

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
March 1, 2018

RICKIE FOWLER (-3)



Q. You only made one bogey out there.

RICKIE FOWLER: It was a good day. It was nice to keep it somewhat stress-free tee to green. Just had kind of one tee shot that got away from me, was able to get up and down and save par there. Yeah, Butch and I, he wasn't in town last weekend, but we were able to go back and forth a bit. Worked with Claude a little bit, his son up at Floridian. Got some really good work in Saturday and Sunday just trying to stick with it. Nice to see it pay off. Like I said, only the one swing that was off. Other than that, just trying to play Plinko, get some balls to go in on the greens.

Q. You're referring to Butch and Claude, of course, your referring to your instructors, the Harmons. Did the course test your patience on the inward nine? A birdie, then an awful lot of pars until you birdied the 18th again.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, it was really just the patience on the greens. They're interesting. I mean, everyone's putting them. Once they start bumping, I mean, you kind of just hit and hope in a way, and try not to leave yourself more than a foot or so. Outside of a foot, nothing's good. So got one to roll good there on 18. It was nice to finally get one to go in, and hopefully we get some more to go in tomorrow. Definitely pleased with the ball-striking.

Q. This is a very tight golf course, you missed only three fairways today, you missed only one green. How satisfied are you with your play?

RICKIE FOWLER: It was a nice day to kind of keep somewhat stress-free tee to green. Didn't get a whole lot of putts to go in. We were all kind of laughing between myself and Jordan and Justin. Some of the putts that we hit, they started where we wanted to and were correct speed, but they did not end up going in the hole. It was pretty funny to watch some of them attempt to roll on the greens.

No, I made it fairly easy on myself with the ball-striking, and nice to have that back. Put a lot of good work in with Claude Saturday morning since Butch wasn't in town. We're definitely keeping Butch included on all the work. So Saturday and Sunday, put a lot of work in. Played Seminole pro-member on Monday so that's why I took Tuesday off here. We were able to go see the pyramids, came in ready to go. Like I said, we got some good work in, nice to see it pay off.

Q. I know you said you were disappointed you missed the cut at the Honda Classic where you were the defending champion, but you talk about the work you and the Harmons put in. What exactly did you feel like you improved over the weekend?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, I mean, there are quite a few things. One of the big things was kind of the posture toward the top of the swing. I have a tendency to go kind of in extension, which is where I kind of come out of spine angle and tilt kind of forward. So once you do that, you're out of posture and you have to get back somehow to hit the ball. Just really working on keeping the spine same angle, really kind of turning over my right foot and not getting into extension and coming off the ball.

It feels awkward at times. We were laughing about it out there. I had some downhill lies and that's where it's kind of in a way the hardest. It feels like I'm going to lay sod on it. So I bladed a couple shots out there, a 7-iron early in the round, a wedge on 10, but luckily they worked out all right, they were on the green.

So no, I was proud of the way I kind of trusted and committed to everything. I really just had one swing off the tee that was a little offline but was able to still salvage par. So nice way to start after getting some good work in.

Q. We hear this all the time, you make a great bird on the final hole, dinner's going to taste better tonight. But do you feel like when you birdie the final hole as you did, that could add some momentum as you head into the second round here of this championship?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, after not seeing many putts go in -- I think Jordan made a putt on 12. Outside of that, there weren't many putts made from outside of five, maybe 10 feet. It was more of a ball-striking day trying to get around. Like I said, it was nice to make it so it's stress-free on myself that way. But to make one on the last, see one goes in finally, yeah, it makes it a little more rewarding being that we had that good of a ball-striking day, to maybe not get that much out of it, at least we got the last. See if we can go get some more tomorrow.

Q. Rickie, 3 under today, how easy was that?

RICKIE FOWLER: It was a good day, especially after missing the cut last weekend. Got a lot of good work in Saturday and Sunday, so to come out and be able to trust what we're working on, what we're doing with the swing. Really only had one shot that was a little ways offline. Other than that, everything was pretty tight. It was a good ball-striking day. I just wish we could have gotten more to go on the greens, but we'll get some more tomorrow.

