

Production Transcript for REWIND\_25PLAY\_MCILROY.mp3

[00:00:35] >> From week to week, every year the PGA TOUR showcases a whirlwind of worldwide talent, taking the game by storm.

[00:00:44] >> Hole in one for the -- hole in one.

[00:00:52] >> In 2025 alone seven internationals have marched in the victory parade through the opening 11 events of the season. At the PGA TOUR's flagship event, flags from around the world will fly proudly at TPC Sawgrass, as the spotlight also falls on a brand new broadcast era, with the launch of this week's world team from our brand new state-of-the-art PGA TOUR studios; a field that is unmatched, competing on a course that is unparalleled, in front of a universal audience, all comprising an unprecedented event, at THE PLAYERS.

[00:01:45] >> PLAYERS' champion, Rory McIlroy.

[00:01:52] >> The first to win THE PLAYERS Championship back to back.

[00:01:56] >> The PGA TOUR is proud to bring you the season-long race for the FedEx Cup, now coverage of the 2025 PLAYERS.

[00:02:07] >> Just a stunning day to begin a singular week in professional golf. PLAYERS Stadium course at TPC Sawgrass is the backdrop, as it has been since 1982. And it once again welcomes the finest competitors from around the globe. Forty-eight of the top 50 in the world are here this week, and 56 international players hailing from outside the United States as well. And they're all trying to earn the distinction of being crowned the 51st PLAYERS champion. We had some heavy rain sweeping through Northeast Florida on Sunday and Monday that took a little bit of the fire out of the Stadium course. But it's been sunny, dry, and a little breezy over the last 48 hours or so, and Etz's masterpiece will present a stern test, as it always does. And we've got some highlights from earlier in the opening round, Jordan Spieth here, Billy, doing Jordan Spieth things at 11th.

[00:03:13] >> Yes, at the par-5, and 568 yards today, and finds the bottom of the hole.

[00:03:23] >> An eagle for Spieth at 11. Vince Whaley working here with his 2nd for par-4 7th.

[00:03:28] >> Well, the tee shot, it just so perfectly played, but to fit it over the bunker in-between the flagstick and draw it back like that, 2 at 7th always works. Little high five from Doug Ghim.

[00:03:44] >> Over at 11 here is Spieth who had it pretty earlier in the round. Could he put another one on the card here?

[00:03:49] >> Well, this one releasing down the hill, little bit down the green, making eagle at 11, back it up with 1 at 16.

[00:03:59] >> Always a high wire act with that man, and he was doing extraordinary things on the golf course earlier today. This was Alejandro Tosti for an eagle at the 9th.

[00:04:09] >> Big par-5, 611 yards, certainly made it small. And that's a nice 3 there.

[00:04:18] >> Second for Stephan Jager here at the 12th, playing 373 today.

[00:04:21] >> Yes, tried to drive it right up on the front edge; created a great angle to the hole location. Nicely done.

[00:04:29] >> And one of the international players in the field, a man who lives right here on the Ponte Vedra Beach area, Aaron Rai picking up a birdie there. And he's in good shape to start the week here. Looking on the leaderboard here for the first time. And it is Aaron Rai sharing the lead with Alex Smalley; Rai with five holes remaining in his opening round. Sepp Straka, one of the season's champions, the Austrian who won the American Express out in La Quinta, California. Spieth has three holes remaining. Former United States Open champion, Lucas Glover also with minus 3.

[00:05:16] >> Now let's go out to Thomas, who has a birdie try at the 9th.

[00:05:23] >> One of the past PLAYERS champions in the field, Justin Thomas, there. Just across the way, third shot into the 2nd for Min Woo Lee.

[00:05:37] >> Just one hop and stop is what he's looking for.

[00:05:44] >> Hmm, look down from high on the Scheffler effort, pause at 1 and 2; as little scruffy, but this might help here, Colton.

[00:05:55] >> Yes, the rough is choosy out here so it does put a premium on the fairways. But this man does this more than any other person in the field. He positions his ball perfectly. And this is a very good look for the first circle of the day possibly.

[00:06:10] >> Well, as much as McIlroy flourished on the greens last week, Scottie was terrible, last in the field. And that will be really helpful. Beautiful 2 from Nelly, 30 feet there -- -- as we go to 17.

[00:06:27] >> And things getting a little toasty.

