

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW: RICKIE FOWLER
May 5, 2016



Q. A great start, talk about today.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I got off to a nice start. Had some good swings. Didn't feel that comfortable with the swing going out, and it was a nice way to kind of fight through it, figure it out. Made some good putts both for birdies, some pars. Yeah, it wasn't a bad swing on 17. Other than that it was a nice day. Feel like I could have had a couple putts that went and it would have been really nice.

Q. It seems like this is a golf course that gets you constantly. You hit a good drive at 10, the balls above your feet, you have to kind of work it around a tree. Every single shot you guys are working so hard on?

RICKIE FOWLER: Definitely. Even if you drive it in the fairway, there are some tough shots into the greens with how much undulation there is. Put some pins in tough positions. Sometimes you just have to take your medicine, hit it to the wide part of the green, two-putt and get out. So it's definitely a course you have to think your way around.

Q. How hard is it to be patient on 18 tee after what happened on 17 knowing there's (inaudible) on 18?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, 18's not an easy hole to come off of a just a dumb mistake, bad swing there. It's probably one of the harder driving holes on the golf course with the creek left. And the wind was luckily helped or kind of helping off to the right as far as it was into us but moving the ball from right to left. Didn't hit it great but it was nice it ended up in the short grass.

Q. And looks like it's very, very close to very, very good?

RICKIE FOWLER: It is. I've had a good start to the year. The win in Abu Dhabi, had some good finishes. I finished off last week well, birdied five of my last eight to kind of salvage a decent finish. So I'm excited, looking forward to the rest of this week, get out there tomorrow and get after it a bit. And then obviously have some fun next week at THE PLAYERS.

Q. (Inaudible.)

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, I got off to a nice start, started on the back nine, I was 3 under and I made a little bit of a miscue backswing on 17 that cost me. Other than that I made good putts for birdie, par. Missed a few out there, which in a perfect world, make those, don't make a bad swing on 17, it's a great round but also nice to shoot under par.

Q. As we go back a few years, probably a little longer, still wearing the nice orange on Sunday though, what does coming back here the site of your first PGA TOUR win

mean to you?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's awesome. We were walking up 18 and just kind of looking at that front left portion of the green and realizing that it is still very small. So to kind of relive some of the memories and be here at a course I play well at, it's fun. Like I said, I went over to the green and went over to the left side there and kind of remembered where I hit the putt from. It's always going to be great memories here for me as well as Rory, who's played well here and got his first PGA TOUR win as well. So fun playing alongside him and Hideki today.

Q. Tell us, Rickie, about the quality of this golf course. I say that this week the quality of the field, loads of the guys in the top-10, eight of the top-10 would have been nice if Justin was here as well. What is it about this course?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, for one, they do a great job as far as setup. The course, this year it's in perfect shape. It's a little wet just with the weather and the rain that's been through. It's got a good feel here in Charlotte. I know a lot of guys love coming to Charlotte. The golf course and the members and the fans here, it's a great area on the golf course and off.

Q. And just finally, I know you talked a little bit about this, a lot about this, the wide shot of this.

RICKIE FOWLER: Good thing it's blurry. Don't want to see it too much in HD.

Q. Have you recovered yet? Quite a tiring week for you guys?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, we had a great time. I think it was perfect timing for all of us to go over and have a little spring break at Bakers Bay. I know we all had a great time. Like I said, probably the proper time to do it coming off the first major and then with the busy stretch coming up and with the summer that we have ahead. I don't think any of us have really been on an actual spring break, so a little guys' trip. We had a good time and the four of us are all refreshed and ready to go play some golf.

Q. Rickie, got it to 3 under early in the round, finished at minus 1, the middle of the tough 16, 17, 18 stretch got you at the par 3. Just talk about your day.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I had a good look at birdie on 16, just hit my putt a little too hard. Putts are tough out here, there's a lot of pins where they're on some good slopes and you get five, six-footers that you're playing a cup or more outside the hole so your speed's got to be right on. 17 made a little mistake, just bad swing. But it was nice to get off to a good start, make some putts there. Yeah, it's always nice to come in and finish under par. Happy about that. Go hit a couple balls, get it tightened up for tomorrow.

Q. Course conditions, we had a little bit more rain this morning out here. Were the par 4s playing as long as they were yesterday?

RICKIE FOWLER: Not as long. Luckily they put a couple tees up with some holes into the wind so that was definitely nice of the Tour to help us out there. I didn't have -- I don't think I had a 5-wood into a par 4 today so that was nice. I had a couple in the pro-am yesterday. I thought the course is in great shape, obviously a little soft with the rain. That's going to be part of it. Have to deal with a little bit of mud here and there but not bad. The greens are perfect so that makes it nice. You start a ball online, you know it's going in.

Q. Rickie, 1-under start for the tournament. How does it feel to get that round in under par?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, definitely nice. I had 3 under early and then a couple little mistakes. Nice to get one back, get under par in red figures. Obviously can't win it but you can take yourself out of it the first day. Yeah, I'm going to go hit a few balls, see if we can tighten it up for tomorrow and make up some ground, but off to a good start.

Q. Is the course playing as long as you would anticipate with it being wet?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, it's definitely playing long. Yesterday it played really long. It's dried out a little bit and they had some tees up for us on some of those par 4s into the wind, which was nice. But still playing long, a lot of mid and long irons into par 4s. If you don't drive it in the fairway, it makes it a bit tougher from there. But greens are perfect. You start a ball online, it goes in. You've just got to be dialed in on your speed because there's a lot of break out here to play.

Q. With the length, does it make it put more of a premium on your approaches to the green to try to score?

RICKIE FOWLER: First of all, getting the ball in the fairway. And then from there, yeah, it's another task trying to get the ball on the green because it's a long iron in. It's not like you're trying to get those very close. Every once in a while you may sneak one in there and try to take advantage of the opportunity of stealing one and getting a birdie. Yeah, it wasn't playing easy out there. Like I said, you still have to drive it well, the second shots had to be on point and had to make putts. Anything under par was a good start today with the wind and the longer conditions. And we'll see, hopefully weather stays away and the course can continue to dry out and should turn out to be a fun weekend.

Q. I was just curious on 17 you and Joe looked a little confused. Was that just a wind gust there?

RICKIE FOWLER: No. Well, one thing with the hospitality tents behind the tee, you can't feel any of the wind so it's a little tough to trust number sometimes and really believe what the wind's going to do. I made a bad swing. I hit it a bit heavy and the hole was playing pretty short for the distance. We were getting a lot of help and it plays a little downhill. Just a bit of a miscue and just trying to get our communication on point. It wasn't like I was upset at him or he was upset at me. It's fun to kind of work through things and find out what he

was thinking, what I was thinking and make sure that we can learn from it and move forward.

Q. Kind of a weird deal at 6, Rory was talking about the fan. What did you see and hear there?

RICKIE FOWLER: Rory hit. I was getting ready to go up on the tee and a ball flew over from the left side. Didn't really know what it was. It looked like a golf ball, something was attached to it, later finding out it was an earplug. So random. The guy tried to say it was a gift. I don't know why you would give a gift of a golf ball with an earplug attached to it. So yeah, luckily we made two 3s and Rory made a good 2 and kept playing.