

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**December 1, 2021**



**RORY McILROY**

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**Q. Nice shirt, it's in one piece.**

**RORY McILROY:** It is. It's another joke you tried to make that's not that funny.

**Q. You didn't like that one either?**

**RORY McILROY:** No.

**Q. First question is about Tiger. You've seen him, you've become friends with him, seen him doing well, but also at the same time saying that he's probably never going to play full time on the PGA TOUR again. What were your reactions or thoughts when you saw that?**

**RORY McILROY:** I mean, I don't feel like he's played full time on the PGA TOUR since 2013 really, so I mean it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone to hear that.

He's been through injuries and he's, you know, he's been through the wars. He's put his body through a lot. Yeah, I mean, I think if I were him at this point, I'd have no ambition to play a full-time schedule. You play the events you want to play, whatever gets your juices flowing. For him, that's the majors and maybe a couple other events a year and that's it.

I think he said yesterday that's what he feels like he can get himself ready for. I mean, it's smart, it's smart to do that. Yeah, and honestly, as I said, I don't think -- he hasn't really played a full-time schedule for a while, so it will just be nice to see him back on the golf course again whenever that is.

**Q. You personally, it feels like you in the media, your year's been up and down, but I get a sense for you you don't ride those ups and downs quite as much as you used to.**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I try not to. Yeah, there's been a few ups and downs. Obviously there was a stretch during the year where I didn't feel like I was playing my best and went on a different path in terms of sort of looking for answers and came back sort of down that road, came back up that road and learned some things. Feel like I'm certainly a more like a wiser player than I was maybe nine months ago.

Yeah, it's been -- I think it's been a year where I've struggled in parts, but I still got two wins on Tour, which is still pretty good. I got myself -- I was tied for the lead with nine holes to go in the U.S. Open. I played well in parts, I just didn't do it consistently enough. I go back to

2019 and had like 19 top-10 finishes or whatever it is, that's the level I want to play at.

**Q. You played this event at Sherwood, I think you played it at Isleworth.**

**RORY McILROY:** No, I didn't play at Isleworth.

**Q. Comparing Sherwood with this course, I know this is the first time you've played this tournament, but you're no stranger to the course. And also the time differences, I noticed this is a little bit earlier than in December when we used to play at Sherwood.**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I think the last time I played Sherwood was 2013. I was coming back from Australia after just playing in the Australian Open.

Yeah, I liked it at Sherwood. It feels like Christmastime. The Christmas trees were up and it sort of felt like the holidays. The Bahamas is a different feel and it's certainly different here at Albany, but it's nice.

I haven't played this event in a while and I felt while I was starting to feel like I was getting my golf game back and playing well, I wanted to play a little bit and this is another opportunity to play well and just build on, I guess build on the good play that I've seen over the last couple of months.

**Q. A couple of really, I mean, blinding starts to a career, yourself, Jordan back in '14, '15, and most recently Collin. From someone who's coming up on like 15 years on Tour now, sorry, what is the challenge and was the difficulty of sustaining, whether it's winning or consistency or --**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I think I heard a little bit of what Collin was saying there. It's just about resetting your goals. Yeah, just trying to keep improving as a player, try to not let complacency creep in at any point.

**Q. Is that difficult?**

**RORY McILROY:** At times. I think at times when you get successful and you maybe enjoy a little bit of that success, that complacency can creep in at times. It's about trying to guard against that as much as you can and keep resetting goals and just trying to keep improving and learning and bettering yourself as a golfer and as a human being I guess as well.

**Q. Rory, how long did it take to rip the shirt and when was the last time you did that before Dubai?**

**RORY McILROY:** It didn't take -- I mean, I pulled on my collar and it ripped. I don't know if I've ever done it before.

**Q. The Saudi Invitational, all the confirmed players came out in the start of this week,**

**but obviously in the background there's a lot of noise about it, Tour not granting releases for guys to play. Would that be a fair position by the Tour or should they be allowed to do as they please?**

**RORY McILROY:** I think we're independent contractors and we should be able to play where we want to play. So in my opinion I think the Tour should grant releases. It's an Asian Tour event, it's an event that has OWGR rankings, I don't see any reason why they wouldn't.