[00:06:29] >> Suguri made a hole in one yesterday in the practice round, jumped in the water. Well actually, he was thrown in the water and he would love to duplicate that again. Not sure you want to be that aggressive. Oh, wonderful shot.

[00:06:43] >> That is so good.

[00:06:45] >> That's basically as far that you want to play. Check this out, ladies and gentlemen, this was yesterday in a practice round. Little sautéed wedge in there. Get a -- that's a great pole location, get a landing above coming down the slope. And the joy, the joie de vivre, check this out. This could be the greatest celebration of all time. I wish it was in a competition.

[00:07:11] >> Do it. Do it.

[00:07:16] >> Can't believe the water's that shallow.

[00:07:17] >> And how do you get out of there, that's the question. And Mr. Kratzer, you live around here; there's a few reptiles that are lurking in that pond.

[00:07:27] >> Mmm, be careful here.

[00:07:29] >> Come on.

[00:07:30] >> Ah, this is sensational stuff.

[00:07:39] >> Now, Min Woo Lee. This is at the 5th. And this starts three birdies in five holes for the 26-year-old.

[00:07:57] >> Back to the 3rd here. Yes, the young box shaped and tee.

[00:08:01] >> And for the birdie for 3rd, and the birdie for 2nd.

[00:08:12] >> Come over for Jager, it's his 3rd at 16. A little bit well to the right in the lay-up; this from 121.

[00:08:19] >> Yes, you can see him sliding it in just a little bit lower.

[00:08:29] >> And through the eight holes the putts that he has made either for birdie or for par, they've all found the center of the cup.

[00:08:38] >> And gaining strokes significantly on these greens through the first eight holes.

[00:08:42] >> I would certainly think he makes this.

[00:08:44] >> Yes, good call. Walk it in. Out in 31. And Jager is here at 17.

[00:08:59] >> Ooh, that's one of the lower trajectories we've seen.

[00:09:02] >> Oh.

[00:09:02] >> Oh, it grabs just enough.

[00:09:19] >> Now, Morikawa, little gentleman's persuader here at the 8th hole; 224 back into the breeze.

[00:09:28] >> Yes. On tour years ago they would call this shot a "chandelle".

[00:09:42] >> Morikawa would make par.

[00:09:48] >> Camilo at 17. So we get to 5 on this through his first eight holes. Well done.

[00:10:07] >> McIlroy for birdie at the 9th.

[00:10:15] >> Give it to him. Couple of bogeys at 3 and 7, memory open with the back-to-back birdie, so out in 35.

[00:10:30] >> Echavarria has to tee here at 17.

[00:10:33] >> Eleven birdies today, still playing a little par and playing the fifth toughest hole in the golf course. It's because of that back hole location up on the shelf.

[00:10:45] >> And excellent.

[00:10:46] >> Echavarria would fashion a birdie at 17.

[00:10:54] >> And McIlroy on the way here at 10, Cole.

[00:10:56] >> Yes, decent lie here for McIlroy here right rough 158. Back into a breeze from his right. Aggressive line. Oh, man, really aggressive.

[00:11:18] >> Birdie putt for Villegas here at the 3rd. Scratch.

[00:11:21] >> Oh, what a bounce back after the bogey. Let's go to 12th with Rickie Fowler.

[00:11:35] >> Oh, the speed is perfect.

[00:11:36] >> Mm-hmm.

[00:11:44] >> To the home ball.

[00:11:46] >> Yes, and a chance for Min Woo Lee to salvage par and tie for 67.

[00:11:53] >> Oh, that's a good one. What a save. He didn't get the 16th, but that was a heck of a par on the 18th hole.

[00:12:05] >> Well, Xander fortunate to be putting for a birdie here, Cole.

[00:12:11] >> Oh, that quite easily got one more skip and in the penalty error; now a pretty good look for birdie. That's not his best stuff today, but he is hanging in there. Oh, well it's back-to-back birdies. He's done that twice today, at 1 and 2, and now 16 and 17. And --

[00:12:32] >> Back at the 8th, and a tee shot as Villegas dove into the rough there.

[00:12:37] >> Yes.

[00:12:45] >> Brilliant second shot for McIlroy to recover and set himself up here.

[00:12:49] >> Yes, and a high percentage to make this putt; right to left.

[00:13:01] >> Began the back nine with three straight birdies and closes with one for 67.

