
JOHN Q. HAMMONS
HOTEL CLASSIC
Cedar Ridge Country Club
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

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First-round leader quotes

AN INTERVIEW WITH REILLY RANKIN

THE MODERATOR: Reilly, thanks for coming in. A three day tournament your 4-under. I imagine it's always good to get off to a good start when there are only 54 holes to play. Just your thought today, what was working for you and we will go from there.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

REILLY RANKIN: I just trusted my game plan and stuck to it the whole day. And I think you just really have to stay focused, completely focused for 54 holes. So I just really focused on staying focused.

Q. What was your game plan?

REILLY RANKIN: Well, just where you wanted to be in the fairway and on the green and which flags were green light, you know, smart, just playing smart conservative, aggressive, I guess.

Q. Is it tougher to be in the threesome when you have someone who has had as much success as Annika, do you take more pressure or less pressure in that kind of situation?

REILLY RANKIN: No, I enjoyed it. It was awesome. I never played with her. When I saw the pairing a couple of days ago I could have jumped through the roof. It's

an opportunity to learn a lot. But I really, I think it helped me because it made me stay even more focused on my own game and she is a great player to play with and on the first tee when they announced all of her successes it was quite an inspiration.

Q. Kind of intimidating when you hear all of those accomplishments, obviously the first nine holes you posted a score of 4-under, what was going well early for you?

REILLY RANKIN: I probably did good on the front. And I stayed in my own world, I call it Riley's world. I made a few good par saves and I kept the momentum going.

Q. Did you have a number in mind when you teed off today that I need to be around this ballpark?

A. I don't usually have a number.

Q. But you got to be happy?

REILLY RANKIN: I was trying to keep my streak of 69's going.

Q. Annika said she was really impressed the way you played today, that you had some tough shots that you had to hit, you took some chances when you had, she seemed to be pretty impressed, that makes you happy when she is pretty happy with your game?

REILLY RANKIN: It's definitely a compliment coming from the best player that's ever played in my opinion. I was very comfortable. It's fun when you can feed off the energy. I learned a lot from her without ever playing with her. So I have watched her a lot.

Q. Does it help when you have a big crowd out there following you around today?

REILLY RANKIN: Yes, I love when there is a crowd.

Q. What happened on 13, you bogeyed?

REILLY RANKIN: Was that a par-3, right?

Q. Yes.

REILLY RANKIN: I hit it in the right bunker. I just didn't hit a good shot in there. I hit a good bunker shot. The putt, I just missed the putt.

Q. How far was the putt?

REILLY RANKIN: Probably eight or ten feet.

Q. But you came back and got the birdie on 14, was that important to keep momentum instead of letting it fly the other way after getting off to such a good start?

A. Yes, it's a bounce back. And Tiger, if you look at his stats, he is No. 1 in bounce backs. I know he was the last time I looked. Yes, I think it's important to refocus and put it behind you and not take it to the next hole.

And when you have a birdie to stay focused and not --

Q. 14, the par-5, what club?

REILLY RANKIN: Well, on all of the par-5s I laid up. My favorite yardage is 87 yards, so I tried to lay up to that. I hit a driver, 5-iron. I actually hit a little more than 87. I hit 93. It was uphill going into the wind so I hit a chain pitching wedge, which is a controlled, a gripe down a little. I called it chain. I don't like to say grip or choke.

Q. You have one of the more interesting notes in your bio in your book, you broke your back and you had to lay up two years, is that right? Did you play any golf at all? Were you not even thinking about golf once you got hurt? Did you try to get well?

REILLY RANKIN: Well, it's a long story. At first they didn't know if I would walk again. So the first eight months or 10 months the doctor said, okay, this was a critical time, the first 10 months, because one of the vertebrae I broke was anterior and

posterior and the nerve running through it. So he said if I fell down I could paralyze myself.

THE MODERATOR: Can you use the mic.

