

RICKIE FOWLER

JOHN BUSH: We would like to welcome Rickie Fowler into the interview room here at the Rocket Mortgage Classic.

Rickie, if we can, first of all, get you to comment on your season up to this point. Obviously winning in Phoenix, get some comments on your play this season.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah. I mean, so far it's been a fun year. To finally get a win at Phoenix was awesome. A lot of boxes checked off as far as family members and friends that haven't seen me win and being there in person, so to be able to celebrate with them on the 18th green was pretty special.

Decent Masters, having a chance again, being there on Sunday. I think obviously Tiger winning there was great for everyone. It was pretty special.

Looking forward to kind of pick the game back up where it was a little earlier this year. Felt like it was very close at the U.S. Open. Missed out on an opportunity of having a good week there. It was pretty cool seeing Gary get one done and get his first major. An impressive week that he put together. So it's been a fun year.

Like I said, I'm looking forward to kind of making a little push to the end of the season. I guess it's middle of the year, but end of our season coming up pretty quickly. One major left and then basically into the Playoffs.

JOHN BUSH: And if we can get you to comment on the Detroit Golf Club. Eighteen holes today with Kid Rock and pretty sure that was an interesting time for you, but comments on the golf course.

RICKIE FOWLER: The course seems great. This is the first time seeing it, the whole course. I played the front nine on Tuesday, and then we played 14, 15, 16 for the 313 Challenge yesterday.

And yeah, anytime you're hanging out with Bob, it's a good time. We hang out a decent amount in Jupiter when he's in south Florida. He spends a decent amount of time there, his parents and sister live there. So go to dinner, play golf, hang out. We enjoy spending time around each other.

So today was fun to be in his hometown. I've heard a lot about Detroit from him, his brother, some of his friends, and to see this finally come together. I've heard about Quicken and Rocket Mortgage wanting to bring this event to Detroit, Dan Gilbert's kind of dream and

vision to get a PGA TOUR event back here. So to see that all come together, be out with one of Detroit's legends today, it's a fun start to the week.

JOHN BUSH: Rickie, before questions I'd like to mention what a neat outing you just took part in out at the Shot for Heroes, and specifically 15-year-old Anthony Trudel through the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Can you just make a comment about presenting him the golf clubs and just a little bit about his story, too?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, the Shot for Heroes, start with that. It's something that's been around for a handful of years now with Quicken Loans, and obviously bringing it here to Detroit, being able to raise money with just the fans being on site and go take a swing and see if you can get a ball close. I think it's \$25 for everyone that goes up and at least just hits a shot.

What was it, \$100 if you make it in the circle?

JOHN BUSH: I think so.

RICKIE FOWLER: I think \$100 if you make it in the circle out there. It's a 60-yard shot. And then \$2,500 for holes-in-one. I heard two pros who already made holes-in-one who stopped over there. It's not just the fans, I guess Tour pros can go hit some, too. You guys can go take a few whacks, but make sure they're on video, like to see that.

So it's been a great thing that Quicken Loans and Rocket Mortgage have been doing to raise money for veterans and local organizations who support that cause.

And then got to spend some time with Anthony up there. We surprised him at the end of the range session we had hitting some balls. He's been through some tough times with a brain tumor, so we're excited that he's here this week. Presented him with a brand new set of Cobra clubs, so that wasn't something he was expecting but I'm hoping he can put those to good use. It's great to have him here, healthy, hanging out.

Also, Bill Emerson with Quicken Loans told him afterwards that he'll be honorary observer and walking inside the ropes on Friday with me. I told him make sure he brings me some good luck and we'll have some fun out there.

Q. Rickie, just how different has this week so far been for you? Do you feel like the so-called almost a host of this tournament with everything that you've had to do? Not had to do but probably wanted to do, but how has it been different?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's special to be a part of a tournament and kind of, I guess, in a little bit of a host role. For me, it's just having a great partnership that I do with Rocket Mortgage, and to see that grow over the years so it doesn't necessarily feel like I'm doing a whole lot extra or working. It's something I want to see succeed and see the partnership grow and want to see the tournament do well.

For me, it was something I always heard about over the last four, five years was the potential that the tournament would move to Detroit, a place where we haven't had a Tour event in over 10 years and there's not a whole lot of events that are played kind of in this area.

For me, it's just been fun to see it all come together. We've enjoyed, you know -- there is some extra stuff that we do through the first few days, but like I said, I think it hasn't really felt like work or anything like that where we feel like we're invested in this event and we want to see it succeed.

Q. Have you managed to get out and explore or anything in Detroit?

RICKIE FOWLER: We went in Monday night, went and had dinner at the Shinola and then went and watched the fireworks. We were downtown for -- I guess we got down there about 5:30 and fireworks finished up maybe 10:30 or so, so we got a solid five hours down in downtown.

It's cool to hear the stories of how much it's changed not just over the last five to 10 years, but really in the last one to two with a lot of the new buildings going up. I know they have some -- right next to the Shinola they're working on a big building, supposed to be the biggest building in Detroit that's supposed to finish, I believe, in 2022. A lot of stuff going on. It's cool to see how much Dan Gilbert and his companies are putting back into the community.

Q. Rickie, you pocketed a win earlier in the season, now it's kind of the dog days of the PGA TOUR schedule with an eye towards the finish line. How do you reshift your goals and kind of finish with a flurry at this stretch?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, with this being my last event in the U.S. until the last major, obviously I want to be in a good position over there in Ireland, but put myself in a good position for the Playoffs. I put myself in a great position early in the year, but you want to finish just as well as you started if you get off to a good start.