[00:13:09] >> Forty-three-year-old Camilo Villegas is tied for the lead at THE PLAYERS Championship, while Rory McIlroy 67 places him just one shot back. The second round is next.

[00:13:36] >> PLAYERS champion, Rory McIlroy. The first to win THE PLAYERS Championship back to back.

[00:13:57] >> Well, we've got five decades of rich PLAYERS Championship history under our belt. So much of it for the last 42 years has been written here at TPC Sawgrass. Many of those chapters leading to storybook endings, but some stories cut short in heartbreaking

fashion. Such is the narrative of the Stadium course, which will attempt, and tantalize, and give and take throughout the week. And so the very best from around the globe look to author their defining story here at THE PLAYERS. Seventy-two degrees, breeze is gently blowing out of the east northeast today, will be pumping come the weekend. The opening round was actually buttoned up earlier this morning, five players competing round one. Second round began as scheduled. John Swantek, Craig Perks, Billy Kratzer, all here this week. Great scoring for the second straight day. How about this one from Harris English at 18?

[00:14:50] >> Yes, dead center of the fairway. Harris bringing it in from the right, trying to fit it in-between the fringe and the flagstick, and of course you hole.

[00:15:00] >> One of the season's champions at the Farmers Insurance Open. Craig, J.J. Spaun has terrific form coming into the week.

[00:15:08] >> Yes, no question about it. And a 3rd and a 2nd at -- that's 66 he shot day one. That's his lowest round here at THE PLAYERS Championship.

[00:15:21] >> Front hole location at 17 today, this one is highly accessible.

[00:15:25] >> Yes, just 128 yards. I'm expecting to see a hole in one. Early scoring average today, 2.82. Yesterday it was well over par. And Billy Kratzer, a target rich environment right there.

[00:15:41] >> It certainly is; but we saw Collin Morikawa yesterday employ this shot, and did not have this success. He did get it up and down, but that's like finding one, and you find one early and then you find one late. That was a bonus.

[00:16:06] >> Morikawa looking for redemption after letting the Arnold Palmer Invitational get away last week. Rory McIlroy in pursuit of his second PLAYERS title here.

[00:16:14] >> He amazingly pieced together that round yesterday of 67, just hitting four fairways. Lowest score ever shot around here, hitting four fairways. Start chipping in like that Rory's going to be dangerous.

[00:16:25] >> Brilliant shot in the 18, on his way to an opening night of 31 today.

[00:16:29] >> Yes, finding the fairway makes all the difference. Beautiful iron shot. Beautiful control of the irons as far as the distance is concerned.

[00:16:39] >> And Rory just a shot off the lead at the moment. Min Woo Lee one of those players at 11-under right now.

[00:16:45] >> Yes, young Australian, had a tremendous performance here a couple years ago when he was in the final group with Scottie Scheffler. He has the length, and today through 36 holes certainly looks like he has the precision as well.

[00:16:58] >> The third playing 157 yards for the second round.

[00:17:01] >> Yes.

[00:17:01] >> Well, 157 yards, this is the one that you have to go and get. This hole location right on the front you're going to put a 9-iron, 8-iron in your hand. You have got to get the 3rd hole with this hole location.

[00:17:13] >> Nice to see those receptive greens playing 30 yards shorter today in the 3rd than it did yesterday.

[00:17:19] >> Just hasn't made any critical mistakes through the first couple of days, Min Woo Lee. And that one went just enough as he urged it on at the 5th.

[00:17:30] >> Well, the green's very -- the green will get some spicy winds in the weekend that may firm these greens up.

[00:17:38] >> Always an intriguing mix of players that get into contention here the first couple of days, right; 23-year-old Akshay Bhatia is in the mix.

[00:17:44] >> Yes.

[00:17:44] >> And you start looking at his putting -- what he's done with his putting so far as the straight strokes game is concerned, he's made a huge leap up into the top 30 the last couple of years.

[00:17:59] >> He's got to share the lead as he plays his second here at the 6th.

[00:18:03] >> Trying to bring it in a little left to right, trying to just take it out of the air just a little bit, just another high-quality iron shot.

[00:18:13] >> So it's Lee and Bhatia, two fresh-faced youngsters atop the leaderboard at 11-under par right now.

[00:18:26] >> But all the guys that have gone to the longer putter and employed this method, they've all had success.

[00:18:35] >> Well, they had success today, round at 66 to get them at the top.

