

**PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE**  
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**RORY McILROY**

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**JOHN BUSH:** We would like to welcome Rory McIlroy into the interview room here at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am. He's making his season debut on the PGA TOUR and his second start at this event.

Rory, welcome back. If we can get some comments on the week ahead.

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, good to be back at Pebble Beach, it's been a while. Played this event in 2018, played the U.S. Open here in 2019, that was my last time here.

The course obviously plays a little different this time of the year than in June. The yeah, just trying to refamiliarize myself with the golf course a little bit. I played Pebble today, I'm planning to play Spyglass tomorrow depending on how the weather is.

But it's good to be back. It's a different format and having most of the best players in the world here is a really good thing for the tournament.

I'm excited for what's hopefully going to be a great week and hopefully the weather cooperates. We'll go from there. Yeah, good to be back.

**JOHN BUSH:** Obviously the state of your game is very good with recent success, but just talk a little bit about that coming into the week.

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, two good weeks in Dubai. It's always been a comfortable, a comfortable place and a comfortable way for me to start the year. I had a good battle with Tommy the first week and learned a lot from that final day and tried to put some of that into practice the following week and was able to get a win there.

Yeah, obviously a great way to start the year, two weeks' play, two times in contention. And to get a win early on is always a nice confidence booster, a nice way to come into a busy, a pretty busy stretch here going sort of into the spring and beyond.

**Q. Rory, just you were talking about the weather. I just wanted to know what are some of the trouble holes during this competition that you're going to have to really worry about, especially with the rain that's going to be flowing in through the next couple days?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I think all the holes that are exposed and right on the coastline. So, jeez, there's not many that aren't, I guess. I'd say that 7, 8, 9, 10 stretch is going to be pretty gnarly if the weather is what we're expecting.



It can change and hopefully it does, but yeah, I think we're going to have to just knuckle down and get through some of those tough stretches.

**Q. Rory, LeBron and Steph Curry got into a double overtime game over the weekend and they spoke sort of glowingly of each other, it's a very elite group that knows what it takes to sort of play at that level year in and year out.**

**Do** you look at that and say yeah, I kind of know what they're talking about? And how do you sort of keep it fresh and keep the motivation? I think you're going into your 15th season here?

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, it's my 15th season on the PGA TOUR. I've been a pro -- so it was like half of '07, so if I just go full seasons, I think I'm going into my 18th full season as a professional; basically over half of my lifetime I've been a pro golfer.

You need to keep it fresh, you need to try to keep inventing ways to motivate yourself. But I don't find that overly difficult. I think there's always things that you want to achieve and things that you can get better at. Trying to have a growth mindset to goal set and try to achieve certain things is something that I've just learned to do as my career has progressed.

But I'm always I think just grateful for the opportunity to do what I love to do. As long as I wake up every day and I think that way, then I think that's probably a part of the reason why my longevity and consistency has been what it's been.

**Q. Rory, you've obviously started the year off very strong and one of the things that we follow that you changed is the golf ball. What's that process been like? You played the same golf ball for a number of years now. How do you find the new one has performed for you and what was it like going through the process of changing to the new one?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I thought it was a good opportunity to at least test it in Dubai. You've got desert conditions, there's not a ton of wind, it's a place that I'm comfortable with. I obviously tested it a little bit at home, liked that it was a touch of a lower launch than the golf ball I was previously playing, then a touch lower spin as well.

And it was a great test, it was two weeks in Dubai, because the greens got pretty firm at the weekend on both courses, so it was a good test to still make sure that the mid irons were spinning enough going into greens and still being able to hold greens. And it's fast, it's a really, really fast golf ball. Definitely feel like I've picked up a little bit of speed with it, especially off the tee.

And it's a little -- it's funny, it's a lower spinning ball, but it feels a touch softer to me around the greens, so I like that feel of it.



I think the sort of lower launch with the short irons and then the little bit more of a softer feel around the greens was sort of the big selling point to me.

Yeah, as you said, it's worked pretty well the first two starts of the year.