I do see reasons why they wouldn't grant releases, but I think if they're trying to do what's best for their members and their members are going to a place other than the PGA TOUR and being able to earn that money, I mean, we're independent contractors and I feel like we should be able to do that if that's what our personal choice is.

My personal choice is not to do that, but obviously a lot of players are doing that and I think it's fair to let them do that.

**Q. Going down the road there could be legal battles and arguments.**

**RORY McILROY:** I think the professional game needs to get to a point where we as professionals need to know where we stand. Are we actually independent contractors? Are we employed by a certain entity? That's stuff that's just -- there's a lot of gray area in that and that's what sort of needs to be sorted out, I think.

**Q. Is that stuff you've discussed with the PAC?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, yeah.

**Q. And has that just met with kind of the Heisman, so to speak, to use a college --**

**RORY McILROY:** Not at all. I mean, that's -- that's -- like I'd say most of the players on Tour would be in a similar opinion to me. If we want to go play somewhere, we should --

**Q. I meant actually the PAC speaking to the Tour.**

**RORY McILROY:** The PAC is players.

**Q. That's what I mean.**

**RORY McILROY:** You mean like the PGA TOUR board?

**Q. Sure.**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I mean, I think they understand where the players are coming from, too. I think some of the things that you're seeing the Tour put in place are a -- maybe a reaction to some of that sentiment.

Yeah, but again, my view as a professional golfer is I'm an independent contractor, I should be able to go play where I want if I have the credentials and I have the eligibility to do so.

**Q. With all the rumblings of the team concept and whatnot that's in the ether there, so to speak, do you feel like that can co-exist successfully with the Tour?**

**RORY McILROY:** No, so for me, like the PGA TOUR is the best place in the world to play. I'm not saying that the whole thing needs to be blown up and we do a different thing here.

I think if people want golf to be more innovative and they want it to be more engaging and they want to see different concepts, there's no reason why the PGA TOUR can't do that themselves, you know? They have the know-how how to put golf tournaments on, they have all the staff, they have everything, they have the best structure in place to do it.

I'm certainly not saying that I want anything else to come of this, but there are certain elements to different concepts of professional golf that I do see merits in, but I don't see any reason why the Tour couldn't do it themselves.

**Q. Rory, I know you talked about two wins and being a pretty good year. You got 20 PGA TOUR wins. It's been a while since you won a major. We saw you win four majors in a pretty good time. How often do you think about the fact that it's been a while since you last picked up a major?**

**RORY McILROY:** Anytime you guys ask me about it is usually when I think about it.

Yeah, look, it's been a while, and since winning my last major I've done everything but win a major. I won THE PLAYERS Championship, I won two FedExCups, I've done basically everything there is to do in the professional game. If I keep playing the way I'm playing, I just keep giving myself chances, it will eventually happen again.

**Q. Rory, a couple of questions. One on the sentiments that you discussed about being independent contractors and being able to play, I was just wondering what are your thoughts that the European Tour as well as the PGA TOUR, the reaction has been a bit excessive towards the Asian Tour, not just the Saudi Golf League. It's a bit excessive towards the Asian Tour where there was no tournament for 19 months and they would have taken anything which anybody would have given to them which could have resulted in tournaments. I just wanted to know your thoughts about that. That's the first one.**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I mean, I don't know. Has it been excessive, because I don't know what the landscape is in Asia. Obviously I know there's been investment from LIV Golf Investments, 200 million, all that sort of stuff, but I don't know what the Tour's reactions have been.

So I don't know what the question or I don't know what the answer is to that question because I don't know what the excessive reaction is you're talking about.

