

WGC Dell Technologies Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

Rickie Fowler

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Rickie Fowler to the interview room here at the 2023 Dell Match Play.

First time back at Austin Country Club since the debut here in 2016, just some opening comments.

RICKIE FOWLER: I'm looking forward to being back here. A lot of stuff in the past, schedule, and leading up to Augusta and -- I mean, to be honest, I wasn't a huge fan of the group format. I loved the 64, just knock out. You knew exactly what you were getting into. But we are here to basically try and get ourselves back in Augusta.

So, no I'm looking forward to it. We have a tough group the first three days. But, hey, that's what you are going to face in match play and everyone here -- unlike a lot of other sports, as you guys know, I mean, match play in golf is a bit of a tossup. Yes, the No. 1 seed against the No. 64 seed is -- No. 1's going to win the majority of the time, but it's 18 holes and anything can really happen.

THE MODERATOR: Three top 10s on the season, overall, coming in off a tie for 13th at THE PLAYERS, just your thoughts on just your overall state of the game as you're entering this big stretch of golf here coming up.

RICKIE FOWLER: It's definitely been a lot better being able to kind of build some momentum and ultimately build some confidence. The last few weeks I really haven't felt that great with the swing. But what I've been able to get out of those weeks shows a little bit more state of the game and how I'm feeling. I'm doing a lot better of being able to salvage what's maybe a poor round or a poor week and kind of turning those into better than where they have been, whether they're a missed cut or finishing in the back of the pack.

Top 20s and top 10s are still good out here on the PGA TOUR. I'm looking forward to getting back to where I'm feeling better with the swing because -- yeah, if we can



finish where we have been, not feeling great, I'm looking forward to when things are feeling really good.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. When you went back to Butch and made the caddie change, a lot of big, big changes at the end of last season. Now you're back here. Your ranking is really on the move. Has this all happened faster than you thought it would or slower than you thought it would or about on the timetable that you thought it would happen?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, I was kind of at a point, I knew what I was capable of but had to go in with kind of either low or no expectations and just put the work in, and it was definitely nice to see some immediate progress or steps in the right direction.

Then once I got some good finishes in the fall, that helped kind of put me in a position where I knew what I could do and what was possible. But, yeah, I would say after the season last year, it was just, all right, let's figure out a plan, start with a clean slate. And at that point, it was either low or kind of no expectations and just we're going to put the work in and see what we can do.

Q. You talked about liking the format here. In your mind, will it be a shame if match play goes away for good on the TOUR?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I would love to see there still be a match play event at some point. I know there's -- it's just a unique form of play compared to what we normally do. Like I mentioned, I prefer kind of the 64 knockout or is this something -- there was a tournament we used to play, the Western Am, that was stroke play and then cut to 16 guys and went to match play.

But match play, other than what we see in team events, it's fun. We obviously wouldn't want it every week, just because of how volatile it is, and it's not always the guy that's playing the best that week. You can hit someone that gets hot for that day and knocks that person out. But yeah, I love match play. I would love to see a form of it be



in the future on the TOUR.

Q. If I could get your opinion on Scottie Scheffler and what impresses you the most about his rise and just how difficult it is to sustain that over a long period of time like he's done so far.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I mean, he's a pretty decent player. (Smiling.) It's been a lot of fun to watch. Scottie is obviously a very good player, but he's an even better person. He's easy to root for. He's fun to be around. I've gotten to know him a little bit. I know his caddie, Ted Scott, even better since I spent a decent amount of time with him and Bubba back in the day. I think that's been a great pairing.

Yeah, I think a lot of that is -- like I said, obviously he's a great player, but sometimes that play comes in waves and you got to ride that wave. His wave has been a little longer than some guys and nothing short of impressive. It's hard to really find a weakness in his game, and a lot of that comes to that momentum and confidence. All these guys out here can play, but when you've got a lot of momentum and you got a lot of confidence, the game seems pretty easy.

Q. I don't know if you follow Nosferatu on Twitter. He's like the OWGR guru. But it looks like quarterfinal, maybe, would give you a chance to get into the top 50. Is that on your mind and is the Masters on your mind as we're sort of getting to our last chances?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, yeah, I knew I needed to come here and play well. I wasn't sure of exactly what I needed to do. The nice thing with the kind of world rankings and what's coming off, really, anything I do that puts points on the board is only going to move me up from here moving forward.

So, yeah, I mean, my short-term goal is to obviously get myself back in Augusta. If that doesn't happen, we're going to continue to move forward and be in a good position.

Q. Different question totally. You're very calm and matter of fact when you do interviews. Do you feel as a person happier because of the way you're playing now? Are you the same as you've always been off the course and the only difference is that you're playing golf better or is there like -- does it change your life in some positive way as well?

RICKIE FOWLER: No, I mean, even the last few years when I hadn't been playing very well everything other than golf was great, so between family and personal life. I

enjoyed the grind at home of putting the time in, the work in. Unfortunately, I wasn't seeing a lot of good out of it.

