

U.S. Open Championship 2023

Friday, June 16, 2023

Los Angeles, California, USA

The Los Angeles Country Club

Rickie Fowler

Flash Interview



Q. 2-under 68. Rickie, nice playing. Obviously a later time today. What did you do this morning and did you watch any of the early wave?

RICKIE FOWLER: Thank you. No, I actually didn't watch any this morning. I did watch a little bit yesterday afternoon.

This morning just hung out with my wife, went over -- my parents are actually staying in an RV with my grandparents next to Jordan and J-Day, so we went over there and hung out for about an hour.

It was just family time this morning. I was able to just walk over and get my warmup going after that.

Q. How did the game feel today and how was the course playing?

RICKIE FOWLER: I felt pretty good today. I felt like kind of the only area I gave away some shots, some long-range putts.

Felt like the greens might have been a little slower, and then there was areas where they were putting pins in a little bit more slope or pitch, so going up some pretty steep areas so it was tough to get yourself to hit it hard enough, and then you obviously don't want to blow it by and have something that's downhill, a slider.

We'll try and clean some of that up. Golf course wise it started to firm up. Greens started to firm up a little bit. Kind of the biggest difference, pins were on some more slope than yesterday, tucked a little bit more. Par-3s were back, and then the wind was blowing a bit more than what we had yesterday.

Still a solid test. The birdies are out there if you put yourself in the right position, but as you can see, bogeys are very easy to make.

Q. What was it like just walking up 18 hearing the crowd chant your name, and do you feel like given the struggles you've had and being where you are now,

maybe there's a little extra support from the crowd, because struggles can be relatable from time to time?

RICKIE FOWLER: I sure hope everyone can relate to struggles because everyone deals with them. No one's perfect. I think you'd be lying if you haven't been through a tough time, especially if you play golf.

No, it was great being able to walk up 18, especially after hitting a good drive and hitting it on the green. Didn't have a whole lot to worry about.

Yeah, the fans have been great here. I feel like especially yesterday as the round went on, just kind of more and more energy with -- as I continued to go more and more under par.

I'm looking forward to the weekend. It's been a while since I've felt this good in a tournament, let alone a major. It's going to be a challenge, but I'm definitely looking forward to it.

Q. What is it about you that makes you so popular with the fans? What do they like about you? Why are they so demonstrative?

RICKIE FOWLER: I wish there was an exact answer. I'm not sure. I never planned to have kids want to look up to me or follow me or anything like that. I feel like I've always been myself, and I don't try and do anything different or be anyone else.

I sure hope I come off as genuine. I feel like I'm just me being myself out here and love what I get to do.

I do feel like kids or the youth are very good judges of character, so I'm going to take that as a compliment that a lot of kids do look up to me.

Q. Does it put pressure on you so that it instills a slight fear in you that I must behave myself all the time so I maintain this extraordinary popularity, or does it in fact bore you up all the time?

RICKIE FOWLER: No, there's plenty of times where you

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know the cameras are around and people are watching, especially with today's day and age with cancel culture and all that. You have to be aware.

At the same time, it's being aware but still being just true to yourself and not trying to be different or fake. I think it's kind of a little bit of both.

Q. Given the way you looked today, pretty relaxed, does it feel like a U.S. Open test? It seems like you're kind of making it look easy.

RICKIE FOWLER: Thank you. I think.

It's not that easy out there. I know visually from -- yes, I've made a lot of birdies and that is doable out there. Until you've been on the grounds or been out there hitting shots, it's still a very hard test.

Is it the hardest U.S. Open? No. I think it's a good, fair, hard test. Visually probably watching on TV and stuff it probably doesn't do it justice. The fairways look very wide because yes, the mowed areas are wide, but where you have to hit it is very small. So the golf course is big and open but plays very tight.

The greens, you can't see how much slope there is and how thick everything is around. You hit fairways and hit greens, yes, you can score well, but you get out of position and it's going to eat you up.

