

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 28, 2018



RICKIE FOWLER

JACK RYAN: We'll start with Rickie Fowler at the 2018 Hero World Challenge. Rickie shot a tournament record 61 in the final round last year to clinch the victory.

Rickie, if we can just get an opening comment on making your title defense here.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, always nice to be back. This is an event that you want to be a part of. That means you've done something right or consistently done things right to be inside of, I think it kind of goes around to the maybe low 20s in world ranking. Yeah, it's just a nice group to be a part of. Small field, nice way to kind of end the calendar year.

And last year was a real nice way to end it, being 7 back and birdieing the first seven holes, put myself back in a position to go win. And unfortunately haven't won since then, so need to win again and get things turned around for the rest of the year.

JACK RYAN: With that, we'll take some questions.

Q. Hi, Rickie. Could you please talk a little bit, reflect on your season and what are you aiming for this coming season as well?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, last year I had a fairly consistent season, put myself in contention a lot, put myself in great positions at the majors. Just never really -- just never got the job done.

So main goal going into this year, ultimate goal is to have a major but just go win more, and if one of those wins happens to be a major, that would be the ultimate goal. I think that's the big thing. It's not like it was a bad year by any means, just didn't win.

So I like where we're at. It was nice to get through kind of the August, September time, get past the injury with the oblique, and yeah, I feel like we're in a good spot and can definitely build on last year.

Q. Good afternoon. How do you feel to be back in the Bahamas?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's always -- it's great to be in the Bahamas. We spend -- my fiancée and I spend some time up at Baker's Bay, which isn't too far from here up in the Abacos, so we get over to the Bahamas three, four times a year. We always enjoy coming here to Albany.

As I was talking about earlier, it's a nice way to end the calendar year. Yeah, I don't have

anything bad to say about the Bahamas. It's a nice place to come hang out, relax, and being that we've been here on Nassau, I've been to the Exumas once, spent time up in the Abacos. I love it. Wish I could get out to go fishing more, but we'll be golfing this week.

Q. Is there anything specific you and Butch will work on for next year?

RICKIE FOWLER: When?

Q. Going into next year.

RICKIE FOWLER: It's really been a lot of the same things as far as I feel like your golf game or your golf swing, you kind of work on one thing and maybe get too far the other way and you're back to working on the other. So it's always a fine line of kind of going back and forth and just try to keep it from going too far one way or the other. You're never going to stay on perfect and that's not going to -- when you are in the middle, it's not going to always last or be there. So it's always kind of managing and making sure that, like I say, you're not getting too far off.

The big change was when I started working with Butch and got the backswing and kind of the first part of the swing dialed in or changed, and yeah, I would say the last couple years it's more so just making sure that things don't get too far off and starting to get picky with things. I would say everything we work on really would be the first half of the swing to set ourselves up for the downswing. As long as the first half is done properly, then everything kind of falls into place.

Q. Can you tell me how much wiser are you as a player compared to 2009 when you came out here?

RICKIE FOWLER: Depends who you're asking, I think.

Q. Your golf IQ, how much has it risen?

RICKIE FOWLER: On a scale of 1 to 10? I felt like I came out very much ready and very much a knowledgeable golfer, but I feel like going into my 10th year and being that it's been however you look at it, it's been successful. I mean, got my card, came out, kept my card, we've been out here. Different ways of measuring success obviously. I want to win more, that's something I want to do.

But to be out here that long, and I definitely feel like every year I've learned more about what we do out here playing week in and week out, more about myself. My game's continued to get better and better I feel like. Yes, there's probably been some years that probably weren't as good as the year before, but no, it's been a fun ride. I think the best is yet to come.

Q. Rickie, you've been pretty close to big wins in particular and it's been that for a while now. How do you keep yourself motivated? We all know that you have it there,

but it's just not coming together at some of the bigger events, especially some of the majors. So how do you keep motivating yourself year after year? As you said, you're entering the 10th year now.

RICKIE FOWLER: The motivating side of it I don't really need help with. I love to play golf, I love to play the game. I think some of it is at times maybe wanting it too much or putting -- you know, maybe pushing too hard. Just go out and have some fun.

Obviously, yes, I want to try and play the best that I can, that's going to happen, but a little bit more just kind of letting things happen, go out there and have fun and kind of play the game and enjoy it.

Q. Rickie, do you know what you're going to be doing for your schedule at least the first part of the year, and how daunting or difficult is it to decide in that mid February stretch, from mid February up through the Masters where there's so many big tournaments?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, obviously there's quite a few big changes for next year's schedule. I know I'll start with Farmers at Torrey and Waste Management the following week. We're still trying to piece things together here and there.

But yeah, it is quite a bit different having THE PLAYERS there in March, which obviously I'm not going to miss that. But it does kind of throw things where guys kind of maybe had a normal routine of whether it was the Florida swing, you look into May, you look at the Nelson and Colonial now being kind of broken up there. So it's interesting. I mean, guys are going to have to make some decisions. I feel like we have a pretty good layout. I think there are some things that still may change. I know, let's see, yeah. I know Farmers there, and then may take a couple weeks off, pick it up in Mexico. Yeah, I know the Florida, I think it goes Honda, Arnie, PLAYERS, so it is interesting. I can't skip on that, it's a home -- I like Arnie's, so probably be there, and then PLAYERS.

No, there's a lot of places I enjoy playing, and unfortunately this year or maybe in the years to come, depending on where the schedule goes and stuff, there's going to be places that I like to play that I won't be able to. There's also places that I may have to play because I might like playing or have to piece things together.

