



**Q. Did you know about the Tiger pairing before it came out this week, or like did they approach you, or were you surprised?**

**RORY McILROY:** Was I surprised? No. I wouldn't have minded a nice quiet couple of days, Thursday, Friday, but no, no, it's totally fine. Like anytime you have a chance to play in a group like that, you sort of relish it and embrace it. I'm obviously looking forward to the next couple of days.

**Q. He hasn't played here in 12 years, that was before you turned pro. Can you kind of speak when you were growing up in Northern Ireland what it was like hearing about Tiger Woods?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I mean, jeez, I started watching Tiger when he was winning his U.S. Amateurs back in '95, '96. So I've, yeah, I've been a Tiger fan for the last 20 years. So yeah, I mean, I think anyone that's my age and even a little bit older and a little bit younger, you know, was inspired by him because of what he did on the golf course and how he approached the game. Yeah, I mean, he was golf for the better part of a decade, if not more. So yeah, it's cool to have been able to get to know him and call him a friend, which is pretty cool.

We play a little bit together down in Florida and live quite close to each other. Yeah, it's sometimes surreal. I remember meeting him for the first time, and then I remember playing with him for the first time. It is funny because I remember all the big moments that he's had, and you're teeing it up alongside that guy. That was eight, nine years ago, so I've sort of got used to it by now, but still, whenever you get a chance to play alongside one of your heroes, it's always nice.

**Q. Can you give us that story? Was that Sherwood?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, Sherwood, '09, '10? '09 or '10. Yeah, that was the first time. I was playing pretty good and sort of trying to keep alongside of him, especially at that point you're looking at everything he does so you know exactly what score he's on, what score you're on. I doubled the last for a 2 under and he birdied the last for 66, so it was pretty close up until that little three-shot swing at the last.

**Q. Is there anything you had to work out after last weekend, or did you look at that as --**

**RORY McILROY:** Not really. A little bit, like I had a bit of a wobble on the greens on Friday,

but I don't put that down to anything more than just surfaces weren't ideal and I let it get into my head a little bit. I went down to Carlsbad on Monday to TaylorMade and we worked on a couple things. I got in the putter lab and got a new putter this week. It's basically the same shape, just a little bit different in terms of loft and lie and stuff like that, so better for the poa annua greens. That's really it.

**Q. What did your dad think of the whole thing after all that? Even though you didn't make the cut, was --**

**RORY McILROY:** Of course, it was a great week. The weather was fantastic. He got to play Cypress. We rented a house right on the fourth green at Pebble, so it was great. We had a really nice week. Wish we had been playing on Sunday, but it was okay. It was a great experience and I'm hopeful that we'll do it again sometime. But I kept saying last week this could be it because you're not going to get it on a better week so you sort of want to get it on top. But no, it was a great tournament. I look forward to getting back there one year.

**Q. This putter change, what are you trying to do, just trying to get the ball --**

**RORY McILROY:** Just trying to get it to, yeah, basically launch properly. I have quite not a lot of loft in my putter, especially for these greens. You can get little indentations where the ball will go into the ground first and then start to -- so just to give it a little bit more launch. That was really it. It's a very, very minor change, but something that the guy suggested down there. Yeah, it makes sense.

**Q. You've played here before. What's the greatest challenge on this course?**

**RORY McILROY:** Probably expectations and patience, because it feels like there's not really many hazards out there; the greens are tricky but you can't really get yourself in a lot of trouble, so you think you can get out there and shoot 65, 66 every time you play, but it's not like that. It's just realizing that and hitting it into the middle of the greens when you have to.

As golf course architecture goes, it's one of the best out here, one of the best we play. Tour courses have to be of a certain size and certain -- we don't necessarily go to the best golf courses in the country because of that, but this is definitely one of them. It's great to be able to play here.

**Q. Is it a situation where your early season schedule's working to your advantage that you're able to get back out this week instead of waiting maybe two or three weeks after Pebble to get back out?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I mean, I guess so a little bit. It is nice. The great thing about golf, every week you start everyone's level again and you get to go again and work on things. So yeah, it is nice that I'm here this week after last week, but I still view the start of the season to be quite good for me in terms of what I've done and the progress I've made on my game.

Obviously results wise, last week at least wasn't what I wanted, but I still saw a lot of good stuff in there, which gives me confidence going into this week to think that I can do well.

**Q. You've dealt with plenty of commotion in tournament rounds given your stature now, but how much does it ratchet it up with Tiger?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, it's big. It's just more the movement. Obviously all you guys are out there following us. It's a bit of a waste of time following us when we're on our own, just hitting it, whatever. You know what I mean. So yeah, there's a lot of that, there's a lot of movement around. Just try and get the honor as quick as you can and try to keep it so not everyone's moving when you're -- but it's fine, it's good, it's good fun. I would rather be in this group than not.