**Q. Is that mid-iron control like probably one of the most -- other than the short game, probably one of the most important things for you?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I like to play a low spin ball but not so low spin that when you're hitting a 6-iron or something into the green that you can't hold it.

But I also like that -- a very comfortable shot for me at the minute is sort of hitting this like hold-off sort of cut. The fact that it doesn't spin too much when I hit that shot I really like because I've always had this fear with whatever golf ball that I've played that if I hit that shot, there's a tendency to come up short because it spins a little too much. But I don't really have that fear with this golf ball, which is a really nice feeling.

**Q. I know you stepped down from the policy board, but you still seem to be involved in the decision-making process on some level. There was a meeting last night, there will be a meeting again tonight. What are your expectations coming out, if any?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I wouldn't say I'm involved in the decision-making process at all really. I just hope they get it done. I know that they were supposed to vote on it Sunday night and there was a delay, they were supposed to vote on it last night and there was a delay. I feel like this thing could have been over and done with months ago. I think just for all of our sakes that the sooner that we sort of get out of it and we have a path forward, the better.

**Q. When you say vote on it, I'm just trying to clarify, you're talking about some sort of agreement between the PGA TOUR, PIF and SSG, all three together?**

**RORY McILROY:** No. I think the PGA TOUR and SSG I think is the -- yeah, from my understanding. Again, I'm speaking off not as much knowledge as I used to have.

**Q. You go back to the weeks in Dubai, what did you learn specifically from the first tournament that you were able to apply in the second one?**

**RORY McILROY:** I think there was a couple of things in terms of just game management. There was a couple of left misses off the tee that I still had the week after, especially down the stretch on Sunday at the Dubai Desert Classic, but I feel like I sort of got a really good feeling with the driver to not hit that shot. It bit me on the last hole the previous week and it could have bitten me again coming down the stretch, but I stood up on 17 and 18, I hit two really good tee shots when I needed to. So I got a ton of confidence from that, especially with the sort of feeling that I had in my swing.

But that was -- that was really it. I felt like for the most part I played -- I made so many



mistakes the week before, I think I made a quad and three-putted from three feet that final day, hit that water ball on the last. I still had a one-shot lead playing the last. I think it was just about trying to eradicate some of the mistakes that I had been making, so a little bit of course management.

And it's going to be that way. I had only played one competitive tournament in like the last three months leading up to it. I think a little bit of sloppiness crept in and just I guess trying to sort of get that out of my game on the second week and it felt like I did a better job of it.

**Q. You said in the past that sometimes you watch highlights of your victories just for inspiration and maybe to draw something from that. Will you ever go back and watch a tournament that you didn't win to see what you can glean?**

**RORY McILROY:** There's been times, yeah. I think even certain shots on certain holes, whether is there a certain swing or a certain tendency, but I think like most people I'd much rather watch the good stuff than the bad.

**Q. Rory, is it fair to say that golf lends itself to long-shot winners more than most if not all pro sports, and why or why not?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think there's more parity in golf than maybe some other professional sports. I think it's the way the structure of the game is set up that you can have an amateur play in a professional event and have the chance to win, which I think is an amazing story and it creates these amazing stories in golf that I think are hard to create with other sports.

You have Leicester City won the Premier League a few years ago, which is an amazing story. I'm trying to think. Like Emma Raducanu winning the U.S. Open in tennis a few years ago I thought was an amazing story as well.

So you do have them, but I think they're more prevalent in golf just because of the way the structure that golf is and that sort of meritocracy, I guess. I think that's the amazing thing about this game, that we do have these storylines and we're able to -- you know, instead of Nick Dunlap being in school this week, he's playing with the best players in the world and his life's completely changed and that's an amazing story.

**Q. Rory, an odd set of dominoes falling with your TGL being pushed back a year and then obviously now Tyrrell jumping over to LIV. Just curious, are you kind of numb to these movements now with these guys going over to the other tour?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I think -- look, at the end of the day everyone needs to do with what's right for them. I had a long talk with Tyrrell on Sunday, completely understood where he was coming from. I've sort of been -- you know, I've talked to him quite a bit about it over the past month. It got to the point where they, you know, negotiated and got to a place



where he was comfortable with and he has to do what he feels is right for him.

