

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
August 11, 2021



RICKIE FOWLER

HALEY PETERSON: We would like to welcome Rickie Fowler to the virtual media room here at the Wyndham Championship.

Rickie, welcome back. Only your second start and first since 2016. What is it like to be back?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's great to be back. Unfortunate to I guess be in this situation I'm at, needing to play necessarily, but I've -- since being here in 2016, a golf course I really like and have watched over the years after playing it. So excited to be back to playing the golf course. Like I said, in unfortunate circumstances, needing to play well, but no, we've had plenty of success in North Carolina, so hopefully we can have some this week here at Sedgefield.

HALEY PETERSON: You're 130 in the FedExCup standings. Can you speak to how crucial this week is and the Playoffs? You haven't missed it in the past 11 (inaudible).

RICKIE FOWLER: Frozen. I'll go from where I think you're going.

Yeah, like I said, not in the position we wanted to be going into this week, but I really, all it comes down to is just playing solid golf. I can't necessarily put extra pressure or anything like that, but yeah, need to get some points to secure my spot in the Playoffs and make more birdies than you do bogeys and play some solid golf and everything will be all right.

Q. Rickie, if I had said Adam Scott, Justin Rose, Tommy Fleetwood and yourself, which would you think would be more likely, that you guys who won the last four majors or that you are all on the bubble this week?

RICKIE FOWLER: I guess that would almost be a coin flip. I mean, really the only way you can explain that is golf. That's kind of what it comes down to. Obviously you have ups and downs. As soon as you feel like you have the game figured out, it will humble you very quickly.

Yeah, those are -- it's an impressive group to be a part of. We're just in the wrong spot at this time of year, so hopefully we can kick things into gear and get ourselves tee times for next week.

Q. What does it say about the overall strength of the PGA TOUR?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, just that you mentioned those other guys, Tommy Fleetwood,

Justin Rose, Adam Scott, great ball-strikers, great competitors, and talking about those guys being on the bubble and potentially not making the Playoffs or making the Playoffs. That being said, that's saying 120, 25 guys have had better seasons than them, including me. 129 currently had better seasons than me up to this date. It's impressive as far as kind of the depth and strength of the PGA TOUR, the overall strength of every field week in and week out here on the Tour.

Q. What do you plan to do if you don't make the FedExCup for the next three weeks, month?

RICKIE FOWLER: I'm not sure. I haven't really thought about it too much. It would definitely -- it would change maybe where I would start and how much I would play once the new schedule starts, kind of with that.

My focus has really just been on this week, what do we need to do. Obviously just need to play some solid golf and take care of business and we'll go from there. Yeah, hopefully I don't have to go through those other plans for the next few weeks. Play this week, hopefully it's better than what it's been over the last year or two and we won't have to worry about it.

Q. Rickie, do you feel pressure this week or do you feel like you can just sort of freewheel it in any way?

RICKIE FOWLER: I would be a little bit more, for me personally, in the freewheel area. It's kind of right out there laid out in front of me, I know exactly what needs to be done. So in a way it's just go play solid golf and that's all I can control or do to control what's -- if I'm moving forward or not. Yeah, it's pretty simple. Back up against the wall, go make some more birdies than I do bogeys and get a tee time next week, and if not, you don't. Yeah, it's kind of just all on me, that's about it.

Q. You've had some good low scores, looks like it's almost like an engine that's trying to start but hasn't quite gotten there. Do you feel closer than maybe we would see from the outside looking in?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, definitely. Like in my terms, it would be like I'm trying to kickstart a dirt bike and just sitting there kicking every once in a while, kind of fire up, get going, get a few revs. I'll keep kicking, she's bound to start. There's been a lot of good stuff within the past four, five, six months, more and more, a little more frequently. It's been a bummer that I've been kicking this long, but we're still here kicking. It's a humbling game, but at the same time it kind of makes you sit back and appreciate everything else in life. This is what we get to do, it's awesome that we get to do it for a living, but at the same time it's a game, a sport we get to play. There's a lot bigger things out there.

Q. Kind of along these same lines, there's an interesting thing where we see young players like yourself, like Jordan Spieth, like Harris English, go through these periods in the wilderness, so to speak, and it's interesting that it even seems to last two years

sometimes. It seems like there's a specific time when that happens. I would assume you feel like that's where you are now and I'm curious to know, do you think you know why that happens, or in your case, what is this about where these kind of two-year slumps seem to happen for players really at the top level of the game?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, I wish I knew the exact answer and had a perfect answer for you because then maybe these two-year slumps or hiatuses or journeys through the forest wouldn't really happen.

I think a lot of it -- I mean, you can relate it to so many things to life. It's kind of just how everything goes, just the natural ebb and flow. We can't -- no one's ever just riding the high for their whole life or whole career or whatever it may be. There's going to be ups and downs. And the guys that you see come back from it, I think it makes or breaks guys type of thing. Ultimately in golf it can make someone a better player and just sometimes appreciate what we get to do even more so. I think there's a lot of benefits that you can get from it not just as a player but as a person.

Yeah, I think there's a lot of ways you could go with it, but I wish there was an exact answer because then a lot of us wouldn't be in this position, but I think you go through it to come out better in the long run.

Q. A quick follow-up for you. It's been a long time since you missed a Ryder Cup or a Presidents Cup. You're not done yet, there's still a chance and everything like that, so I would like your thoughts on that. Also, it made me think of what Bubba did at Hazeltine and he just wanted to be around the team and there's a role for him like that. For someone like you who seems to be so beloved by his fellow pros, if you didn't make the team, would you consider something like that?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, for sure. With the position I'm in, age-wise, and yeah, I'd have to play my ass off the next few weeks to have a chance there, which like you said, it's not out of the question. But yeah, if the team -- if the guys wanted me there, I'd be there in a heartbeat. They're such fun weeks to be a part of whether you're playing or not. Some of my favorite times have been when I've sat out and basically got to be there as, you know, a makeshift assistant captain in a way. You're out there supporting the crew and being around.

It's a lot more fun playing, but just being a part of those weeks is very special. Yeah, if I got asked or had the opportunity to go be a part of it, it would be awesome. We'll see if we can take advantage of the next month or so starting here this week and give ourselves an outside shot at it.

Q. You mentioned that you've gotten some good perspective on something that might be more important than golf and I was wondering what those things might be.

RICKIE FOWLER: I think a lot of people have seen since we've been going through I think this pandemic for corona for, what's it been, 18 months or so, I think that's opened a lot of

people's eyes and made them appreciate just normal day-to-day life and what they get to do and how you normally get to live in normal circumstances.

No, going through a slump or down period, I feel like I've been someone that's always had an appreciation for what we do get to do and understanding that things could be a lot worse. I've had people around me that have dealt with, whether it's cancer or being sick or just dealing with health problems. And then there's plenty of stuff going on around the world. Obviously we live in an amazing country even though, yeah, we have our own struggles and problems here.

Something I always look back on, I think about Jarrod Lyle a lot, everything he went through with his three fights with leukemia. There's always someone in a worst position than you, so it's kind of just about appreciating what you have and trying to keep moving forward.

HALEY PETERSON: That's all the questions we have. We thank you for taking the time as always, and good luck this week.

RICKIE FOWLER: Thank you.