

RBC Canadian Open

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Toronto, Ontario, Canada

St. George's Golf & Country Club

Rory McIlroy

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the two-time defending champion of the RBC Canadian Open Rory McIlroy to the interview room. Rory, obviously a different venue here this year at Oakdale, but just an opening comment on being back in Toronto defending your title.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's nice to be back. Any time you can come back and defend a title sort of wherever that is in the world, it's nice to be able to do that. Obviously the Sunday last year was, to me, one of the probably one of the best experiences I've ever had playing on TOUR. Battling it out with JT and Tony down the stretch. Rosie was on course trying to shoot 59. There was a ton of low scores. Battling with those two guys. JT and Tony being two of the best players in the world. Coming out on top. Yeah, it was really nice. Nice to be able to defend a title.

I felt like the support I got out there was absolutely amazing and I'm looking forward to playing in that sort of atmosphere again this week.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take some questions.

Q. Yesterday's news. I guess, how and where were you when you received it and how did it make you feel?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I got a text message on Monday night, I guess. From Jimmy Dunne. Saying, Hey can I give you a call in the morning. So I said sure. Jimmy rang me at about 6:30 yesterday morning. We had a chat. Took me through the news. Took me through the deal, structure of the deal. What it meant for us. What it meant for the DP World Tour.

So, yeah, I learned about it pretty much at the same time everyone else did. And, yeah, it was a surprise. I knew there had been discussions going on in the background. I knew that lines of communication had been opened up. I obviously didn't expect it to happen as quickly as it did. But I really think that, you know, from what I gather, the TOUR felt they were in a real position of strength coming off of the



back of the DP World Tour winning their legal case in London. It sort of weakened the other side's position.

And they went in there, and the way Jimmy described it, Rory, sometimes you got 280 over water, you just got to go for it. And that's what they did. I think ultimately, when I try to remove myself from the situation and I look at the bigger picture and I look at 10 years down the line, I think ultimately this is going to be, it's going to be good for the game of professional golf. I think it secures the -- it unifies it and it secures its financial future.

So there's mixed emotions in there as well, as there's going to be. I don't understand all the intricacies of what's going on. It's a very, what's the word? There's a lot of ambiguity. There's a lot of things still to be sort of thrashed out. But at least it means that the litigation goes away, which has been a massive burden for everyone that's involved with the TOUR and that's playing the TOUR. And we can start to work toward some sort of way of unifying the game at the elite level.

Q. Over the last day with the different meetings and the conversations you had with players has your opinion changed at all? Have you sort of started to see where this is all going and are you excited about this or are you optimistic about this, as you project it forward?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I think the one thing that I think was really misconstrued last, yesterday was all the headlines were PGA TOUR merges with LIV. And LIV's got nothing to do with this, right. It's the PGA TOUR, DP World Tour and the Public Investment Fund are basically partnering to create a new company.

This has gotten -- I think that's where I was a little frustrated. Because all I've wanted to do and all I've wanted in the past year, from basically this tournament, is to protect the future of the PGA TOUR and protect the aspirational nature of what the PGA TOUR stands for. And I hope that this does that.

But I think with the headlines being, "merges with LIV," like that's not the -- I mean, if you look at the structure of how it's structured now, this new company sits above



everything. Jay's the CEO of that. So technically anyone that is involved with LIV now would answer to Jay. So the PGA TOUR have control of everything.

And one thing as well is, whether you like it or not, the PIF were going to keep spending the money in golf. At least the PGA TOUR now controls how that money is spent. So, you know, if you're thinking about one of the biggest sovereign wealth funds in the world, would you rather have them as a partner or an enemy? At the end of the day, money talks and you would rather have them as a partner.

Q. Given that the DOJ was already looking into the PGA TOUR for antitrust violations and all of that how much of an uphill battle do you think this is going to be to push this through going forward now, now that the two sides have kind of come together and are operating together here?

RORY McILROY: That's way above my pay grade. I have no idea how the Department of Justice operates. I have not been involved in any of those discussions and it would be very silly and naive of me to comment on that.

Q. I know it's early, but how does an announcement like this impact tournaments like the Canadian Open, for example, one of the storied events on the PGA TOUR?

RORY McILROY: I mean, I feel bad for RBC and the Canadian Open. To think about what went on this time last year and then the bombshell that was dropped. I mean, RBC have been one of the biggest supporters of the PGA TOUR over the last 10 years. This year they're supporting a designated event at Hilton Head. They're sponsoring their National Open. They're pouring tens of millions of dollars into the PGA TOUR that the players obviously benefit from.

So I really, I feel bad because being such a great partner and having this stuff sort of dropped on you two years in a row is very unfair.

As to what it looks like going forward, I would like to say that things don't change. I would like to think that the Canadian Open keeps on thriving and just like every other event on the PGA TOUR. And I think the PGA TOUR are hopefully going to announce their 2024 schedule here in the next three or four weeks and I don't think that will, you know, I don't expect that to change.

Q. We heard there was a lot of anger in the clubhouse yesterday in the meeting yesterday with the commissioner. Do you still have confidence in Jay Monahan as commissioner of the PGA?