[00:18:49] >> Stephan Jager.

[00:18:51] >> Well, this would be --

[00:18:53] >> I mean you talk about it somebody that's got it rolling.

[00:18:56] >> Yes, 4 and 6 holes.

[00:19:02] >> You just see the flag fluttering beneath the canopy of the tree there.

[00:19:06] >> Yes, the iron play has been so good today. He's played the correct shot, the eyes are connecting once again to the flag; like just absolutely buried --

[00:19:19] >> Wow.

[00:19:19] >> -- every flag out here.

[00:19:22] >> Another birdie for Thomas.

[00:19:30] >> And --

[00:19:31] >> That's great that he -- his work with Ernie Els and trying to weaken that left hand, trying to get it a little bit softer --

[00:19:37] >> Ernie with his smiling.

[00:19:42] >> -- to hit shots like that.

[00:19:50] >> Justin Thomas chance to get to 11-under here, Cole, from, I don't know, just inside 19 feet. Going to turn? Is it going to turn? Oh, yes, it is perfect putt from Justin Thomas, 11-under par on this round today, and boy, did he rise to the occasion. And a little thumbs up to the boys from NBC.

[00:20:14] >> We stay with Thomas. Historic round in progress for 2021 PLAYERS champion Justin Thomas, 11-under par after that birdie back at 17. And he does this, starts it down the right-hand side, not turning back as much as he needs. He needs a soft bounce.

[00:20:49] >> Well, it's not the greatest of lies here for Thomas in the right rough at the home hole.

[00:20:58] >> The former PLAYERS champion looking at 206 yards out of this thick rough. You must consider the limbs hanging just ahead and the lake to the left.

[00:21:17] >> Comes out low turning to the left. Oh, look out.

[00:21:19] >> Oh, easy. Oh, a chance for the course record may have just been washed away at 18.

[00:21:33] >> Now Thomas's 4th.

[00:21:37] >> Realistically got to try and get this up and down or even hole it for history. When his short game is stellar, he just is able to pick these little wedge shots just so beautifully.

[00:22:02] >> Hmm, what a shot.

[00:22:03] >> How about that?

[00:22:11] >> And Sungjae Im trying to move to minus 1. Just a couple of feet remaining for bogey, and to match the lowest round we've ever seen on the Stadium course. Sixty-two for Justin Thomas at 10-under par Friday.

[00:22:40] >> Yes, the only 5 on the card came at the final hole, but that was a heck of a round of golf.

[00:22:50] >> Thomas ties the course record with a 62, a 16-stroke turnaround from round one to two, the largest improvement in PLAYERS Championship history. The third round is next.

[00:23:17] >> PLAYERS champion, Rory McIlroy -- -- the first to win the PLAYERS Championship back to back.

[00:23:38] >> So we have reached the halfway point of the PGA TOUR's flagship event, where the receptive conditions at TPC Sawgrass greeted this classy field with a handshake on Thursday and Friday. But today, however, this Stadium course is going to be throwing some haymakers in blustery conditions. This place has gone from welcoming to menacing. Conditions were a little more favorable for the early players out today, and they included Justin Thomas off that record sheering performance yesterday. Boy, did he pick up where he left off.

[00:24:13] >> And he certainly did, and we saw this time and time again yesterday, the iron play; all of a sudden it went from not very good to very good on Friday and the early start here.

[00:24:30] >> Danny Walker got in the field as an alternate, Craig, then made the cut on the number. He did some work this morning.

[00:24:35] >> Missed a couple of short putts late in there yesterday, Billy, a race still out from the -- would go out and continue to drive it in the fairway. That's so important. These greens are prepared differently today because of the wind depth. Slowed them down and they will continue to slow down throughout the day and still quite receptive even with the gusty weather.

[00:24:56] >> And you see that it was relatively calm when Walker was out there this morning doing some damage to the golf course. How about this one into the 11th?

[00:25:03] >> Yes, this is really taking advantage of not only making the cut on the number, but taking advantage of the break that he got being an alternate giving into the field, advancing. I mean, this is a massive week for Walker.

[00:25:19] >> Two weeks ago Joe Highsmith made the cut on number one in the Cognizant Classic, so maybe inspiration for Danny Walker and, "Now, listen, you go out and shoot 66 today, you've thrust yourself up the leaderboard." Another 66 from Corey Connors, one of the elite ball strikers in the game, and when this club is behaving, he's a tough customer.