**Q. So, for example, like the (indiscernible) Invitational on the same week as announced as Saudi, and now everyone has to take a release, even some of the Asian Tour players who were graduated from the Asian Tour and have won the Order of Merit and they have to take permission from the European Tour to play those events.**

**RORY McILROY:** Again, that's what I said at the start. I think those releases should be granted because we are independent -- if it's just to go and play in another tournament. But I understand the PGA TOUR's point. Pebble Beach is on the same time as the Saudi event, so they don't want to lose their top players to go play on another tour. I get it. That's why I talk about there's a lot of gray area and there's a lot of -- I think the players just need to understand where they stand, where are we because we feel -- I think the players feel like they're pawns at the minute in this big sort of global game of golf and we just want to know where we sort of stand. And as someone that represents the players on the PGA TOUR board, like that's on me to try to understand where we are and for people to feel comfortable playing where they play.

**Q. And the second question is just taking you back to some bad memories actually. DP World Tour Championship, how do you look back at a tournament like that where you played so well, had a really bad break and then you finished the way you finished?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, so I think --

**Q. How much time also it took you to just take it out of your system?**

**RORY McILROY:** It's fine. It's not -- it was more -- what I was angry about was how I reacted to the bad break, not the bad break or the fact I didn't win the golf tournament, because Collin played great. And even if I hadn't had that bad break, there was no telling that I was going to win the golf tournament. It was just my reaction to that bad break that made me angry because I basically lost my head after that and made a bogey on 16. And then so it was more just angry at the fact of how I responded to that was my big thing. The fact that I didn't win the tournament was totally fine, but it was more just the reaction of what happened after the break on 15.

**Q. I'm just curious, Rory, what's been the difference in the level of your confidence between where you were kind of during the Ryder Cup versus how you're feeling now about your game?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, it's -- I'm much more confident. I just think I'm much -- I'm more sure of what I'm doing. I guess it's a bit like we sort of talk about like Manchester United over the last few games have looked like they've been going out playing and not really having a strategy or a philosophy of how they want to play. That sort of felt like that was me for a few

months of this season.

Now I feel like I've regained like what my philosophy is and what my -- basically the sort of golf that I want to play. So it was just getting back to being really clear about that and I think that's really helped my confidence.

**Q. Can you articulate what that is?**

**RORY McILROY:** Again, just being more visual, more creative. Just being -- not being a perfectionist, I guess. Being okay that you're going to miss shots here and there and you have to use your imagination and your short game and your putter to bail you out at times and that's okay, that's golf. Golf's just about getting it around the course in the lowest amount of shots possible. I just had to accept that.

**Q. Do you have any change in your strategy going towards the Masters in April?**

**RORY McILROY:** Honestly, I haven't really thought about it to this point. I probably -- I don't really turn my attention to Augusta until sort of after the Florida Swing, so yeah, you're two steps ahead of me.

**Q. And last one, what happened to the shirt, the ripped shirt?**

**RORY McILROY:** I went to the pro shop, bought a new one, threw that one in the trash. I mean, this fucking ripped shirt, Jesus.

**Q. I'm not asking about the shirt, so don't worry there.**

**Another piece of equipment of a sort, you're in all MG3 wedges. Is that accurate now?**

**RORY McILROY:** That is accurate, yeah.

**Q. And I heard that you had done a fair bit of testing around them and you may have joined us on the "bounce is your friend" team. Is that accurate? You're a little bit higher bounce now?**

**RORY McILROY:** Very high. I went to a 14-degree bounce lob wedge --

**Q. Oh, wow.**

**RORY McILROY:** -- which has helped a lot, it really has. It's brought my ball flight down with my sort of longer shots. I mean especially a course like this week, really grainy, it's helped a lot around the greens. I just have more trust in it, just more trust it's not going to dig, it's going to get out of the ground a little bit easier. I went to the high bounce wedge in the 54 as well. Yeah, bounce is certainly your friend.

**Q. Anything else on longer shots or more mid range in addition to around the green?  
Any benefits you're seeing there?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, just being able to control my trajectory a little better. The ball doesn't get up as much so when you're able to control your trajectory better, you're able to control your distance better and I've sort of found that with them.