RORY McILROY: I do. And, look, I've dealt with Jay a lot closer than a lot of those guys have. From where we were a couple of weeks ago to where we are today, I think the future of the PGA TOUR looks brighter as a whole, as an entity. What that looks like for individual players in terms of keeping a TOUR card and bringing players back into the fold and then that sacrifices other people, that's where the anger comes from, right. And I understand that.

There still has to be consequences to actions. The people that left the PGA TOUR irreparably harmed this TOUR, started litigation against it. Like, we can't just welcome them back in. Like, that's not going to happen. And I think that was the one thing that Jay was trying to get across yesterday is like, guys, we're not just going to bring these guys back in and pretend like nothing's happened. That is not going to happen.

So I do have confidence in him. I think you ask the people around him that deal with him in a business sense, whether it's the directors of the board of the PGA TOUR or the title sponsors that he deals with, I mean, he seems to be a very impressive individual when it comes to business.

Q. I know you and many other golfers were offered substantial amounts of money to join LIV --

RORY McILROY: I was never offered any money.

Q. Oh, my apologies. Should the golfers who maybe stayed loyal and turned down LIV, should they be made whole financially?

RORY McILROY: I mean, the simple answer is yes. The complex answer is how does that happen, right. And that's all, that's all a gray area and up in the air at the minute. But, yeah, there is, it's hard to, it's hard for me to not sit up here and feel somewhat like a sacrificial lamb and feeling like I've put myself out there and this is what happens.

Again, removing myself from the situation, I see how this is better for the game of golf. There's no denying that. But for me as an individual, yeah, I, there's just going to have to be conversations that are had.

Q. You mentioned that this has really nothing to do with LIV Golf, but do you foresee you and other PGA TOUR players having to play some sort of team events moving forward into the fall or a series of them?

RORY McILROY: So, I think Yasir is very -- so the PGA TOUR already is doing their own sort of team thing, right. We're going to do TGL, which is, it's not on a golf course, but it's a team type of event and it's an entertainment

product. And that stuff was already starting to happen, but it was very -- so you had like proper competitive golf like we're playing this week and you have more entertainment type of golf that you get more into the team atmosphere and you bring tech into it and it's a more made-for-TV type of deal.

I would say an element of team golf might still stay. It certainly, in my opinion, and my hope is it won't, it won't be under the LIV umbrella. It's something that the PGA TOUR will control, the PGA TOUR will operate. And it will hopefully look very different to what LIV has been.

Q. How much of a distraction is this as you try to go and win this tournament three times in a row?

RORY McILROY: Yesterday was tough. I think the shock of it, the surprise of it. I wasn't looking forward to this, to be honest with you. But once we all get done here and you write your stories and say what you say what I say or quote me or whatever it is, I'm going to go to the range and do some practice and try to get ready for a golf tournament.

Q. A lot of fans are upset at this news. The war of words between the PGA TOUR and LIV got very heated and fans got very involved. What do you say to fans who are disappointed in this deal?

RORY McILROY: But it's not LIV. I think that's the thing. I still hate LIV. Like, I hate LIV. Like, I hope it goes away. And I would fully expect that it does. And I think that's where the distinction here is. This is the PGA TOUR, the DP World Tour and the PIF. Very different from LIV.

All I've tried to do is protect what the PGA TOUR is and what the PGA TOUR stands for. And I think it will continue to do that. So, look, going forward I hope that there's, you know, there may be a team element and you're going to see, maybe me, maybe whoever else play in some sort of team golf. But I don't think it will look anything like LIV has looked and I think that's a good thing.

Q. Just as a follow-up, I mean, you do see why fans are upset though. I see what you're saying that it's not LIV, it's the PIF. But nonetheless, during this back and forth over the past year, at one point Jay Monahan said a deal like this would never happen out of respect for the victims of 9/11. Obviously you're not responsible for what Mr. Monahan says, but you can see why this has stirred up a lot emotions in fans, right?

RORY McILROY: Of course. I said it to Jay yesterday, You've galvanized everyone against something and that thing that you galvanized everyone against you've now partnered with. So, yeah, of course I understand it. It is

hypocritical. It sounds hypocritical.

The one thing I would say is, again, whether you like it or not, the PIF and the Saudis want to spend money in the game of golf. It is -- they want to do this. And they weren't going to stop. So how can -- you know, the thing for me and this is the one thing that I've always thought about, how can we get that money into the game, but use it the right way. And I think that's what this ultimately will do, hopefully. I mean, that's my hope.

Q. You said a couple of times now, maybe two or three times, if I remove myself from it and kind of trying to kind of forecast a bit further down the line. But is that a hint that there are bits of you that are still uncomfortable with -- you know, you're a football watcher, you've seen the reaction to Newcastle United's takeover the last year and the Saudi kind of moves in soccer and other sports.

RORY McILROY: Yeah.

Q. Is there a bit of you that's still uncomfortable with just how cozy Saudi Arabia and their money is now in golf? Like a lot of people would say that it controls a hell of a lot of golf.

