

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
March 29, 2018



RICKIE FOWLER (-6)

Q. You talked about your checklist coming into today. How would you rate your first round?

RICKIE FOWLER: It was pretty good. I felt like we did a good job kind of managing our way around the course. Made some good putts, which was nice to roll in a couple longer ones. Had a couple short ones that we could have got, but all in all, good solid day. I like where we're at heading into the next few days and going into next week.

Q. At what point did you know you could push this to a low number and get to 6 under?

RICKIE FOWLER: It was nice to birdie the first hole but that doesn't always mean good things. I did a good job, I had looks the first few. Made a nice putt for par on my -- I guess that would be our fifth hole, yeah. Sorry, we started on the back nine. Then made a couple after that and kind of got things going.

Yeah, it would have been nice to get a couple more, I had some shorter ones that we kind of let slide by, but it was nice to hit some good, solid putts and give myself a lot of opportunities.

Q. Jordan's talked about coming into this week wanting to get one really low round under his belt before going to Augusta. You started off strong at this event last year, went on to contend and play well at the Masters. How important is it to at least get one round of 5 or 6 under under your belt?

RICKIE FOWLER: Prefer it to be Thursday or Friday, that way you can kind of be in not trying to play from behind the eight-ball, be in a good position where you have a good chance of being in contention, kind of get the blood flowing.

Like I kind of talked about yesterday in the press conference, if you can do that, that gap or that little break from Sunday when you finish playing to the time you tee it up on Thursday, it's not very long, versus I feel like some guys like to take that week off and come in after practicing and fresh.

I like the way it feels typically playing the week before. It's a quicker turnaround and you're ready to go play. It's one of the reasons, like I said, why we took off last week after playing Bay Hill, not playing four in a row. Obviously don't want that back end of the four in a row being a major.

No, I definitely agree with Jordan. Like I said, it would be nice for it to be one of the first couple, that way you can kind of get off and rolling, but it is nice to stand up on the tee on Thursday after having played well or having that solid round that you played a few days prior.

Q. Most of the guys have said coming in now they felt the course was gettable. Did you feel that way and do you feel you took advantage?

RICKIE FOWLER: It was very gettable. I mean, there was definitely 7 to 9 under out there. Obviously you still had to play some great golf, anything 4 to 7. I know Lucas played well, a solid round for me today. But with the course being as soft as it was this morning, greens still rolling great, but being able to be pretty aggressive to pins from kind of wherever you were, didn't really matter as much fairway or rough. The good thing about being in the fairway, lift, clean and place, you get a dry golf ball. Out of the first cut of rough it kind of starts to -- you lose a bit of control, but with the soft greens you're still able to play fairly aggressively. So just making putts and it was nice to get a few of those and post a solid round.

Q. You mentioned getting that birdie at the start was good. Was it nice to finish the way you did as well?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I mean, I don't necessarily always like starting with birdie. I feel like rounds can kind of go either way from there. It's kind of like start on a high point and it's hard to really better it from there.

But no, it's always nice getting off to a good start after coming off of a week off, getting some good work in with Butch the first few days of this week. Yeah, I mean, I had the one bogey where actually I made a great up-and-down after hitting it in the water. So to finish the way I did making a good one for birdie on 7, my 16th, had a good look at eagle on my second to last and a good look at birdie on the last. So could have had a couple more but definitely pleased with the start.

Q. What's the value in competing to win this week versus just playing with next week in mind?

RICKIE FOWLER: We talked about it earlier. You know, being in contention and getting yourself in a position to win and kind of getting the blood flowing, it makes it a lot easier to start things up come Thursday with a short break in between the events and being pretty close to -- you know, not far removed from tournament golf.

Q. Talk about today. I followed you a year ago here, you obviously like this golf course a lot. Why does it set up so well for you?

RICKIE FOWLER: Really, it fits my eye tee to green. These greens are always in great shape, especially the mornings. They roll nearly perfect. Obviously you're going to find a

ball mark or spike mark here and there, but that's anywhere. Other than that, these greens, they roll about as good as you can get them. They're perfect making speed today. With soft conditions, get it in the fairway, ball in hand, you get a dry golf ball, which is nice. But it was pretty soggy in the fairway so you had to be careful getting the right contact. From there you can play pretty aggressively with the soft greens. So it was nice to be able to take advantage of that. Like I said, the golf course fits my eye pretty well and nice to get off to a good start and definitely looking forward to putting myself in a position to win this week.

Q. How good was the putting today, because I can tell when you hit a few, you get that confidence going. Towards the end of the round it looked like you were starting to make everything.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, it was nice, I made a good par putt on my fifth to kind of keep the round going. I was 1 under at that point. Made two long ones after that. So no, it's nice to be back on good greens and greens that I see the lines well and had a good feel on speed. Missed some shorter ones. I still hit good putts, some of them are just misreads. Unfortunately, left the one short at the last, but no, it was a good day on the greens. Nice to have the putter coming around because it was something that was great last year. I feel like it's always been one of my strongest parts when it gets going, and I've had a couple cold months, so heating back up.