[00:25:41] >> Yes, and the putters have been very good the last couple of weeks, especially today, but that is going to be a round that propels him into a higher position. I wouldn't be surprise if he's in the top five at the end of the day.

[00:25:55] >> Echavarria had an 18 here earlier; all over it.

[00:25:57] >> I mean, guys are going to come in here with wedges pretty much all long. You can see the strength of the wind, 17 and 18, and it's all about the judgment, and how do you flight it? But then you can cap it off with a nice six-foot putt there.

[00:26:12] >> He's as good a strike as anyone.

[00:26:13] >> Mm-hmm.

[00:26:14] >> And John, you mentioned before we came on, leading the field and strokes getting putting, that's a lethal combination. The third today 182 yards down one from the left. The hole location on the right sits up beautifully for Scottie Scheffler. Cutting it back



there. He's shown a lot of frustration so far this week, but that will ease some of the anxiety. There have been 14 birdies so far today at the par-3 3rd.

[00:26:38] >> You would be a fool to count that man out. Scheffler got it to 6 under par, within 5 of the lead.

[00:26:50] >> Will Zalatoris got to snuck into picture with a bogey-free round yesterday, and he's got a chance to get to 9-under here.

[00:26:57] >> Yes, 8-under par, and you get off to a good start, maybe make it from 20 feet here. Good effort. Oh, yes.

[00:27:08] >> Ooh, baby, watch out for this man this weekend.

[00:27:13] >> Wow, great to see Bud Cauley, not only playing but playing well. This is his 3rd at the 9th.

[00:27:21] >> Back into the wind you can be aggressive. Oh, perfection. How about birdies at 6, 7 and eagle at the 9th? He's at 33 and 8-under.

[00:27:38] >> Well, two outstanding shorts into the par-5 2nd for Lucas Glover.

[00:27:42] >> Yes, two big shots reeling in.

[00:27:44] >> Mm-hmm.

[00:27:44] >> Taking advantage of it.

[00:27:49] >> And Scottie was reacting to how quickly that one just buried its head there as he plays his 3rd at 6.

[00:27:57] >> The ability --

[00:27:58] >> Hmm.

[00:27:59] >> -- to come back.

[00:28:00] >> Mm-hmm.

[00:28:02] >> Scheffler would make birdie.

[00:28:03] >> Look for something to come in a little bit lower, try and skip back there. He's driven it in there. This looks promising.

[00:28:14] >> Oh. Up to the 3rd.

[00:28:18] >> The 45-year-old Lucas Glover, motivated, dedicated, deep down still believes he can compete. This is pitch shot at the 3rd down the hill. Oh, yes he can compete. And how about those two back-to-back birdies?

[00:28:35] >> And Spaun pitching back up the slope here at the 2nd.

[00:28:41] >> Nice work.

[00:28:42] >> Very nice.

[00:28:43] >> Yes.

[00:28:44] >> Very nice.

[00:28:47] >> And back to the 2nd. With Rory we can see the top half of the ball there.

[00:28:54] >> Straight up in the air. What a golf shot that is.

[00:28:58] >> Both McIlroy and Spaun would make birdie.

[00:29:03] >> Alex Smalley, remember, hit it over the green.

[00:29:16] >> J.J. Spaun here from 27 feet; this for the birdie.

[00:29:25] >> Oh, yes, indeed.

[00:29:33] >> Bud Cauley just three off the lead here.

[00:29:35] >> Yes, and 326 drivable. Ooh, careful. Careful. Careful.

[00:29:48] >> No. Aw.

[00:30:03] >> Beautiful eagle from Stephan Jager. That 2nd was from 244 and landed so softly.

[00:30:11] >> Will Zalatoris for his birdie.

[00:30:15] >> I like the way he's been putting, Greg.

[00:30:18] >> Well, birdie to 1st coming down the hill, breaking correctly. There's two birdies to your point. His proximity number is best in the field. Bhatia back up on the tee. Loves to hit some shots, so take it down the bunker and cut it.

[00:30:42] >> Ooh, cart path.

[00:30:47] >> Get back there in a second and get that all sorted out. Let's look in on Smalley here at 6. He's just two off the lead.

[00:30:54] >> Base delivery; does it often.

[00:30:59] >> Smalley would make birdie from there.

