

Travelers Championship

Thursday, June 25, 2020

Rory McIlroy

Quick Quotes



TRAVELERS
CHAMPIONSHIP



Q. Rory, can you just talk a little bit about the round; it seemed to start slowly but you certainly caught on there.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I played well from the start. Hit two shots into our first hole, the 10th, didn't capitalize on that. Had a chance on 12, didn't capitalize on that. But sort of the round got going with the eagle on 13, birdie on 14, and then the tee shot into 15.

Yeah, so that was a new 3-wood I put into play last night. I hadn't even hit it on the course. So my first shot with it was off 10, and then second shot was the one on 15. It's worked out pretty well. Nice little change.

Q. When you wake up in the morning knowing that this is a golf course that a lot of times historically yields low scores, there was no wind, it seemed like the greens were fairly receptive, does that sort of get in your head that you want to get off to a fast start? Is there a little bit of pressure to get it going quickly?

RORY McILROY: I mean, no, I think when you do, you get a little -- for me especially, you get a little antsy and I start to maybe get a little quick if you're thinking that way, so I have to keep reminding myself it's a 72-hole golf tournament and there's plenty of chances throughout the week to make birdies. Even after the first few holes where I had chances and the didn't quite convert, you just have to keep telling yourself, so many more chances coming up.

As much as there is low scores, you just have to keep telling yourself it's patient because inevitably you're going to go through maybe a nine-hole stretch where you only make a birdie or two. You're not going to keep shooting nine holes of 3- or 4-under all the time, so you have to remind yourself of that.

Q. Heading into the break you had a string of top-5 performances and then coming out of it you haven't had quite that much success so far. Can you talk about the difference mentally going from playing casual golf even with TOUR pros back in Florida and trying to get tournament tough and what's the challenge to do that?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I guess my thing, I deemed the last two weeks as successes. I hadn't been to Colonial before. I hadn't been to Hilton Head in over a decade, so if anything they were like practice weeks for me, and

the fact I went out and had to shoot 65 on Friday last week to make the cut just to get an extra two days to get some reps in and practice, I felt like that was a pretty big success. So yeah, the results weren't as good as what they were before the break, but you can't base everything off results in this game, and I felt like I took a lot of positives out of the last couple weeks. But yeah, look, it is different playing. That's why I was talking, even though two rounds last week at the weekend were very helpful for me coming into this week. It would have been terrible to miss the cut and not have those two rounds -- not as practice because you're sort of trying to get yourself into contention, but at the same time there's so much big stuff coming up at the end of the year, and that's really what you're trying to build towards.

Q. From a performance standpoint, is the layoff at this point behind you? This is now your third week back on TOUR, whatever the sort of new normal is at this point, do you feel that the extended break is behind you from a performance standpoint, or is sort of the anxiety in this new environment that we're all in, does that still weigh somewhat on you inside the ropes?

RORY McILROY: It still is very different. Everything is so different, from the surroundings, the routine. It's not behind us, obviously. We're still right in the middle of this. But it's just been nice to get back into some competitive golf again. You know, it doesn't feel the same because you're not having thousands of people reacting to your birdies and getting that going. I felt the weekends have been a little flat for me just because that's when you're in contention and that's where you sort of start to feel it. Thursdays and Fridays don't feel that different to be honest, but into the weekends they do.

Q. With regard to Phil, he's got a few years on you. Obviously he just turned 50. As a guy that's gotten to know him a little bit, can you just speak to your impression of what he's doing at this stage, and can you imagine yourself still performing at that level?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, his longevity is incredible. It really is. I think the big thing about Phil is his resilience. I mean, he's won 44 times on TOUR, which is an incredible number, but the amount of close misses he's had, as well, and the fact he kept coming

back and kept coming back and played well and putting himself in position. It looks from the outside he's never feared failure, and I think that's what's made him such a fan favorite is he goes for things and he takes on things. And he has a deep appreciation for his place in the game and the game of golf itself. Can I see myself out here at 50? It's 20 years down the line, but I'd like to think that I would still have the love for the game that Phil has at that age.

Q. Obviously Winged Foot coming up is the site of one of those places he had to be the most resilient coming back. What do you recall from that week?

RORY McILROY: I recall Tiger missing the cut. It was soon after his dad passed away. I recall Geoff Ogilvy chipping in on 17 and that ball was going off the green, and then Phil and Monty on 18. Phil obviously lost it way left, Monty hit a terrible iron shot in. I think for me at that point in my -- what was I, 17? I think being where I'm from, I was probably pulling for Monty just for him to win one. He hadn't won one. But yeah, I mean, remember Ogilvy winning in the end and the short game display that he put on.

But I'm looking forward to going to Winged Foot. I've never been there before, and yeah, looking forward to getting up there in September.

Q. Aside from yourself, how much do you root for Phil, the fact that he's been -- he's a competitor, but to see him win an Open, a U.S. Open, after six runners-up and whatnot, and you spoke of his resiliency, if it weren't you, where does that rank --

RORY McILROY: It would be an incredible story for our game, for the game of golf. But look, I think Phil has proved enough to everyone, three green jackets, a PGA, an Open Championship. He doesn't -- if he doesn't win it, it's not a blemish on his career. He's had a wonderful career, and no one should take anything away from him because to keep putting yourself in that position -- look, sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't. That's our game. He's handled all that really, really well. But look, if it weren't me and he found himself in that position, I'd definitely be rooting for him.

Q. How different is it playing here how compared to past years?

RORY McILROY: It's different. 18 especially. I came here on Tuesday and I was scrolling through Instagram and I saw someone put up a picture hitting the second shot into 18, but I was like going, what hole is that. That doesn't look like a hole that I recall from this course. It is a little different, and I think because it's quite a -- especially looking down back this way, it's very open. You see 15, 16, you don't really see that usually because you've got that sort of tented village in the middle of the course there. It feels hope, feels -- but

look, it's nice. It's sort of spring going into summer. You can hear the birds chirping, and it's a nice little stroll out there.

Q. Did you notice any change out here after Commissioner Monahan spoke yesterday?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I thought Jay did a wonderful job yesterday, just relaying the information and where the PGA TOUR stands and where we're going going forward. I think people -- you hear one or two positive tests and people are panicking, and I saw a couple of calls to shut the tournament down, which is silly from my point of view. You know, I thought he did a really good job explaining. There's been almost 3,000 tests administered. The percentage of positive tests is under -- it's a quarter of a percent.

I think as a whole, it's been going really well. There's a couple of loose ends that we needed to tidy up, and I think we've done that. So yeah, I feel like the mood and the tone of the event was probably lifted by Jay yesterday.