But, yeah, everything away from the course was great. It was a good learning period. I wish it was a bit shorter. But, no, I feel like I'm the same as I was the last few years on and off the course. The only thing is I do feel a lot better and have a lot more confidence and, I mean, playing better. So the golf part of it is a bit more fun because I know what I'm capable of.

But, yeah, I've learned a lot in the last few years. Like I said, I wish it was shorter, but at the same time, everyone goes through ups and downs and it's a bit more about what you learn and how you come back from them.

Q. As someone who has played in quite a few of the World Golf Championship events, why do you think they have run their course? It doesn't seem like there's much of a future for them.

RICKIE FOWLER: I'm not sure. I mean, it was -- I think it kind of started -- pandemic had a big kind of hit with it. Prior to that, with not having Akron on the schedule, I feel like that was very much a staple WGC. But, yeah, like you said, they have kind of run their course. I think with some of the changes coming, it kind of picks up or makes up for what the WGCs have kind of been.

But, yeah, I don't have a real answer for you on why they have kind of fizzled out. I know a lot of guys have really enjoyed them. But, yeah, I think there's a lot of things you could go into, but I don't think there's one specific answer.

Q. To sort of spin it, what did they mean to you throughout your career? Because you've played them since the beginning.

RICKIE FOWLER: To me, they kind of felt like -- almost like bonus events. Like, you earned your way into a top tier event with the top players in the world and you look forward to them, obviously, no cut and you knew that even if you got off to, say, a rough start, you had four rounds. It's interesting to look -- there's quite a few times where guys make the cut on the number in a normal TOUR event and there's a handful of times where guys have a chance to win on Sunday.

I'm not saying that makes what a WGC is or not, but I think it shows how fine of a line things are, especially when you look at a limited field and no cut. Yeah, someone can shoot a high one on Thursday or Friday and still have a chance to win a golf tournament.

Q. If you don't do well enough this week to get into the

top 50, will you go to San Antonio next week?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah.

Q. Okay.

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I'm committed and planning on playing there. If I do play well enough, we'll kind of maybe reconsider and see where we're at. But, yeah, kind of doing whatever I need to do to give myself the best chance to be in Augusta, and then planning to play the following week at Hilton Head as well.

Q. And then as it relates to this tournament, what would be your single fondest memory of match play at this event?

RICKIE FOWLER: My single fondest? Probably beating Phil in Tucson. That was a fun one.

Q. Elaborate, please.

RICKIE FOWLER: I played well. Obviously, you have to beat Phil in match play. But I remember I hit a couple 4-irons. One of 'em I hit to gimmie on -- I can't remember, a par-5 on the back nine up the hill. Yeah, it was just one of those days I kind of had it going, and Phil and I were, you know, a lot closer then because we spent a lot of time both playing practice rounds and games together and it was fun to get the better of him that day.

Q. Any words that stand out? With Phil there's got to be something.

RICKIE FOWLER: No. I mean, we had plenty of games back in those days. And even when I was his teammate, I remember one day I think I made nine or ten birdies at Augusta and I was his teammate. And I remember on the 8th hole he was trying to trick me on the read and get in my head. Luckily I ended up making it. So it was, you know, to get paired up against him and ultimately play really well and get the better of him, I just, I know how much it maybe got under his skin a bit and, yeah, it's just fun when you get to beat your buddies.

Q. You mentioned the group setting for match play and having being paired with other players, talented players this week. Including Jon Rahm who has won three times and Billy Horschel who won the Match Play back in 2021. What aspects of your game are you focusing on specifically going into this week?

RICKIE FOWLER: For me I have to drive it well. Like I mentioned swing-wise earlier, I hadn't been feeling that great the last few weeks. Driving it was one of the areas

that kind of felt the worst. If I go drive it well I know I can contend and play with anyone out here this week. But obviously some tough matchups and you can't really dictate a whole lot on how the other guy's going to play. I've played a lot with Jon Rahm over the years. We've been paired together quite a bit. We both enjoy playing together. He seems to play well when he's paired with me, so I know that's going to be a tough match out of the gate. Billy and I were Walker Cup teammates and partners in 2007. And Keith Mitchell, he can flat out play. So I'm going to need to play well all three days. No one's going to lay down, there's not going to be an easy match. But that's what you expect when you're coming to play against the best players in the world and it's going to be a battle.

Q. An off-topic follow-up to that. Do you have any vibrant outfits planned in the works for this week?

RICKIE FOWLER: Vibrant? I don't know how vibrant you may be looking. Pretty calm today with the overcast weather, all black. But we are launching our Palm Tree Crew collab with Kygo and Puma and myself. So there's a couple floral, kind of tropical shirts that I'll wear. Luckily, it will be warming up the next few days so I won't be fully covered up and we'll be able to rock some of the new gear and looking forward to that.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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