

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
April 4, 2019

RICKIE FOWLER (-4)



Q. Rickie, got off to a hot start. Comment on that start and also your round as a whole, please.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, definitely happy with today. Obviously coming off two weeks, it's always nice to get out and make some birdies early, shake off some rust. Happy with where we're at going into tomorrow, but also looking forward to the weekend with some work to do tomorrow as well as how I feel about the game going into next week. So really only one blemish, the tee shot on our 17th hole, No. 8, but other than that, solid day of golf and some good work.

Q. Did you feel like given the weather yesterday that the conditions were pretty prime this morning for scoring?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, we knew what we were going to get. A lot of us always check what the weather's going to be throughout the week, check what the wind direction's going to be so we're preparing the days leading up. But yeah, having a little bit of rain softened the greens up a little bit and then a little warmer this morning than it has been, light winds. It really never got definitely no more than 10 miles an hour when it picked up, but pretty light this morning. It was really good scoring conditions other than when you do play in the morning, it's a little wet out there. Moisture on the golf ball at times makes it a little tougher to control and actually spin the ball. So yeah, no, it was definitely out there. I feel like I had a chance to shoot a bit lower, but happy with where we're at.

Q. When you come to a new event, does that add anything, pressure? How do you approach that? (No microphone.)

RICKIE FOWLER: No, I mean, it's fun being in that position. Luckily, it's not my first time. It might be a different story if so.

It's cool. Like I said, it's pretty cool to think about when growing up you want to play on the PGA TOUR and then there's times where you end up being the name at the tournament, so you kind of have to pinch yourself at times and realize, hey, this game's humbling. Just because you're the biggest name here or the favorite or something like that, there's no guarantees. All the guys in this field are here and have the capability of winning. The PGA TOUR obviously has the depth and great players out here. So like I said, it's an honor to be in that position, but that doesn't mean anything.

Q. You said you heard some things about the course coming in. Did it live up to your expectations?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I've enjoyed it so far. With today being the first time I played all 18 in a row, it's fun to play. It's fairly generous off the tee until you get some wind blowing out here, which I know it can, but it's very much a second-shot golf course. No, there's some tough but fun second shots out here. I've enjoyed it, looking forward to tomorrow. I know we have some potential weather this weekend, but just play it how we get to play it.

Q. Did Jimmy give you any advice coming into this tournament?

RICKIE FOWLER: No, I haven't talked to him a whole lot about it. I've just gotten great things from guys before saying that the guys that play here, they enjoy it, they enjoy being able to stay on site at the resort here. It's always nice when you can walk to work. And I think they've done a good job condition-wise, the course is in great shape. Like I said, it softened up a little bit from the rain yesterday. But for me, it's not necessarily about what the course is like or which tournament I'm at; I feel like it's just good prep for me to get out and get some competitive rounds under my belt before going into next week.

Q. Is there a shot or putt that you're most proud of today?

RICKIE FOWLER: I would say, I mean, early on my second hole I think No. 11, it was just a nice little hold-off high cut wedge into the back right pin there. Really hit it exactly how I wanted to, so that was kind of a nice way to lead into the round. Whenever you hit -- it doesn't happen that often that you hit a perfect shot, how you draw it up landing in the right spot and finishing where you want. So to have that happen the second hole of the day definitely gave me confidence moving forward, so I would say that was a nice shot to get going.

Q. Is there a different feel for a tournament the week before the Masters?

RICKIE FOWLER: For me, yes. I get a lot more out of it, like I said, playing an event versus not playing an event before a major, if it works. There's obviously other ways to prep and a lot of guys aren't here are prepping other ways for Augusta. But for me, I've found it beneficial when I can play the week before leading up to it. Yeah, I think there's -- you're thinking about and focusing on some other things rather than just the day or the week at hand.