I think this year we're potentially going to play San Antonio before the Masters, partly I like playing in the majors, it's actually one of the places I haven't been to. You hear guys talking about it. It is a big change because there are some, like I was talking about with Florida or Texas, the normal routes guys would take that are kind of getting split up.

Q. Rickie, you're about to turn 30 in a couple weeks. Do you feel like that's kind of a milestone kind of birthday, and maybe do you feel like you maybe have to ramp up your sense of urgency a little bit? How do you feel about that?

RICKIE FOWLER: No, I've always heard that 30s were your prime, so we're just getting into it. No, I don't see any kind of rush or anything like that. I look at the next five to 10 years as the time to take advantage of things and make sure that we're not sitting back and just relaxing, go out and take care of what we want to take care of and see what can happen.

I would say 40s is a little bit more of where we'd look at prime would be kind of in the rearview mirror. So I'm looking forward to, like I said, these next five to 10 years of taking advantage of them and making them count.

Q. Have you changed how you define a successful season since you've been on Tour? Maybe is your definition of a successful season different than it was in 2009 and 2010 when you first started?

RICKIE FOWLER: No, not necessarily. I think as long as you're always seeing improvement and it's not just based off wins. Yes, I want to win more. If I went off of my checklist or what I ultimately want to do, I haven't had a successful season. So I want to win more majors, I want to win more golf tournaments, but in golf, other than Tiger winning at a 30 percent win rate, that doesn't just happen. So you have to kind of look at the glass half full, especially if you're talking about staying motivated and keep wanting to move forward, if you look at the negatives or downside of not winning, man, it's going to be a long road.

So yes, I want to win more, I want to win majors. It's not easy, and I've just always tried to go kind of the glass half full, keep moving forward. No, these next five, 10 years will be good.

Q. Rickie, what kind of factor is intimidation on the Tour? Using Tiger as an example, like you were talking about the 30 percent win rate. Tiger comes back from back surgery and he's got some speed back, he looks like Tiger like everybody knew before. Does that intimidation factor still exist, do you think?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, I get to see him at home. I don't look at him as, you know, he was probably looked at early 2000s. He's someone that we want to go beat up on, he wants to beat up on us. I feel like it's a lot more of a level playing field now where prior to a lot of us being out here, you look at the kind of late the '90s, early 2000s when he was 30 percent win percentage and all that, he stepped on the tee and it was a different presence. He still carries that presence. I mean, he's 14 majors, 80 wins, it's got to count for something. But no, we're not scared to go toe to toe and go have some fun out there with him.

Q. When you saw him at home those times when he was coming back, when did you really start to see the speed and to see the things that would indicate that he could come back here and do what he's doing?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, it would have been kind of October leading into November last year. I thought he looked great. The thing that I noticed and was different from kind of previous years was I remember one time we went and played 18, I needed to get home to

go work out and he just went out and played another nine for fun. It was really the first time that I was able to see Tiger go have fun playing golf. It wasn't just because he was feeling good that day and could go practice or go play, or that he needed to do it to try and get ready to go play a tournament the next week because he hadn't played much. It was he was able to go play and enjoy golf.

I know it probably caught up to him a little bit at the end of the year this past season when he had to play a lot of events kind of leading to the Playoffs and stuff. No chance five years ago could he have played seven out of nine weeks. So that was, for me being able to see him go out and have fun and enjoy it, we all know that he knows how to win, that's not an issue, and it wasn't going to surprise me if he won last year. East Lake didn't surprise me. If someone said that he was going to win, I would be really surprised if he didn't win before East Lake. It was a little late for Tiger, I expected more out of him.

But no, it's great to see him out smiling on the golf course, being able to enjoy it, back's healthy and he can play with the kids now, too.

Q. Rickie, golf's a fine balance between longevity and peak performance. Just wonder some insights on what you do for your fitness and maybe some of your routines.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, on the road I don't work out too much. I'll typically get a workout or a movement day Monday or Tuesday early in the week, and then every day from Wednesday on I'll do a warmup with my trainer and then also kind of a cooldown / flush to make sure the body's kind of still moving properly. Then I'll throw the NormaTecs on, which is compression boots. I'll do those every night.

At home I'll typically be in the gym working out four to five days a week, depends kind of where the cycle falls and where I take a day off, and then probably three of those days I'll do treatment.

So I'm trying to get a little bit more on a regular schedule of all that. Like I said, on the road at a tournament, all that work should have been done at home, I'm ready to go and just make sure that the body's moving properly.

Q. Rickie, Tiger actually has a chance to top-10 in the world this week depending on certain things. If you didn't know he's swinging the club, if you just saw the ball flight, does it -- is he a top-10 player? Does he rank with all these guys, yourself, in terms of the way he strikes the ball and all the things that go into being that good?

RICKIE FOWLER: I think so. He's arguably the greatest that's ever played and arguably one of the best comebacks we've ever seen. Yeah, especially when you're kind of standing next to him on the range, I would say more so hitting mid irons and long irons. It makes -- I feel like we all make a nice sound hitting golf shots, but it sounds different. And the consistency of his strike, like I said, I would say for the most part on kind of the 9-iron

through the bag, and that was one of his strong points through his career, proximity to the hole.

We all know he can putt. When he's driving it well, he can drive it well, we've seen him hit some interesting ones. I would say the most impressive or what I've enjoyed watching him hit when we're just practicing or hitting balls or warming up is those 6-, 7-irons, just the consistency, the flight. Playing at the highest level out here and seeing everyone, I mean there's little things. Like I said, I feel like we all make a pretty good sound, we can all make the ball do what we want to do. He's been pretty damn good at it, though.

JACK RYAN: Thank you as always for the time, Rickie, and best of luck this week.