REILLY RANKIN: (Inaudible). So, no, I could only stand up or lie down for the first three months, I think. I'm not 100% sure on these time frames but I know that I didn't touch a golf club. I went back to school though. It happened in June, and I don't even know when school starts.

After a few months of school I started rehab with Ron Corsin (phn). He is our head football trainer.

The first day of rehab I couldn't even lift my hands over my head with nothing in them. So it was very big progress. I guess my focused changed. Yes, I definitely didn't play golf.

Q. How long were you actually able to pick up a club and swing it?

REILLY RANKIN: I want to say after 14 months or 15 months. We had a swimming pool, probably the size of this room, with a treadmill that was under water. So I had to walk on that. So he let me swing it under the water just because it takes away everything. Not really swing, swing. Then I hits whiffle balls. I will try. I don't know the time frames on everything.

Q. When were you injured?

REILLY RANKIN: June 4th, 1999.

Q. How did you injure it?

REILLY RANKIN: I jumped off a rock and landed wrong in the water.

Q. Once you have been through something like that, I would imagine pressure, bunker shots, those things don't seem as pressurized as maybe they did before the injury, I'm sure you are a lot different person now than you were before the injury.

REILLY RANKIN: I always had the same approach to golf before the injury. But it definitely taught me a lot of risk and reward. But I never get upset on the golf course or turn pressure into -- pressure is a word, you can use it however you want. That's how I think. But, yes, it definitely put a lot of things in perspective. It taught me a lot about friends and family and how powerful the love and support they give you. I wouldn't be sitting here right now if it wasn't for the support that I got.

Q. You had to struggle to get on TOUR, too, having comeback like you did from that, struggling to get out here on TOUR, I'm sure you want to be here, I'm sure it made it a little -- things probably don't upset you as much as probably it does other people because what you have been through, you are able to handle that stuff better.

REILLY RANKIN: Adversity is just a challenge. No matter what you do in life, or no matter what situations, it's all about determination and your commitment to where, and believe in yourself, and what your goals are, and that you can achieve them.

THE MODERATOR: Scorecard. Just the birdies and the bogeys.

REILLY RANKIN: I birdied 2, 4, 5, and 9.

THE MODERATOR: Can you tell us what you hit off the tee on two and how far the putt was?

REILLY RANKIN: I hit a 6-iron and the putt was about three inches, four inches. I couldn't remember for a second.

THE MODERATOR: The birdie of four.

REILLY RANKIN: 4, I think I hit a 6-iron again. And the putt was about 10 feet.

THE MODERATOR: Birdie on 5, the par-5.

REILLY RANKIN: I hits a wedge and, a sand wedge and I need to start writing these down. I don't know 12 feet, I'm guessing.

THE MODERATOR: Birdie on 9.

REILLY RANKIN: Actually, 5, the birdie putt was shorter. It was more like six or seven feet. 9, I hit a -- it was on the back fringe. It was probably about 25 feet. I don't remember. Oh, I hit a chain 9-iron.

THE MODERATOR: 13, you told us about it. Do you remember what club you hit?

REILLY RANKIN: I hit a 4, a chain 4.

THE MODERATOR: 14, you said driver, 5-iron, pitching wedge, does that sound close?

REILLY RANKIN: To about ten feet.

THE MODERATOR: Anymore questions for Reilly?

Q. Are you surprised that 6-under, 5-under or 4-under in the morning session is leading? Everyone seems to think this is a challenging course for every one?

REILLY RANKIN: It still is a challenging. If you get the putts to go in, that's what it's all about. Just capitalizing on your opportunities when have you them. I think you have less green light pins than you do, you know, especially on these greens. So if you take advantage of that you can stay patient and you can shoot.

Q. Annika said the greens were smooth, do you concur with that?

A. Yes, they are. The course is in great shape. The wind is not blowing as much as it was the first couple of practice rounds.

THE MODERATOR: All set. Thank you.

REILLY RANKIN: Thank you.