Q. (No microphone.)

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I'm happy. I mean, I know this place can play a lot tougher when the wind picks up and this place dries out and gets firm and fast. Happy with being back after two weeks off. Obviously this week, love to play well and get in contention and have a chance to win, but the real reason, getting ready for next week and I'm happy with 68.

Really the only hiccup on the card, made a bad swing off the first tee. Not the first tee, the 17th hole, No. 8 but our 17th, and ended up making bogey there. Other than that, I feel like

I did a good job kind of managing our way around. Decent amount of fairways or at least missing on the proper side and hit a lot of greens, made a couple nice putts, so off to a good start.

Q. A lot of guys talking about the adjustment because of the earlier spot on the calendar, but having never seen this golf course except the way that it is this week, does that play into an advantage this week for you?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, there's no adjusting for me, I'm just trying to figure out how to play it. It's pretty much right in front of you. I think it does a good job of telling you where you can miss it and where you can't, and you try to do the best that you can with that. There are some spots out here that are definitely Xs on the yardage book, but it's a fun place to play.

There's some great approach shots in here, you've got to be pretty spot on with your numbers and kind of the -- how you're bringing the ball in, the height, whether you're skipping it back or trying to stop it pretty quickly. It's a fun test. I wouldn't mind seeing a little breeze around here, just add a little more ball-striking on top of that, even though it is already a ball-striking golf course.

Q. You mentioned the test. After two weeks off, is it more mental or physical to get back into it?

RICKIE FOWLER: More mental. Been swinging well. Swinging well right now, but it's more just getting back in the right frame of mind, trusting the shots you're trying to hit. That's a big thing for me playing the week before Augusta is trying to check off as many boxes as we can so that we're comfortable with what we're working on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and tee it up on Thursday next week.

Q. Rickie, a nice welcome to TPC San Antonio in your first start at the Valero Texas Open, your opening round of 68. The only blemish on your 17th hole, the 8th. What unfolded at that tee shot?

RICKIE FOWLER: Really just trying to get a little too much out of it. For the most part it's pretty much a three-shot hole. I was trying to see if I can get one up there and maybe have a chance to go in with two with the back pin, but maybe try to get a little too much out of it instead of just getting one in play. So a little bit of you can look at it as a mental mistake or bad swing, either way.

Other than that, really the only blemish. Really got off to a quick start with 3 under early, and being the first time around here. I've only played each nine -- played the course once but it was nine holes at a time, so it was my first full round of golf around this place, so I'm happy with it. Looking forward to getting back out here tomorrow afternoon.

Q. Talk a little bit about the precision on the golf course with approach shots. A couple of the players were talking about tee boxes moved up, those who played in the

past. Where did the approach shots really get magnified in your round?

RICKIE FOWLER: There's a handful out there. I would say there's probably like five or six approach shots that you've got to land them in a pretty small area and you have -- you're hitting 8-iron or less. So you should be hitting it in small areas, but I think it's a good test. I think it helps separate a good shot from a missed shot or a bad shot. Seems like this golf course, it's fairly easy off the tee, it's not too demanding. I can see obviously once wind picks it up changes quite a bit, but it's more of a second-shot golf course where they're pretty small areas that you're hitting into and it seems like every green runs off on both sides.

Q. Yeah, lucky with no wind this morning relatively speaking. Let's talk about the season's schedule. You're a guy who likes to play the week before a major. What kinds of things are you fine tuning in these next few rounds?

RICKIE FOWLER: Obviously the mental side of it, making sure we're going through the process right and committing to the shots, but at the same time making sure the shots that we're trying to hit are actually coming out properly, too. So a little bit of everything, trying to check off as many boxes as we can from short game being on, short irons to mid irons to long irons, being able to work the ball both ways, but more so just hitting the proper shot and actually hitting the shot you're trying to.

So like I said, as many boxes as we can check, that makes Monday, Tuesday Wednesday next week a lot easier. We can limit what exactly you're trying to work on, go play golf and rest up and tee it up on Thursday.

Q. So literally everything?

RICKIE FOWLER: Everything.