[00:31:10] >> At the 10th, that's a par for Scheffler, so no bogeys on the card.

[00:31:16] >> Will move to his right. And this is Alex Smalley's 3rd at the 7th, and oh yes, indeed.

[00:31:45] >> Here, Cole Swatton.

[00:31:48] >> Well, he's only made two bogeys for his 1st 36.

[00:31:56] >> Here we might see this one here just wander off to his left as it loses speed. Scheffler for the birdie at the 11th, just made one so far today. He's 4-under par. He's just two back of the lead. This is his 3rd at the 15th.

[00:32:24][ Applause and cheering ] Up to 13 and Scheffler on the par; 386 yards today, the 13th.

[00:32:38] >> Yes, coming off the bogey at 12, and bouncing right back with a splendid iron shot.

[00:32:46] >> Scheffler moves to 7-under.

[00:32:50] >> Potentially yet to make a birdie here through the first seven holes.

[00:32:57][ Applause and cheering ]

[00:33:01] >> Six birdies and an eagle on the round for Bud Cauley today, and he could join the leaders at 11-under.

[00:33:06] >> And this would be for three straight. Doesn't move much once it gets up on top. And oh, man, poor ender.

[00:33:20] >> Bhatia bunkered at the 8th.

[00:33:23] >> Kind of a flat part, some green that can use. And --

[00:33:28] >> Oh, this shot.

[00:33:28] >> -- did he do it?

[00:33:29][ Applause and cheering ]

[00:33:41] >> J.J. Spaun threw a green change here at 9 for an eagle. Oh, my. All right, Cauley for par at 18 and a round of 66 in the afternoon wave.

[00:34:05] >> Glover at 13, his 2nd at the par-3. Oh, yes, indeed. Yes indeed.

[00:34:20] >> Coming in low -- -- and kind of missed the green. That's a mistake.

[00:34:27] >> What kind of a kick is that? Oh, my gosh.

[00:34:41] >> Back to 12 where McIlroy made a bogey and Spaun will make a birdie; stretch the lead. Coughed up some valuable shots here. Hmm. Scheffler on the 18th green. Pretty. And that's an unfulfilling round of 72 for Scheffler who was within four of the lead at one point and now is eight back.

[00:35:39] >> Well, this one looks better; a whole lot better.

[00:35:44] >> Oh my God. What? Double bogey at 15, let's just go ahead and follow it up with a 3 at 16.

[00:35:56] >> About seven feet for his par. Oh. Get the heart rate down, some deep breaths, and just center of the green. That's all we're looking for here. Oh, my gosh. Oh, no. Oh, disaster.

[00:36:24] >> Yes, that's a lot of fairway cut of grass to go through, right here.

[00:36:34] >> How about it? How about that one?

[00:36:40] >> Alex Smalley in the bunker. This is his 2nd at 17. And then it chunk and run up the hill. Beautiful.

[00:36:50] >> Smalley makes another great save and stays at 10-under.

[00:36:56] >> Yes, that's a stab poke down with a final hole here with a driving iron 312 yards. Leaves him only 160 to this back pin location. Long is no good. Decent strike just a little right of the flagstick. And that's pretty easy now.

[00:37:15] >> It's pretty.

[00:37:22] >> Thank you.

[00:37:24] >> So the final four players remain on the golf course. They get an early start tomorrow because of some impending weather.

[00:37:42] >> Go, yes, go ahead and rattle one in for par at the last. What a way to finish the round.

[00:37:59] >> Putting on almost the identical line, Billy.

[00:38:03] >> Yes. This to move up the leaderboard one shot, get it in at 73 today, four behind, well within range.

[00:38:20] >> No question about it.

[00:38:23] >> Good job, good job, good job. Good job.

[00:38:30] >> Spaun, Cauley, Smalley, the tee-up all looking for their first PLAYERS Championship. But Rory McIlroy moved just four shots back. Who will take home the 51st PLAYERS? The final round is next.

[00:39:19] >> After a blustery and bombastic Saturday that sent the scoring average soaring, today will be another fierce battle with the elements, impounding the internal battle that is always heightened here at the Stadium course.

[00:39:33] >> Out to the 2nd hole, McIlroy for eagle.

[00:39:37] >> Ben, I think it's a high percentage he makes this. And that was the first eagle he's ever recorded at the 2nd hole here.