Q. You went for the green on the second hole and you really almost hit the green on the second hole. Does that tell you that all that work you put in was effective and that the ball was going to be going where you were looking?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, I played 18 yesterday because, like I was talking about earlier, I took Tuesday off after the amount of work we put in over the weekend, playing Seminole Monday, so I felt that rest was a big part of it. We played 18 yesterday and we hit a lot of

good shots, felt like I drove the ball pretty well and felt like we were ready to go. It was more just kind of trusting and staying committed to what we were doing.

But yeah, the swing off of -- I had a good warmup, but that doesn't always mean -- it doesn't mean everything. You can have a bad warmup and play well, you can have a good warmup and play bad. I made a great swing off 1, another good swing off 2, off 3. So no, it was good to get off to a good start today. That way I can kind of settle in a little bit.

Q. Conditions of the course today, how was the course?

RICKIE FOWLER: The course is good. It's a little softer than last year. I think the fairways and the greens were a bit firmer. Tee to green the course is in great shape. The greens are, they're in good shape. Unfortunately, they're a bit bumpy, so you see a lot of guys missing putts. It's hard to make putts on them, but everyone's playing the greens, the same ones. Yeah, try and leave a close tap-in if you end up missing putts because you don't want to have a whole lot coming back.

Q. Is your time in Mexico, do you feel the warmth of the Mexican people and difference between here and (inaudible)?

RICKIE FOWLER: I definitely enjoy being in Mexico, from Mexico City over to Mayakoba. I played better at Mayakoba than I did here last year, but I feel like there's more people here at this tournament, Mayakoba being a little bit more a tourist destination. I would say obviously there's a lot of people that live in Mexico City. So it is great to see the amount of people that come out and support the game of golf and the tournament here. We did have a great turnout at Mayakoba, too. We had a lot of people following us. It's fun to be able to travel the world, to go to different countries and have fans and the support everywhere we go.

Q. After today, do you have to change your strategy?

RICKIE FOWLER: No, I'm not going to -- hopefully, just keep hitting the ball the way I did today. Not going to change anything. Hopefully, just have more putts go in on the greens and we'll be in a good position.

Q. Is this tournament preparation for next month's Masters?

RICKIE FOWLER: I think playing -- it's very different, I mean playing at altitude. It's still one of the better fields that we play in, World Golf Championships, so we're playing against guys that we're going to see at the Masters.

But as far as a golf course for preparation for the Masters, no, I don't think there's many golf courses that necessarily prepare you for the Masters because Augusta is so unique and so different. I would say most of it is just working on the game and making sure you're heading in the right direction and getting ready to play the Masters.

Q. We are with Rickie Fowler. You said PGA National was a course that demanded full attention. Where does Chapultepec stands in terms of attention?

RICKIE FOWLER: This golf course definitely demands your attention. It's fairly narrow off the tee. You want to make sure if you do miss, you miss on the proper side. And then dealing with altitude and the adjustment to converting numbers over and trusting that you are hitting the right club from a certain yardage, yeah, it definitely demands your attention at all times. It's a fun course to play because it is -- it's different in a way, we don't hit a whole lot of drivers. You're able to hit a number of different clubs off the tees, some good par 3s out here, so nice to get off to a good start.

Q. Rickie, Mayakoba was close, people in Mexico want to see you winning. What can you tell them in terms of hope that they want --

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, I did have a really good week at Mayakoba. We played well there, coming close. But if I continue to strike the ball the way I did today and make some more putts, we'll be in a good spot for Sunday.

Q. What was different last year to this year?

RICKIE FOWLER: I feel like probably just feeling more comfortable here, that we have, what would that be, I think we played nine holes on Tuesday last year, so I might have six or seven rounds of golf in here now at this golf course. So more comfortable with the adjustment for the altitude and the distances and knowing the golf course a little bit, so more comfortable.