RORY McILROY: I've come to terms with it. I see what's happened in other sports. I see what's happened in other businesses. And, honestly, I've just resigned myself to the fact that this is, you know, this is what's going to happen. Like this is -- it's very hard to keep up with people that have more money than anyone else. And, again, if they want to put that money into the game of golf, then why don't we partner with them and make sure that it's done in the right way. And that's sort of where my head's at.

Q. Just wondering if you have any thoughts or feelings or insight as to what this does to the Ryder Cup and the DP World Tour. And I ask that just how it sounds, but also, as you are aware, the European Tour is headed by a Canadian.

RORY McILROY: I'm very aware of that. Very proud Canadian. I don't think it changes. The ruling in that arbitration court was upheld that the European Tour can uphold the rules and regulations and sanction people for leaving the TOUR, for harming the TOUR. And again, I think it's a moot point, because all those guys have resigned their membership. If you're not a member of the European Tour you can't play the Ryder Cup. So to me it's a moot point.

Q. Going to give you a bit of a break from some of this conversation. We're at a very special place here, the



Oakdale Golf and Country Club. It's special in a lot of ways. Special for me, I caddied here when I was a kid. You now played nine holes at Oakdale and tell me your first impressions of the course and how you are going to play 18 differently the next time.

RORY McILROY: (Laughing.) I wouldn't -- I played it okay today. I made a birdie. I mean, the only way I would want to play it differently is making eagle.

It's a, there was a couple of greens on that back nine that were quite severe. So there's limited, I think there's limited hole locations that you're going to be able to use on some greens. But you have to be very wary of where you put the ball on the greens. You start getting yourself above the hole on some of those greens and it's going to become very, very tricky. I think it's a good setup. The rough is incredibly thick, it's long, very hard to control your ball out of the rough. I think there's quite a few greens where you can tuck pins away behind bunkers and stuff. So you need to get the ball in play and be able to put spin on your ball to get close to some of those holes.

So I thought the back nine was good. I thought it was quite scorable. There's quite a few birdie chances out there. I've heard that the front nine's a little more difficult. There's a few very tough par-4s on that front nine. And, yeah, I mean, thankfully tomorrow I'm starting on the easier nine. So hopefully get off to a good start. Then I'll be playing the front nine blind, but hopefully Harry's walked it a couple of times and gives me the right lines.

Q. Welcome to Canada. How are you able to sort of quell a lot of the noise that comes around you? You played great through three rounds at the PGA Championship, such a hard course. Memorial, in a perfect spot, such a hard course. But any time you don't win the perception is like Rory let down. But you're tackling these really difficult layouts and you're putting yourself in a perfect spot. On that note we have a U.S. Open next week, how familiar on that course. And did you get a chance to talk to Jack yet? Because we picked up on the mic when you walked off 18 at Memorial, he said he wanted to sort of have a sit down.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so, yeah, look, any time that I'm in contention and I don't win there's no one more disappointed than I am. I want to go out there and win golf tournaments. Sunday at Memorial was really tough. The conditions got very, very tricky, the greens got incredibly firm. The later off in the day that you teed off I felt the more at a disadvantage you were. I think about -- I holed the putt on Saturday night on the 18th green to get into the final group. If I had missed that putt I would have been five

groups earlier. And I feel like being five groups earlier might have been a better thing. Just sort of how firm and fast the golf course played as the day went on.

So it was tough. I mean, I bogeyed the two par-5s on the front nine in really good position, so that wasn't great. But any time you go through something like that on a Sunday afternoon you learn from it. The great thing about golf, and this is hopefully going to be the great thing about golf going forward, is there's always next week. There's always next week to right the wrongs from the week before and try to learn from those situations and do better the next time you're out there.

So, yeah, look, I was disappointed that I didn't play better on Sunday, but I've got another chance this week to get myself in contention in a golf tournament and try to win.

Now talking about LACC, I have not played there yet. I'll first sort of lay eyes on it next Monday when I get to L.A.

I've watched some videos on YouTube. I sort of know the, I know the look of the course and the topography a little bit and sort of what to expect. But you don't get a real grasp of it until you're actually out there and your feet are on the ground.

So I'm excited. I mean, I've got four days of competitive golf to get through here first and trying to win my third Canadian Open. And that's at the forefront of my mind. But obviously with a major next week as well I'm looking forward to that.

Q. Just to go back to one more about yesterday. The players meeting, I think a lot of reports sort of described some frustrations and just your sense of what was said and sort of the mood of that meeting and any sort of way that it stood out to you?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, look, it was heated. People were surprised. People felt like they were in the dark about all this. Look, most of the gripes come from the guys that are, you know, trying to hold onto their cards. And they feel like things have already been taken away from them this year with the designated events and smaller fields and no cuts and weighted FedExCup points for the larger events with the stronger fields. So they were already feeling somewhat vulnerable. Then, whenever this news is brought about, there's only going to be one reaction to that. And I understand that. And, honestly, it's hard for me to relate to those guys, because I've never been in that position. I try to empathize with it, but it's hard for me to -- it's hard for me to relate to them fully, but I certainly empathize with their point of view.

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

RORY McILROY: Thank you.

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