

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
February 12, 2020



RORY McILROY

MARK WILLIAMS: We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy to the interview room here at the Genesis Invitational. Rory, congratulations, back to No. 1 in the world. Obviously that's a big talking point, but before we get into that, just talk about your performance here last year, finished top-5, shot 63 on the second day.

RORY McILROY: Yeah.

MARK WILLIAMS: You're becoming familiar with this golf course from the sound of it.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so I played -- yeah, I think '18, yeah, '18 -- yeah, this is my third year. I mean, what's not to like? Riviera, L.A., the fields, the fact that nine of the top-10 players in the world are here on a great golf course. Yeah, I mean, it's got everything you need to be a big event. I think with Tiger hosting as well and taking that on, it obviously elevates it to a new level, obviously on par with what Arnold did at Bay Hill and what Jack's done at Memorial. So yeah, really, really feels like a big event. Looking forward to getting started tomorrow.

MARK WILLIAMS: It's been since 2015 that you've been No. 1, you're the current FedExCup champion, you're the current Player of the Year, PGA TOUR Player of the Year. Just talk about what it means to you to get back to No. 1 and the challenge to stay there.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, everyone keeps saying congratulations. I said the work's only started, staying there is the hard part.

But look, it's a calculation based on how you've played over the last two years. I've played well and I've played consistently well. The mathematics add up that I'm the top of the list right now and obviously I have a chance to stay there this week, but I've always said it's a by-product of doing the right things week in, week out, playing well, shooting good scores, trying to win tournaments, and if I can continue to do that, then hopefully that thing just sort of takes care of itself.

Q. Rory, staying on the No. 1 world ranking headline there, is there -- does it feel strange to move to No. 1 in a week that you weren't playing? And secondly, is there as much motivation to stay there now as there was, say, the first time that you got there?

RORY McILROY: No, because I'm sure at some stage in my career I took a week off and got back to No. 1. I don't know if this is the first time that's ever happened. I've already had that euphoric moment in 2012, I won the Honda Classic to get to No. 1 in the world. Tiger

was coming down the stretch, I was able to hold him off, like that to me was the really cool moment. At least I've had one of them, that's nice. To me it doesn't matter if I was sitting at home on the couch and got there or whatever, it just sort of is what it is.

So no, I've already had that experience and I think as long as you do get that experience, especially the first time you get there, that's all you need.

Q. I've got a question about drivable par 4s, which probably fit into your category more than some others. When you think of drivable par 4s in professional golf, what holes come to mind and what is your strategy here on 10?

RORY McILROY: The first hole I ever played as a professional golfer was a drivable par 4 was the 10th hole at The Belfry back in 2007. I hit 6-iron off the tee. I mean, look, this is possibly the best drivable par 4 in the world here at Riviera, the 10th. It's just so -- it's just as easy to make a six as it is to make a three, but all the statistics suggest that if you do go for the green, you're going to play the hole .3 of a shot lower than if you lay up. All the statistics suggest that it's a hole to go for.

Q. Rory, in addition to the wins last year, you led the Tour with 14 top-10s. Tiger's about to get his 200th at some point. Just curious, when you leave a tournament and you haven't won and you top-10, do you get any satisfaction out of that?

RORY McILROY: I think you have to look for positives every time you leave a tournament whether it's a top-10 or a win or even a missed cut. You have to be an eternal optimist in this game. I'm very proud of my top-10 ratio, I'm sort of right around the 50 percent number on the PGA TOUR. I'm probably a little higher than that of professional tournaments that I've played. I mean, I think it just speaks to consistency and being up there week in, week out. If you can go through the bulk of the year and only a handful of guys are beating you most weeks, if that's your sort of average week, then you're doing the right things. I always feel in golf and winning there's quite a randomness to it. Some weeks you get the right bounces, some weeks you don't, but at the end of the year it all sort of evens out. If you've played consistently good, you're going to have your chances, the door's going to open for you, you're going to make stuff happen, guys are going to give you some stuff. It's sort of the ways of professional golf, I guess. But yeah, my top-10 rate is something I'm proud of and something that I want to keep going, yeah.

Q. Do you recall a memorable top-10 that was not a win?

RORY McILROY: That was not a win? Yeah, there's always a few, especially when you don't have your best stuff and you just hang in there, you know, you get the best out of what you have that week.

Torrey Pines last year is a prime example of somewhere I finished fifth in that tournament last year, in 2019, and I could not have got one last ounce more out of my game. So you walk away from tournaments like that feeling like it's a mini victory in a way. You can hold

your head high and go, I got everything I could out of what I had this week.

Q. Rory, you and Brooks have had some kind of fun back and forth a little bit with the No. 1 thing and whatnot in the majors.

RORY McILROY: Have we?

Q. It seems so.

RORY McILROY: It feels like it's been a one way.

Q. Well, it has been one way. That's kind of where I was going. What's your impression of kind of the run that he was on with the majors and whatnot, and is there any little added satisfaction to overtaking him however scant a lead it is?

