

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
June 27, 2018



RICKIE FOWLER

MARK WILLIAMS: We would like to welcome Rickie Fowler to the 2018 Quicken Loans National interview room.

Rickie, thanks for joining us. You're making your seventh start here at this tournament. You're the highest ranked player in the FedExCup standings and the highest ranked player in the official World Golf rankings in the field. Last year you finished a couple shots out of the lead, shot a final round 65 with five birdies. Looking forward to this tournament, coming back and trying to get maybe a little revenge and getting into that final spot there?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, definitely glad to be back. Obviously I have a great partnership with Quicken Loans and it's been fun to grow that over the years and be a part of this tournament. I was excited when we came here last year, this place had a great setup. Kind of bummed that it's a little soft, I know they've had a lot of rain last week leading into this week. If we can dodge some of that rain today and the course will dry out and hopefully get to where it was last year because it had, you know, in a way a little bit of a major championship feel with how firm and fast the course got, thick rough and greens were firm and fast. It definitely picked you apart as a player if you didn't hit fairways and control your golf ball.

I feel like this golf course is a great test and played well here last year. Ultimately I was just a little too far back, but still nice to finish with 65 on Sunday. So glad to be back and looks like once we get past today, like I said, with weather, it should be good. It's going to be a little warm.

MARK WILLIAMS: Your season this year, you had a second, a runner-up finish at the Masters and also in Mexico at OHL, and Tournament of Champions, you were 4th here. How would you assess your season so far this year?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's been okay. It was obviously nice to do what we did at the Masters. I was really looking forward to kind of taking advantage of that and building on that going into Shinnecock. Obviously I didn't do myself any favors on Saturday. I feel like we're obviously over that. Played nice the next day and I felt like we got some good work in.

Last week I was able to get a good day in with Claude at the Floridian and very happy with where the game's at going into this week. And especially with this part of the year, the next few months are kind of our busiest and the biggest part of the season outside of having majors, like I said, April, having THE PLAYERS in May, two majors left and going into the Playoffs with the Ryder Cup on the back end of that.

MARK WILLIAMS: Busy time. Let's take some questions for Rickie.

Q. I just wondered if you could give me a letter grade on Tiger's come back so far and why?

RICKIE FOWLER: I'm giving him a solid A. A-plus would have needed a win. No, for me and guys like JT, we got to play with him a decent amount last fall prior to Presidents Cup, after Presidents Cup, before really anyone else had seen him play and hit balls. I was definitely impressed with the speed that he had back. He was able to go out and go play and have fun doing it. It wasn't like he was trying to figure out a way to play with little pain or try and manage his way around that. He's basically been pain-free from what I know.

So for him to come out obviously with no one has more pressure, attention and people around him than he does, so I think he's done a great job. He was away from competitive golf for so long, it's not like you just come right back out and go win a golf tournament. But it's Tiger, it wouldn't have surprised me.

So it's been fun to see him get back in the mix at some events, show his face. The run he made on Saturday at THE PLAYERS, it's great for the game. We all enjoy having him out. It's only better for us, it's only better for the sport, for the fans, media, TV. I think he's done a great job because he's getting older, he's not starting his career. It would be great if he can extend his career as long as possible and, like I said, he's got plenty of speed and he's hitting a lot of great shots.

I don't think -- he knows how to win, so I'm not worried about him by any means. Like I said, I think the big thing for me, it was fun to see him back out and just being able to enjoy playing golf and, like I said, not trying to manage his way around pain.

Q. Rickie, it's a pretty frenetic part of the schedule obviously, a couple majors, WGC, FedExCup Playoffs still to come. You said the season's only been okay so far. What do you need to achieve this latter half for it to then become a successful season?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, I would love a win at Carnoustie or Bellerive. That was kind of the main goal going into the year is go get ourselves a major. Augusta was a step in the right direction, I think more so just for the belief and confidence. It would have been nice to go redo the Saturday round at Shinney. I felt great going into there, a place that I love and enjoy playing.

So now I've got to look at two courses I've never been to. I haven't been to Carnoustie or Bellerive. But like I said, I got some great work in last week and I feel really good where we're at swing-wise and having control of the golf ball and where we're driving it right now, so that's going to be very beneficial going into those two events. That's the main goal.

Obviously I want to be over in France with the boys, be on the Ryder Cup team. Obviously it hasn't been a bad year, but I feel like we should be winning multiple times each year.

Q. Tiger Woods impacted a lot of golfers worldwide. Did he impact you to change something, and if so, can you explain what was it?

RICKIE FOWLER: He didn't impact me to change anything. Obviously I enjoyed watching him play and having him have the success. I remember from him coming out to the '97 Masters is probably the one that I remember the most, and obviously his dominating performance from '99 into the early 2000s.

He's definitely, I think, helped motivate if kids weren't already motivated. I wanted to play golf, I wanted to play professional golf, but kids around my generation to even a little bit younger, he had a big impact on the game and at least pushing kids to want to be the best they could be.

