

# Cognizant Classic

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, USA

PGA National Champion Course

## Rickie Fowler

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome six-time PGA TOUR winner Rickie Fowler to the interview room here at the Cognizant Classic in the Palm Beaches. This is your 15th start where you won back in 2017. What's it like to be back?

RICKIE FOWLER: It's nice because I'm in my own bed and staying at home, so this is always a nice easy week.

I was able to play the course last week. We had an outing for our TGL team with Team New York, so decided to stay and just play all 18, kind of use it as my practice round, and like I said, easy being at home. Show up this morning and spent the last couple days prepping off-site or other obligations.

Like I said, it's always nice being at home. I've always enjoyed this event. Great golf course. I've had success here. It's all around a great week.

#### **Q. You're making your 350th PGA TOUR start this week --**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I'm getting older.

#### **Q. Fifth start of the season. Can you comment on the state of your game heading into this week and the Florida Swing?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Game-wise, definitely trending and heading in the right direction. Obviously last year was back to playing some poor golf or not necessarily taking advantage of some opportunities. Played poorly on the weekends.

Not a great start this year, but I feel like I've seen a lot of good things, and I know that I'm at least trending. That's a positive.

Definitely like being back here at a place that I've had success, and healthy, as well, after dealing with a little lay-up, a few days off there in Phoenix and trying to get back in the swing of things at Torrey.

**Q. Rickie, you said last week your Monday was Jack's pro-am at Bear's Club, into TGL, into this week. Now that you've gone through the chaos of the last few days, has it been a bit of a whirlwind, or for someone that has as busy of a schedule as you have, sort of took it in stride?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, in way kind of just normal or a little bit of a new normal, playing at night on a Monday. It was nice having last week off, but that flew by pretty quickly. Getting back and getting adjusted, I know it's only a three-time hour time, but having kids, it's not like they're sleeping in a whole lot, and getting our oldest back in school.

Like I said, those six, seven days go by very quickly.

It's always nice to be home, be in our own bed and being able to go out in the pool in the afternoon with the little one and do more family stuff versus traveling on the road hopping back and forth.

Great to be here, and like I said, was able to knock off a day last week with having an outing with our team and getting to play out here. That made for what would yesterday have been a little bit more work out here, as well, but I was able to go and just go play Medalist and have a nice casual day.

Pro-am moved probably the fastest I've seen a pro-am move in a long time, so that was a big bonus for a Wednesday and resting up for tomorrow morning.

**Q. Your buddy Jordan Spieth is playing here for the first time. He said you were kind enough to offer your home to him if he wanted to stay there. Are you laying out the hospitality for him because he says he doesn't spend much time in South Florida? The community here is excited to have him for the first time.**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, we had a nice tent ready for him. (Laughter.) He would have been all right out back.

Yeah, between myself and JT who I know offered up, as well, I think he decided to stay a bit closer. He was here



on his own, obviously wasn't necessarily planning to play this week, so I know they had plans at home, so kids and wife are back there.

But no, it's great to have him here. I feel like with how he plays and stuff, I feel like this golf course -- obviously he's a great player. He can play well anywhere. But I think he'll find it a fun challenge. I know he's been here a while back, but definitely good to have him here. Hopefully we'll be able to get him over to the house a few times.

Our oldest is three days younger than his oldest, Sammy, and they're very close, so she'd be excited to see Jordan.

**Q. You mentioned earlier that you're getting old. I think at our age your perspectives change and all that. I'm curious, do you spend more time in reflection now than you may have done five, ten years ago, and if so, what moment or moments in your career do you kind of look back on most fondly?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, it is fun to look back because it doesn't feel like it's been that long or 16 years on TOUR. Thinking back when unfortunately I got sick at WM Phoenix Open, but that was my 17th start there because they gave me a start as an am. I've played a lot of these places quite a few times.

But yeah, it is fun to think back from the first few years on TOUR to first win. PLAYERS is always a fun one. The top 5s in all four majors. All the wins out here are special. Some guys make it look easier than others, but it's not an easy thing to do.

Being able to remove yourself from current situation, as a kid you just dreamed of playing on TOUR and ultimately winning. To have done that six times, as a kid you'd be stoked. In current position, you want that to be more. You have to be able to look at it both ways.

**Q. Are you past the point to where the things that aren't on your resume kind of gnaw at you or you've learned to kind of be more at peace with whatever happens the next 10, 15, 20 years from now in your career?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, like I kind of mentioned, you always want more, but at the same time you have to have the perspective and be able to look back as a kid -- what we get to do and what I've done is pretty cool. But in the current situation, you want more.