You know, didn't have -- I was a little off on the game I feel like PGA, Colonial time. Didn't have many putts go at the U.S. Open. I feel like everything's really close to being back where it was. Yeah, you don't want to just kind of coast to the finish line, you want to finish the race off hopefully with a really high note.

Q. The tournament officials didn't want to make this course too tough because they wanted players to gain confidence, want to be here, fans like birdies. My question is, how does this course potentially help you prepare for the British Open?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, I know the wind that was up yesterday, that was a good little help there. I don't see necessarily -- the style of golf is obviously very different. For me, I mean,

if you drive the ball well out here, you can score. There's a lot of scoring opportunities, which is nice. I think you're going to see some potential low scores with guys playing well and driving the ball well.

I think something that always transfers over is just tight lines and being able to hit your spots off the tee. And driving anywhere can be fairly similar, just good flight and just good tight drives. It doesn't matter what type of golf course you're on, that helps.

So I think that's really one of the main things that could transfer from these few weeks into the Scottish and British Open.

Q. Rickie, both you and Gary worked with Butch for a long time. How have you seen Gary's game progress over the years playing practice rounds and majors and stuff, and how much did you feel like a victory in a major was something that was coming for him?

RICKIE FOWLER: Gary's always been a very good player, a very strong player. He's one of the guys that can create some of the most speed out here when he wants to.

I think he's done a great job of not necessarily dialing it back, but getting everything a bit more in control. And he's got a little bit more to cutting the ball, not necessarily worrying about how far it's going, but more fairways, more greens. I know he's worked really hard on his putting with Phil Kenyon the last few years. I think he's just tried, as all of us are, to be the best player that he can be and not try and do anything, you know, over the top. He's not trying to hit it as far as he can, but he's dialed that back. He's got a lot more in the tank. He can definitely be one of the longest, if not the longest out here if he wanted to sit back and try to hit it hard, but that's not what it's all about out here.

He's also put a lot of work into his short game like all of us do, but you could see at the U.S. Open, he chipped and putted very well, scrambled. Some of the putts he made or chipped in for par kept him out front and helped him win that tournament.

It's always fun when hard work pays off. When it's yourself, it's great. When it's your buddies it is as well because you know the feeling. We've all been there.

No, it was special obviously as well as with what him and his wife Gabby have gone through with the first miscarriage and now she's pregnant with twin girls. It's cool for Gary. He's a good guy, one of the most well-liked guys out here, for sure.

Q. With your game, do you work on any part of your game constantly or are you always okay, I'm happy with this, I'm going to work on this, and where are you right now on your game?

RICKIE FOWLER: I wouldn't say I'm ever happy as far as you never settle. There's times where I'm definitely pleased with where I'm at or what I'm seeing from the work that I'm

putting in, but it's constantly working on different things.

I mean, the swing for me, I'm always trying to almost get my hands higher at the top of the backswing and as at least laid off as possible. I think I've done a good job of that over the last few years, especially considering where I was when I first started working with Butch.

So with Butch not traveling really anymore, the time that Claude was around with Butch has definitely helped. Now spending more time with Claude, so we're working on the same things there. For me, I always work on the same stuff; on putting, always working on yardages and wedges. Like I said, I wouldn't say -- I never settle. There's definitely times where you're happy with how things are, but you know that's not necessarily going to stick around.

Golf's a funny game. You're working on swing stuff and it's kind of -- you work on it one way and it gets too far there, and then you work on it to get it back. It's kind of a back and forth in trying to keep it from getting too far one direction and then the other, and almost in a way try and time it up to where everything's hitting the middle at the same time.

JOHN BUSH: All right.

RICKIE FOWLER: And if you do that, you win.

JOHN BUSH: Anything else? Let's take one more right here in the front.

Q. Rickie, you talked about how this has been Dan Gilbert's vision for many years, really dating to his time at the National. It's not lost on people in Detroit that he's not here this week with the health issues. I'm just curious your thoughts on that. Have you reached out to him through somebody else or just generally your thoughts on that?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, it's obviously a bummer. As you talked about, this has been a dream of his for quite some time and all the work that he's put in to not just downtown but the city as a whole. So for him not to be able to be here, yeah, it's a bummer. I wish he was able to see kind of what he's helped create.

We sent him a video last week and so we're going to -- depending on how he's feeling, what's going on, I told a few people, if he's open for it, we would love to go see him, visit, say hi.

But I think just from the turnout, the guys that are here playing, the fans that will be here through the week, it will be cool for everyone to show their appreciation for him bringing a Tour event to Detroit. I'm happy to be a part of it, like I said, with everything that Dan and his companies, what they've done to help the city.

JOHN BUSH: Rickie, before we go, I know you chatted about Anthony a few minutes ago.

He's now joined us here in the room. Maybe a couple comments on his swing? It looked pretty good out there.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I feel like -- well, he actually told me after he hit the first couple 60-yard shots that that was the shot his coach and him were working on, so if I get 60 yards on Friday, I might just pull him in, have him sub in for me on that.

But no, he's got a good swing. Unfortunately, we only got to hit 60-yarders. He lives about an hour south of us in Jupiter, maybe we'll get him out for some full swings, I'll get to see the rest of his game.

I'm just glad him and his family could be here this week and get to come walk around on Friday, hopefully see some good golf. Special to, you know, give back to someone that has gone through some tough times. Like I said, we're just happy that you get to spend a week with us. Like I said, Bill Emerson was the one that said -- I don't know where it all came from, but lined up the honorary observer. I told you, bring me some good luck Friday and we'll be good.

JOHN BUSH: Rickie, thank you for your time. Best of luck this week.