RORY McILROY: Not really. Brooks has been phenomenal the last few years. Even starting before he won the U.S. Open at Erin Hills, he won at Phoenix, he's doing well on the European Tour and he just went on a fantastic run obviously winning four majors in three years. So no, it doesn't -- again, I keep saying golf isn't about the other people, golf is about yourself and golf's about getting the best out of what you have. If you keep doing that and you keep that mindset, everything else will fall into place.

Q. But he has a first (no microphone.)

RORY McILROY: But that's -- that's not my area to comment on, that's his prerogative.

Q. Well, on a lighter note, we've learned recently that you are quite a movie buff and seeing some locations of films filmed here in Los Angeles. Have you done any of that this week and have you watched any of the films that were actually filmed at Riviera on the grounds here?

RORY McILROY: No and I don't think so. So no, we got in Monday night and then the last couple days have just been at the course and sort of, yeah, getting ready to play the event. I don't know what movies have been shot here.

Q. Follow the Sun, the Ben Hogan Story, is a famous one.

RORY McILROY: Okay.

Q. Old.

RORY McILROY: More your --

Q. Yeah. Do you watch a lot of movies besides reading books? Is that something you do to kind of just get your mind off of golf?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I do, I do. I watched a good bit of the Oscars Sunday night and was pretty intrigued to see how that was going to unfold. I really liked Once Upon a Time in Hollywood last year, I enjoyed that movie. I love Tarantino movies, I always enjoy those. Honestly, anything to get my mind off this is a good thing.

Q. Rory, where do you see the discussion after the distance insight survey evolving and where would you like to see it end up?

RORY McILROY: How long have you got?

Q. I have lots of time.

RORY McILROY: You know, I think the biggest thing that came out of the report for me, a lot of the stuff about the ball going too far and technology, it really pertains to 0.1 percent of golfers out there. So look, if they want to try to contain what we do as touring professionals, I'm all for that.

Selfishly, I think that that's only a good thing for the better players, but for the game in general, I think one of the best things that came out of it was the sustainability aspect and the fact that architects building these golf courses, and not even architects to a degree, but also the people that are giving the architects the money to build these golf courses with this grand ambition of maybe having a Tour event one day. Building these golf courses on these massive pieces of land, having to use so much water, so much fertilizer, pesticides, all the stuff that we really shouldn't be doing nowadays especially in the climate we live in and everything that's happening in our world. You look at what happened in Australia, you look at what happens in this state every August, September, October time with fires and global warming.

I think golf has a responsibility to minimize its footprint as much as it possibly can. For me, I think the sustainability aspect of what they're trying to do is very important and that's the one thing I would definitely stand behind.

Q. Rory, on the subject of the books, Digital Minimalism, do you see us as the author contends that an attachment to this (gestures to cell phone) could be a performance issue, a hinderance, and if so, tell me why and then what you've done to kind of back off.

RORY McILROY: Yeah, so it gets into digital minimalism about the prefrontal cortex and what staring at screens and being -- just information overload basically, how that can be detrimental to your cognition and your concentration and the ability -- I think there's no doubt that the fact now that so many kids have ADD or all of these different attention disorders is because of the screens that they're looking at from such a young age.

So yeah, there is a huge -- I would love to see people get away from it somewhat. I try my

best. We live in a world where we can't get away from it, we do need our phones, we do need -- you still need to stay connected.

But I downloaded an app a few weeks ago called Freedom, which is actually a really good word for what it does. It frees you of -- it's like a URL content blocker basically, so if you just want to have a week or a month where you see no news, no social media, whatever, you can block all that content on your phone. It's just basically like an extra layer of a VPN so that you only see what you need to on your phone whether it's a text message, a call or email. That's something that I started to try and do. And I only read one news outlet to get my news from, I don't go to so many different outlets because that can -- there's just so much information out there.

Q. Will you consciously dial back that information intake before an especially big event, THE PLAYERS --

RORY McILROY: Yeah, yeah, 100 percent. I try to lock my phone in the bedside drawer in the weeks of majors and just try and get away from it all. We do jigsaw puzzles, I read books, I do anything I can to just get away from that.

Q. Speaking of majors, you're No. 1 in the world now and having won Player of the Year last year, I'm wondering if you're the type to sit down and make goals at the beginning of the year, and if so, you know, what can bring you satisfaction now apart from the majors?

RORY McILROY: Yeah, I mean, my thing with goals is always I write down goals all the time. I write down goals at the start of the year, I write down goals at the start of weeks, what do I want to achieve this week or what do I want to achieve today, what's going to possibly make me better going into tomorrow. For me, it's all about the process and the steps.

I mentioned it at the start of this conference about the 10th hole being .3 of a shot easier basically if you go for the green. So into setting goals that are based on objectivity, statistics, strokes gained and stuff, all that. Just trying to work towards that.

I rarely set myself goals of I want to win this and I want to win that because all of those goals are just a by-product of doing the little things right and I'm a big believer in that. If you get the little things right day after day after day and you practice good habits and those habits become completely ingrained in what you do, the rest will follow.

MARK WILLIAMS: Rory, we appreciate your time. Have a great week.