Yeah, I still obviously love to play. Off weeks I'm still playing a bunch, whether it's for fun or working towards getting back out on the road.

Yeah, there's no better feeling than being in contention, having a chance to win, and then when you ultimately do end up the last guy standing and holding that trophy. Yeah, the plan is to add some more to the win column, and I would not mind getting one of the big ones, but at this point I've got to work on getting myself a tee time in the majors before I start thinking about that.

**Q. I was just wondering, with all the TGL you've been playing, I know early on the players seemed to be hitting the stride and getting used to the indoor thing with the big screen and all that stuff. Does it work the other way, as well, where you're in there for however many matches you've played now and when you come and play outdoor golf at a normal -- you're kind of adjusting your game a little bit the other way? Does it mess you up in any way when you're playing normal PGA TOUR tournament golf?**

RICKIE FOWLER: No, I don't think it messes you up. I think it can help in ways. I feel like in there, it can simplify it in a way as far as point and shoot, try and hit a straight one right where you're looking, instead of trying to hit certain shots or maybe get too cute. Just a straight ball on there still goes straight.

I know guys have talked about different curvature and sometimes it doesn't feel like it matches up, but no, there's definitely been some benefits I feel like to it, and like I talked about, the play in there has gotten better, and I feel like it's just been guys being able to spend more and more time and getting more and more comfortable with it.

It's not real golf, but it's as close as you're going to get within a simulator setting. Some of it is kind of learning that game and how it works and what you need to do in there.

There's some things that are a little different. Obviously chipping and different things, bunker play and putting on a synthetic surface. But at least we're all getting better in there. I think it's gotten to the point where it's a little more entertaining. At least I feel like people want to see good shots and putts made versus holes being won with pars a lot of times.

It's been great. I've had fun watching other teams play. Us as players, I think universally, all the guys are having a great time in there, and I think you can see that.

**Q. You hope the putting translates from last week, right?**

RICKIE FOWLER: You're still trying to hit your lines and



make putts, so it definitely does translate. As you guys know, putting on synthetic versus a real green, there are definitely some differences, but left-edge putt is still left edge.

**Q. For many years here, the winning scores were very few double digits under par. Last four years, 13- or 14-under par has been the average. What has been the difference in the course the last four years?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Out here, a big thing is how firm the greens can get and what the wind is doing. Obviously the course is soft right now. Greens are still soft. Hopefully that will change throughout the week and dry out.

But it's very much a second shot or approach golf course. Obviously there's plenty of water in play. There's a handful of key shots that can be the difference in maybe having a putt at birdie to walking away with double or potentially more.

So it's a very penal golf course, like I said, in those handful of key shots. It is a golf course if you drive it well and control your golf ball, you can shoot some good numbers. But I've always loved this place because you don't necessarily have to go low or make a lot of birdies to win. If it stays like it is right now and there's not much wind, you're going to see some lower scores.

Typically wind is a factor down here, and when you're playing this golf course with such kind of fine margins of what a good shot is and when you're grabbing another golf ball out of the bag, it's tough.

But I've always enjoyed playing here from junior golf. I played it once in a junior event and I've played this event quite a few times. I think it's a nice challenge.

**Q. You clearly mentioned you've played here a lot. What would you make of the overseed around the greens and on the fairways? How is it going to make the course play different than years past?**

RICKIE FOWLER: I think overseeded rough may play, if anything, easier than Bermuda rough. A little bit more control. You can sometimes get the ball to fly a little bit softer or spin a little bit more from the rough. Bermuda rough, as you all know, just about anything can happen, especially when these greens get firm. It gets very hard to play to small sections.

Hopefully it continues to dry out. At times with Bermuda fairways or overseeded, you can get mud balls, and mud balls around this place are no fun, either.

But I would say coming into this week, it's probably the best condition I've seen the golf course leading into the tournament. I think they've done a great job, and I know that's something they've been focusing on to continue to elevate the condition of the course, not just for this week but for year-round and everyone that plays here.

**Q. Just wondering how much involvement, if any, you had with Cobra's new driver line, any feedback you gave or stuff in the development process you were involved with?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I'm usually pretty involved. I enjoy the testing and giving feedback. I feel like I'm pretty good at giving kind of unbiased opinions as well as my personal opinions and what I feel or see.

So yeah, I typically start anywhere from a year to year and a half out, typically hitting prototype heads, probably about six months before we get them.

I think over the last -- I would say with this line, it's probably been the earliest I've had access to that and being able to give feedback. That's something that makes it easier for me and other players to work into new equipment. It can be tough when all of a sudden come late fall, it's like, here's a new driver. Hopefully it's in the bag in January.

So to be involved with that process, it's something I enjoy, not just with drivers but other equipment, as well, with new irons, fairway woods, different things like that.

