.

I think the rotation of golf courses that this event seems to have going. Hamilton and then here and then I think Oakville, maybe next year, is that right? Old, traditional setups that probably in some way are good preparation for next week. It's not all just about next week, obviously, it's a huge tournament in its own right and you want to come here and compete and try to win. But the date change definitely helps.

And then I think, going back to the RBC question, I think just their involvement in the game, being more present throughout the TOUR, guys getting to know RBC and the team at Hilton Head and then obviously here as well. I think it's a big part of it. I think you'll continue to see this field be very strong in the future.

Q. You talked about names on trophies and National Opens. Is it possible for someone such as yourself, a non-Canadian, to have an appreciation for how long the drought has been since a Canadian has won this and what it would take?

RORY MCILROY: 68 years. I know.

Q. Very good. Thank you.

RORY MCILROY: No worries. Corey Connors gets told every five minutes.

Q. Can you have an appreciation for what they go through in trying to put this week together?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah. I was told the story, I was at Glen Abbey yesterday and I was told the story about the Vijay Singh, Mike Weir, someone said, no one's seen someone so disappointed to win a tournament than Vijay that week.

I do, because when I go back to play in the Irish Open, I feel it, I get it. There's more tension, there's more angst, there's, you almost try too hard. It's almost like just about letting go, going out and having fun playing.



Sometimes when you go to play your own National Open it's hard to do that, because you are just trying so hard and you're getting reminded every five minutes about how long the drought's been.

Yeah, so I can certainly appreciate what Corey and Adam and Mackenzie and Nick and all the guys that are here this week, I certainly appreciate what they have to go through.

Q. Last time when you did win I think on Sunday it may have been for every round but you were marking your ball with a loonie, did you get a loonie again this week?

RORY MCILROY: Yeah, so I turned up to the locker and there was already one in my locker. And then one of my pro-am partners give me one this morning on the first green as well. So I'm loaded with loonies this week. Yeah, so, yes, I will use it, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Rory, we appreciate your time, best of luck this week.

RORY MCILROY: Thank you.

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