

ROUND 2 INTERVIEW
February 16, 2018

RORY McILROY (-2)



GENESIS OPEN

RORY McILROY: Good, good back nine after a couple of three-putts on 7 and 8. Yeah, it was nice, played well. Hit the ball really well the last nine holes yesterday and then 18 today, so last 27 I played really nicely. Yeah, no one's getting away out there, it's very tricky, it's very U.S. Open-like conditions. Greens are really firming up, getting shiny. You miss fairways, it's very hard to get it close to pins. Yeah, pleased going into the weekend.

Q. With the difficulty the course was playing, it seems there are a huge number of people within five, six strokes of the lead and it seems like anybody really is in play there?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's going to be very hard for anyone to separate themselves because of how the conditions are. Yeah, again, I played okay, I'm within 5 going into the weekend, but there's a lot of guys around that number. Yeah, it's sort of anyone's tournament right now. 36 holes around here, it's a lot of golf. Happy to be in the position I'm in.

Q. I heard from a lot of guys this morning that played yesterday afternoon that it was brutal, the greens. How were they and what's the hardest part, what distance is the hardest part for you?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, yeah, you could see, I think, with the low light as well coming in, you can sort of see the little bumps, whether it's footprints or heel marks or just different levels of poa. I think the speed is more the thing because you don't want to -- you've got to be very conscious of the speed here especially because it seems like a lot of greens, it's not like one -- the slope isn't -- how do I describe this? It's all one constant slope, so it sometimes doesn't look as steep a gradient as it is, but you get up there and you touch one and all of a sudden wanders by six, seven feet. And then they're the toughest ones coming back are those inside four, five feet because you're hitting it -- you can't hit it hard enough for it to stay on line if there's a few bumps because if you miss the hole, you're going to have the same coming back. So you've got to us sort of hope a little bit that it's a true roll and it's going to catch the hole and go in.

Q. I know you were focusing on your own game for these two rounds, but were there enough good signs in Tiger --

RORY McILROY: He's very close, he is very close. Give him a little bit of time. He's still figuring a few things out with equipment, I think, sort of in between drivers and whatever, but he's close. We saw that yesterday with his short -- I mean, I thought his short game display yesterday was very, very impressive. He still -- he struggled a little bit more today, but he

hits enough good shots to know that if he sort of pieces it all together, he's going to be right there. I think everyone just has to be patient with him, especially him being patient with it and just give himself time. It's a good thing he's playing next week just to get back at it.

Q. Do you get that from talking to him that the passion is still there?

RORY McILROY: Oh, yeah, of course. He loves the game. There's no bigger golf nerd in the world than Tiger Woods. He absolutely loves it. So yeah, I have no doubt. I think I was very impressed with him in November when I played with him just back home. Didn't play the way he wanted to over the last two days, but it's more sharpness, it's just playing tournament rounds and all that sort of stuff. It's not too far away.

Q. For someone who just came off a long layoff, how hard is it 10 months after back surgery to come right out and --

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, I don't know, it might have been like this like the whole Tiger mania and these dudes, but I swear, playing in front of all that, he gives up half a shot a day on the field. Like it's two shots a tournament he has to give to the field because of all that that goes on around. So whether that calms down the more he plays and it doesn't become such a novelty that he's back out playing again because it's -- it's tiring. I need a couple Advil just to -- I've got a headache after all that.

Q. What do you mean by that, like somebody yelling in the backswing?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, just the whole thing. Guys, you've got a six-foot putt, "It doesn't break as much as you think," just stuff like this that they don't have to say. Just stuff. You know, whoever that's teeing off at 8:30 in the morning doesn't get that and can just go about his business and just do his thing. That's tough. He has to deal with that every single time he goes out to play.

Q. Did it break or not?

RORY McILROY: What's that?

Q. I'm just kidding. When you guys were in the 17th fairway rehearsing something, what was that about? Are you on a retainer now?

RORY McILROY: Depends on how much he pays me. No, no. Not really, we were just talking about a few different things, started talking about the driver, like that drive he hit on 17 was a little, like it didn't spin enough so it sort of nose dived to the right. Just talking about that sort of, yeah, technical stuff.

Q. You changed putters?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I just went back to the putter I used for the first two tournaments

this year because there was a little bit extra length on that putter I used yesterday, so I couldn't -- my eyes just weren't in the right spot. So I practiced with the original one yesterday in the mirror and just getting my eyes sort of aligned again and where they need to be over the ball. Felt like with the little extra length in the putter, everything just wasn't matching up. So felt good today.

Q. How many putters are in the McIlroy shed?

RORY McILROY: 102.