

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
August 2, 2018

RORY McILROY (-5)



RORY McILROY: I don't think you could find -- I was saying over there, you can't find this golf course any easier than we had it today. It's soft, it's probably the softest I've ever seen it. Usually you have to hit your ball in the fairway here, but even I missed a few shots in the rough and it seemed like, you know, you could even get your ball to stop on the greens, even if they're tucked behind bunkers. Ninth hole's a prime example, I missed it in the right rough and the pin's tucked over that bunker front right and I still felt I could go straight at it and not worry about it going through the green.

So you needed to take advantage of the conditions today. It looked like most of the guys have done that, which is good.

Q. (Question about using driver.)

RORY McILROY: Not really, I'm just working through a couple of things, but I got it going on the -- towards the end of the round, which was good to see. But yeah, no, the ones that I missed in practice, I was missing them right, and then the first couple tee shots today I missed left. So it's fine. I think it's minuscule things. Whenever you're swinging it that hard and at that speed, it just has to be a little off and it sort of is magnified. But I got it going later in the round, which is good.

Q. When Tiger is lurking now on the leaderboard like he is today, at the British Open on a Sunday, what is the energy like compared to back in 2012 when he was chasing you at Honda, or is it different at all?

RORY McILROY: No, not really. I mean, I was on the 8th green and he must have holed a birdie putt on 7 because we could hear it. It's still the same. You know, I think just because I've competed with him for a while now that maybe my -- I've sort of been desensitized to it a little bit, but it's still great to see. It energizes the entire game and tournaments that he plays at. It's good to see.

Q. (Inaudible) about a shootout against Tiger at some point. I mean, his recovery sets the stage where you can --

RORY McILROY: Yeah, it's funny, we were having good chats about it in 2014, thinking he was -- and then he sort of -- he still struggled a little bit. I mean, I think the surgery has just been a complete, not lifesaver, but it's really resurrected his career and it's given him an extra few years to go out and -- I mean, I didn't think that the progress would be this fast. I mean, even you look at -- I saw his sort of profile come up on the board and he's already had four top-5s this year, whatever it is, and he's given himself a couple chances to win. I

thought it was going to take a little bit longer than that, but I guess when you're sort of born with it, you have a knack for getting yourself in there and giving yourself a chance, I guess it never leaves you.

Q. Do you still have the other (inaudible)?

RORY McILROY: Hopefully. It's golf, so it's hard to -- you know, it's not like other sports where there's rivalries and it's hard. You know, even the best two players in the last generation, Tiger and Phil, they didn't go at it very often in final rounds. So hopefully one day, it would be cool, for sure.

Q. Who's your most memorable shootout with so far? Not Kiawah, not Congressional.

RORY McILROY: Myself?

Q. Valhalla?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, Valhalla, but I guess I wasn't in that group. Rickie and Phil were --

Q. Yeah, you were. On the 18th you were.

RORY McILROY: Very nice of them to let us join for one hole. (Laughs.) Yeah, I guess that's one of the most --

Q. (Inaudible.)

RORY McILROY: What's that? Yeah, that's when -- cheeseburger.

Q. Rory, do you recall when you first encountered Justin Thomas or saw him out here? Was there an immediate impression like as far as what kind of game he had?

RORY McILROY: No. I mean, I think the first time I met JT was down in Florida at the Bear's Club. We practiced a lot together. I was just -- it was nice to see someone come out on Tour smaller than me. It was nice. (Laughs.)

No, I mean, I think his amateur record and collegiate and stuff, he was a really good player. I like JT's attitude over everything else. He's got a nasty streak in him, which I think you need out here. He has that. When he gets himself in the hunt, you can see like a little twinkle in his eye and he really enjoys it.

Q. Did he hit it almost as far as you, or were you surprised at how far he hit it?

RORY McILROY: He was trying to.

Q. Do you have that same nasty streak?

RORY McILROY: Yeah. I think you need it, you need it. You have to have it. I think if you don't have it, it becomes -- you know, second places and third places become too comfortable and too acceptable. So yeah, I think you need it.