So I'm not going to stand in anyone's way from making money and if what they deem life changing money, like absolutely.

But I think that the delay of TGL was a blessing in disguise. I think 10 months is a long time, especially in the game of golf right now. You know, who knows what the landscape's going to look like in 10 months' time.

I think at this point all I see is opportunity. I certainly think that there's tons of opportunity within the game to do great things. You know, who knows. Tyrrell might still play TGL in 10 months' time depending on what happens.

**Q. I was just going to follow up, there seemed to be a suggestion that he had committed to TGL, I think was it your team?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah.

**Q. So there was some discussion that he had to buy his way out of that commitment in some way. How did that eventually have to go for him to be released from his TGL commitment?**

**RORY McILROY:** I don't -- I don't think that -- I mean, I certainly have no knowledge of that, but if I did have any say in that, I wouldn't -- again, like I'm not going to stand in someone's way. He hasn't earned a penny from TGL, so I wouldn't make him pay to get out of anything.

**Q. Rory, since you made the decision last year to sort of step away from the business/political side, your success earlier this year would suggest it's had sort of the desired personal effect. I mean, has it had the effect you wanted and do you sometimes think should I have done this a little earlier?**

**RORY McILROY:** Should I have never went on the board? I think so. I actually -- I think I said this when I did step off, I'm happy being busy, I just like to be busy doing the things that I think are not "worth it," I think that's the wrong way to phrase it, but more I just didn't feel like I could influence things the way I wanted to and I felt like I was just banging my head against the wall and it was time for me to step off and kind of concentrate on my own stuff.

**Q. The discussions you had with Tyrrell, were they different than they would have been a year ago, first off, and second off, what kind of tenor did they take?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I think they're different than a year ago because, you know, we're potentially about to do a deal with PIF, who owned the large majority of LIV, and hopefully seeing things come back together here at some point. Yeah, I think the nature of the conversation was probably different than it would have been a year ago, absolutely.



Again, I said to him just like I said to Jon, like I'm totally supportive of your decision if that's what you feel is the right thing for you. Look, these are guys that I've spent a lot of time with, and I guess I've said this before, but I've come to the realization I'm not here to change people's minds, I'm here to just try -- especially when I was at the board level, trying to give them the full picture of where things are at and hopefully where things are going to go. They can do with that information what they want.

But at the end of the day I think I'm done with trying to change people's minds and trying to get them to see things a certain way or try to see things through my lens because that's ultimately not the way the world works. You know, these are guys that I respect and that I've spent a lot of time with and if that's what they feel is the best decision for them, then I'm going to, you know, be supportive of that decision and let them go and do their own thing.

**Q. In this effort to kind of repair a fractured landscape, do you have an opinion on how that gets done in terms of bringing guys back who cashed in to join with the guys who didn't, and is that difficult?**

**RORY McILROY:** I think life is about choices. Guys made choices to go and play LIV, guys made choices to stay here. If people still have eligibility on this tour and they want to come back and play or you want to try and do something, let them come back.

I mean, I don't -- I don't think -- I think it's hard to punish people. I don't think there should be a punishment for -- obviously I've changed my tune on that because I see where golf is and I see that having a diminished PGA TOUR and having a diminished LIV Tour or anything else is bad for both parties. It would be much better being together and moving forward together for the good of the game. That's my opinion of it.

So to me, the faster that we can all get back together and start to play and start to have the strongest fields possible I think is great for golf.

**Q. Is a win here at Pebble or at Riv cheapened by the fact that Jon and DJ and fill-in-the-blank is not playing that week?**

**RORY McILROY:** Yeah, I'd like to win here and stand up with a trophy on 18 green and know that I've beaten all of the best players in the world, so yeah.

**JOHN BUSH:** Anything else? All right, Rory, thank you for your time. Best of luck this week.