I know there's other players out there that don't like doing much testing or things like that. It's something I'm kind of a club geek, as well, and it's fun. Like I said, I enjoy it.

I've seen our driver for next year already, and that's something that I would say could probably have something hittable for me probably only in a couple to a few months and start giving feedback and working on that stuff.

**Q. About the hosel, how adjustable it can be, wondering if that's helped in your fitting process, getting into this specific driver?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, definitely. Now we have 33 different settings, and going from kind of being limited in what you can do loft and lie independently, now being able to have obviously a lot more options -- I can't remember exactly where we're at, if it was seven-ish or something like that.

I think the biggest thing is being able to do loft and lie independently, like I mentioned. I was in a little bit of a slightly upright setting starting the year. I've gone quite a

bit flatter. Having the ability to do that, it's great on driver but also when you start going into 3-wood. We also have a 2-wood or 3-wood plus, small driver.

Yeah, I think it's big. It's not like you're using all 33 settings. Typically you're living in some sort of quadrant. But it opens up just a lot more possibilities and stuff that you can test and see how it reacts to you.

**Q. You're going from the California swing now being finished to the Florida Swing here. You being from California, this is now home. How long did it take you to sort of get used to the grasses and the different challenges that these kind of golf courses can present as far as dealing with Bermuda, dealing with rough? Can you explain how that would work to people who maybe have never come down here? What are you trying to adjust to? What makes it as challenging as it is?**

RICKIE FOWLER: I would say luckily for me, I obviously got better and learned a bit more once I was living down here, but growing up, played a lot out in Palm Springs and we get a lot of Bermuda out there. So I was exposed to multiple grasses from a young age.

Then junior and amateur and college golf, you travel and you're playing on a bunch of different stuff, as well. I feel like I've been pretty well-rounded from a young age.

Yeah, Bermuda, tight, grainy Bermuda, there's a big difference in where that grass is laying. It can make a very simple pitch shot a completely different shot. People that haven't played Bermuda and having the grass laying back into you and the ball sitting down a little bit, there's times you're just hoping you have a chance or there's an option of being able to putt it. You don't want to mess with trying to clip it perfectly. But there's times where there might be a bunker in the way, and you just close your eyes and pray to God and hope that something comes out halfway decent.

Yeah, we deal with it a lot down here. It's part of it. But it's so lie dependent and what shot you have in front of you.

This week you're not going to see much of that with it overseeded everywhere except for the greens. You'll start to get into that. Bay Hill you get some tight ones, at PLAYERS, and now we're down here in this part of the country, and that's what you have.

**Q. Do you think that living down here now year-round, do you think it's helped to improve your short game a little bit because it requires a lot more precision? Not that you can get away with more in other types of**

**venues and other setups, but there's less margin for error it sounds like down here, and if you're playing in that, you'd probably get a little bit sharper?**

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, I think it can kind of go either way if you're struggling, and this is while you're trying to go dig it out of the dirt into the grain. It could go the wrong direction.

But it's definitely going to let you know where your technique is at when you're chipping well down here. You go anywhere else and you have a lot of confidence.

Any of the places around here, especially this time of year, are in great shape. They're usually going to be pretty tight, and hitting shots around the greens, if you're hitting them how you want here, you're going to have zero issues elsewhere.

**Q. I'm sure you're aware of Luke Clanton and the opportunity he has this week through the PGA TOUR U. He's a made cut away from a PGA TOUR card. As someone who was basically Luke Clanton 16, 17 years ago, what goes through your head when you think about these kind of pathways now for a Luke Clanton to basically get his PGA TOUR card while he's still in school?**

RICKIE FOWLER: It's great. He's still -- in a way, he's earning his way out here. I don't think anyone is going to argue that he hasn't played some very good golf. It's been impressive to watch. It's been fun.

In those situations, it's tough. I know a bunch of people are asking him about it. He knows what's at stake. Sometimes it's hard to remove that and just go play golf. But he's a great player. Whether it happens this week or not, he's going to be fine. He's shown that and proven it.

No, I think having Q-school back as an option to the TOUR and other pathways, whether it's through PGA TOUR U to guys coming off of DP, yeah, I think it's going to -- you're going to see guys have success following earning their way through all those platforms.

I know there was talks of, in past, the percentage or how many guys kept their cards after Q-school and different things like that. I know trying to make that as high a percentage as possible. But between Q-school and through Korn Ferry and these different avenues, guys are definitely earning their way. Like I said, it's nothing that's being given to them.

I've had fun watching Luke play. Like I said, he's earned it, and he's played some really good golf. Hopefully he can

get it done this week.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