Q. When you reflect on all you've been through, the struggles, the adversity, what or who would you say got you through it, kept you going?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, a number of people. From JT, Jordan, Duf, Smylie, who was walking around with us all day today. My coach that I was working with until I went to Butch. John Tillery. Joe, who had been on the bag for me forever.

My wife, my little one, even though she can't say a whole lot. Family and those people that are close to me. Knowing that everything other than golf was great, it was tough because golf was kind of the only thing that was not in place according to everything else.

Yeah, it was a grind, but to be back in here talking to you guys for a couple days, it feels great. This is where I want to be. It's nice to be back in here.

Q. When you reflect on all that now, how do you appreciate these moments, the week you're having here?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, these are why we play. This is why everyone that's teeing it up this week or guys that try to qualify, this is what we all want to do. We play the game because we love it and we want to compete and we want to win.

Going through the last few years, yeah, there's probably plenty of people that might have just hung it up, but for the guys that play for a living out here and know high-level golf, part of the struggles -- I wouldn't say I necessarily enjoyed it, but looking at it, I did, just because of how much I learned about myself, my swing, my game.

I wouldn't be in this position had I not gone through the last few years.

Q. You had an exceptionally long wait on the 4th tee, probably like 15, maybe 20 minutes before you hit that tee shot, and the result was going to be a little bit of a block and you hit a loose shot in the bunker, and then on 7 you probably had 10, 15 minutes before you hit that putt. I'm wondering what if any effect did those delays have on those two shots?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, you try not to think about it, but it is kind of a bummer when you get a little bit out of your rhythm, especially when you're kind of rolling, especially coming off of three birdies to start the round.

It can be tough, but there's no excuses out here. Things are going to happen. You're going to have waits.

Kind of just a bummer, but it's part of it.

Q. Can you remember another event where you've had two groups on the same tee waiting to hit a shot?

RICKIE FOWLER: I mean, we get backups, especially drivable par-4s, reachable par-5s. It happens. I wouldn't say weekly, but just depending on the golf course.

Next week we go to Travelers. 15 there usually ends up being a bit of a wait there.

Like I said, it's part of it. It would be nice if it wasn't, but it's part of what we do.

Q. Speaking of rhythm, when you go into the weekend with the lead at the U.S. Open, from a mental, emotional standpoint between now and when you tee off, do you do anything different? What is the ingredient there?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yes, I'm in the lead, but we're only halfway there. Being in the lead is nice, but it really means



nothing right now.

I'm looking forward to continuing to challenge myself and go out there and try and execute the best I can. Like I said, a lead right now doesn't really mean anything.

It's about being in a good position after the first two days, obviously making the cut, having a tee time on Saturday.

But we're in a great position, and like I said, having a lead right now doesn't really mean much. A little different once you get to after 54 holes because that's when things really heat up.

Q. Coming out of that period of struggle, what's the overriding emotion now? Is there relief that you've kind of got that behind you, or is it determination? What goes through your mind now that you seem to have your mojo back?

RICKIE FOWLER: Well, I wouldn't say it's all back. It can get taken away very quickly. Anyone that plays this game at all, you never know.

Definitely appreciation, gratitude, knowing it's a very humbling sport. Yeah, and there is some relief that that three years is behind us, but like I said, appreciate the good times because you never know when things are going to go south.

Q. When you think about your peaks, like 2014, all the majors, early 2018, some of your best stuff, do you view those two peaks differently than each other, and how far away from those peaks do you feel right now?

RICKIE FOWLER: Yeah, a little bit. '14 and '15 were very good, '14 with the top 5s in all the majors, '15 I won multiple times with THE PLAYERS, '18 being another solid year.

I would say now I'm in a better position than any of those years. I really haven't, I feel like, played to my capabilities yet, and knowing what I've been able to salvage and still get some solid finishes and putting myself in contention, I just feel like I'm getting older, so I'm more mature.

I do feel like I'm in a better position with my game now than I was back then.

Q. Why do you feel like you're in a better spot?

RICKIE FOWLER: I have a better understanding of everything. I know more about my swing, myself, my mental approach, and I would say having a family now and a great support group around us, I just feel like I have a lot

more going for me than I did then.

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