[00:39:55] >> Whimsical hole here, just from 153 yards of front tee, sort of a front flag you've got to take it over the body of water into a hole. Hey, and the captain just made a widened hole.

[00:40:07] >> How about that? McIlroy first to take it on here, Cole.

[00:40:24] >> This one high moving right. Is it enough to get over that bunker edge?

[00:40:27] >> If it is, it's going to be close. It's going to have a downhill putt moving slightly to his right.

[00:40:42] >> Well, there have been eight birdies here at the 13th, including and also a hole in one. And this man is as good as anyone with the short irons.

[00:40:52] >> Hoge would make and move to 9-under.

[00:40:57] >> McIlroy now for birdie at the 8th.

[00:40:59][ Cheering ]

[00:41:05] >> For a share of the lead. What a 2.

[00:41:10] >> Yes. Nice little bounce-back there.

[00:41:12] >> This does have a little bit of movement to the left. Beautiful. Well done. That's the first birdie for the round.

[00:41:28] >> You make this, and now if you can capture one more.

[00:41:35] >> McIlroy for birdie at 11.

[00:41:40] >> Get in there.

[00:41:43] >> Get in there.

[00:41:45] >> Well, that will electrify all the fans.

[00:41:50] >> After a weather delay, we pick up McIlroy playing his 2nd at the 12th.

[00:41:59] >> Well, he's tried to fly it a little further.

[00:42:06] >> Ooh, spreads pretty quickly and getting better.

[00:42:13] >> And Tom Hoge has this for a round of 65 to post it 11-under par.

[00:42:25] >> And back to the 12th, and McIlroy from above the hole for birdie. Shakes one in.

[00:42:33] >> Spaun to save par.

[00:42:34] >> Eight feet. Disastrous, really. So that now drops him to 10. And to your point, John, McIlroy out in front with three shots.

[00:42:56] >> Up to the 16th where McIlroy is playing his 3rd.

[00:43:04] >> He's got to get going.

[00:43:05] >> Yes, the slower green speeds have really kind of thrown him off a little bit.

[00:43:12] >> A missed opportunity for McIlroy. He would make par.

[00:43:14] >> Where is he looking to land this one, Billy?

[00:43:18] >> I think you have to land it closer to the top of the ridge right there. That's pretty good right there.

[00:43:27] >> That's really good. That's amazing.

[00:43:29] >> Spaun ties the lead.

[00:43:41] >> Sends it a mile in the air, just barely left of the pin; similar line to Connors'. Here it comes.

[00:43:46] >> Well, it's all right. There's a little bit of a buffer there.

[00:43:56] >> McIlroy finds land and safely makes par at 17. Now, Spaun at 17.

[00:44:04] >> Should now gain pace and turn to the right. This looks marvelous. It's as good as you can expect under the circumstance.

[00:44:18] >> This is one of those ones you just stand up and bang it in.

[00:44:21] >> Didn't exactly bang it in, but it went to the bottom. That's all that matters.

[00:44:29] >> You saw the little shake of the head right there like, "How did that putt do that?"

[00:44:38] >> You know, this is an easy putt to hit too light.

[00:44:45] >> There's been just one birdie at 18 all day long. A second would bring the title. Oh, and he had it right on line. So McIlroy and Spaun with some unfinished business on Monday morning, three-hole aggregate playoff at 16, 17, and 18, and after that, if necessary, they'll return to 17 for sudden death.

[00:45:24] >> Rory McIlroy, the second ranked player in the world an order of 27 PGA TOUR victories, J.J. Spaun, ranked 57th in the world, has one victory on the PGA TOUR. They are the combatants in the ninth Monday finish in PLAYERS Championship history.

[00:45:43] >> Oh, you were the first to finish on score of 276, you're going to have the honor of this tee, okay?

[00:45:49] >> Okay.

[00:45:49] >> Guys, play well.

[00:45:50] >> Thank you.

[00:45:50] >> All right.

[00:45:51] >> Have a good one. Yes.

[00:45:52] >> Well, he's got to take it right near that stand of trees on the left.

[00:45:57] >> And he said last night the importance on this shot, getting it in the fairway.

[00:46:04] >> Well, he is taking it down that left side, up and over those pine trees. This could be really good.

[00:46:10] >> I'm going to tell you, you couldn't stamp it out there any better than that. I mean, that is absolutely perfect.

[00:46:18] >> Go, Rory.