No, he didn't have -- I don't want his head to get too big. He didn't have an impact on me changing anything, but guys like him, Phil, Freddie was another guy that I enjoyed watching, looking up to, to Payne Stewart, really guys that were the best players in the world, guys that I looked up to and that was the position I wanted to be in.

Q. Rickie, with D.C.'s future bid uncertain on the PGA TOUR as a stop going forward, what are your thoughts on support from golf fans here for this tournament and does D.C. deserve to be on the Tour as a regular stop?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's been great in the D.C. area from Congressional to here down to RTJ in Virginia. I don't think I ever played too well at Congressional. I had a good finish here, I had a good finish at RTJ. So I would love to be able to come back and have an event here. RTJ, Congressional, like I said, I haven't played that well. It could stay here, it doesn't have to go to Congressional.

I think this is a great golf area, the fans have been great here, so we'll see. I know we try and do the best that we can as far as touching all the markets. If this event potentially goes up to Detroit, it's an area that really hasn't had an event in a long time, it could be very beneficial up there, too. We'll just have to wait and see.

Q. Rickie, Tiger's been using a mallet putter this week. For you personally, when it comes time to maybe switch a club, mentally or physically, what does it take and maybe how long is that process for you?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, if the club's right and you're swinging well, it shouldn't really take much time at all. And really, for me, I would say it's more so that adjustment doesn't really happen until you've actually hit or used it in actual tournament play. You can get comfortable with it at home and through practice, but until you get kind of confirmation under the gun, it's always nice when something does end up working out how you planned and expected it to.

I mean, it's definitely interesting. Tiger hasn't really used a mallet a whole lot. I know he has before and I'm sure he's hit putts with a bunch of different putters. He is one of the best putters in the game, one of the best putters we've ever seen. I think he'll be just fine.

Q. Rickie, given your success at the Open Championship, is there anything about your game heading into that specific links type of golf that you may focus on and maybe even adjust to get ready?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, a big thing over there is ball-striking, hitting the ball solidly. I feel like -- I was talking about with a little bit of work last week I feel like I'm in a really good spot as far as the ball's flying a little tighter and a little stronger ball flight, which is definitely needed when it gets a little cooler or that heavy wind over there. Not necessarily downwind, but more so the crosswinds and into the wind there. I feel like when I am swinging well, I feel like I've always been very good at starting the ball in the right window and working the ball properly working with or against the wind. It's something I enjoy. I love links golf just because you can be so creative, use your creativity, hit different shots. There are maybe five different shots that you could hit into a certain hole and all of them could work, just really picking the one that feels best and executing.

Q. Rickie, will you be an interested viewer this week in the French Open? Also, will you be going to see Le Golf National ahead of time with some of the other players, and if so, what do you think you can garner and to what value can it be to see the course for the Ryder Cup and later this year?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, I think it could be beneficial, but at the same time it may not have that much of an impact seeing it now versus later in the year. I'm sure the course will play a bit different come the fall time.

I'll lean on JT a little bit for feedback and he'll have a handful of rounds in over there. Right now the main focus is making sure that I am on the team and also would love not to have to be a pick. I've been in that position and would rather just solidify our spot on the team through points.

But I feel like with where we're at as professional golfers, we've had to go to hundreds of courses for the first time and learn them in a couple days and figure them out. I've heard it's a fairly straightforward golf course, it's just tough. Good driving golf course, great second shot golf course. I'm sure I'll lean on, assuming we make the team, lean on guys like JT, and Furyk I know has spent a decent amount of time over there. But I'm not sure if there's any plans to go ahead of time. I think from here until after the Ryder Cup, I only have one-week breaks in between some events.

Q. To follow up on Ryder Cup, have you got -- I guess a couple things -- a couple of particular memories of past Ryder Cups that have been important to you, and can you talk a bit about just what it means to make that team, the chance to play with these guys, the camaraderie and the bonding of what you guys go through, how much it

means?

RICKIE FOWLER: The team events, both Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup, they're the best weeks of the year. Getting to be on a team with some of the other best players in the world and being able to throw on red, white and blue and represent your country, it's special. It was nice to be two years ago finally on the winning side. It's something that hasn't happened a whole lot in the last 20 years or so. To be on another team potentially later this year, to be able to go overseas and have a chance to win one overseas, which I can't remember the last time that was done, it has been a while.

Like I said, they're the best weeks of the year. The Ryder Cup, my favorite part of the Ryder Cup would probably -- outside of the team and hanging with the team in the team room, the first tee over there when you play overseas, whether it's in Europe or the U.K., it's pretty cool how they build it as far as a horseshoe. You hear the fans out there starting at 5:00, 5:30 in the morning with their chants and songs. It's a different energy.

MARK WILLIAMS: Rickie, thanks for your time, good luck this week. Just you and Joe this week, no teammates, so all the best.