[00:46:25] >> Well, this one for J.J. Spaun leaking a little bit out to the right hand side.

[00:46:30] >> Go J.J.

[00:46:33] >> Oh, that's a lay-up there.

[00:46:36] >> It's likely to be a lay-up; we'll see.

[00:46:38] >> And I believe he's still going to -- he's still looking definitely at that front right. And this one heading for the bunker; mmm, no, no.

[00:46:52] >> Oh, the margins are close.

[00:46:55] >> Now, this is a wedge for McIlroy, driver wedge. This thing is a mile in the air left off the pin. Might need to take a seat.

[00:47:12] >> Smartly played.

[00:47:15] >> A very clean line in the bunker here, short right of the green at 16. Pinned up on top of a little bit of a crown. You've got to be precise here. Well, it's the first bunker of the week for J.J., and a disappointing shot.

[00:47:33] >> In years past, would be really quick. Not this year.

[00:47:37] >> And then I think in the back of the mind, "Man, make a 3 and you might have a two-shot lead with two to play and you can play those last two back in the wind so differently.

[00:47:44] >> Mmm.

[00:47:44] >> Uh-oh. There you go, Rory.

[00:47:52] >> This pin location is very exposed. I would allow a little extra for that.

[00:47:56] >> Get in the hole.

[00:48:06] >> I think it's the kind of putt that may be off-center just ever so slightly, but put some pace behind it.

[00:48:14] >> And it helps you play the next two differently with that one-shot lead.

[00:48:21][ Applause and cheering ]

[00:48:25] >> That group in the three towers behind the green.

[00:48:33] >> Well, this is a 9-iron on its way, just slightly left.

[00:48:37] >> Aw, very good. He looked a little anxious. It was clearing deep. It went through the wind. You saw the apex at 83. You get it above 90 and it's going to get knocked out of the air. Excellent shot. J.J. has a little peak. We'll take it.

[00:48:55] >> Yes, it is an 8-iron here for Spaun. And to me looks like he's aiming a little bit more aggressively. This one looks a little heavy; floating. You just cannot believe it, it's gone right through the wind.

[00:49:14] >> McIlroy for birdie at 17.

[00:49:26] >> That was gentle.

[00:49:28] >> Mmm.

[00:49:28] >> And still wanders by.

[00:49:37] >> After playing from the drop zone and playing his 4th to here, Spaun has this for double.

[00:49:45] >> Disastrous. Just going to be a 6th.

[00:49:56] >> Even with a bogey, you pick up two and now you have three shots clear.

[00:50:09] >> Well, as what you would expect, this one hugging the right side. This one's going to end up in the gallery, I believe. And this one also on a similar line, maybe even a touch further for Spaun.

[00:50:28] >> I think there's just more disappointment now. You know --

[00:50:33] >> Right.

[00:50:33] >> -- you resign to the fact you've lost this tournament after such a great week.

[00:50:36] >> Both played their 2nds out of trouble to the fairway.

[00:50:40] >> This one's a lot more floaty than he wanted it. And it's going to peel down to the lower level here. A fly to this one beautifully.

[00:51:04] >> Certainly has.

[00:51:06] >> You wanted to hit five quality shots, you hit five quality shots.

[00:51:09] >> Rory McIlroy, a walk fit for a champion.

[00:51:15] >> As it gets up on top of this shelf with the wind and also the slope of the green, it will move back to his right.

[00:51:30] >> J.J. thought it was a sudden end of the playoff and he was headed for 17 last evening. He probably would have much preferred that scenario.



[00:51:37] >> Get in the hole.

[00:51:38] >> Get in the hole.

[00:51:51] >> With what happened to J.J., I kind of understand all of a sudden you had some room to play with.

[00:51:59] >> And good to see this many people out on a Monday for the --

[00:52:01] >> Oh, this sport --

[00:52:02] >> -- for this flagship event.

[00:52:04] >> -- this sport has been unbelievable.

[00:52:11] >> And Rory McIlroy is a PLAYERS champion again in this moment between the two playoff combatants in this Monday finish at TPC Sawgrass. And he joins a very exclusive list of players that have secured this coveted championship twice, all of them hall of famers. And that's another man who will be enshrined someday.

[00:52:36] >> This concludes the PGA TOUR's coverage of THE PLAYERS Championship from TPC Sawgrass Stadium Tours in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.