

Motorsports

Harvick says he'll 'follow along' with move to Ford

By CHARLES ODUM
AP Sports Writer

HAMPTON, Ga. — Kevin Harvick, who has spent his entire Sprint Cup career driving a Chevrolet, said Friday this week's announcement that Stewart-Haas Racing is moving to Ford won't force him to look for a new team.

Harvick and SHR co-owner Tony Stewart each won championships for the team driving Chevrolets. The team's move to Ford in 2017 set up a potentially awkward final 2016 season with Chevrolet and led to questions about how Harvick would react.

The 2014 Cup champion said during Friday's practice at Atlanta Motor Speedway he plans to stay with SHR.

"Just got to follow along with what your organization thinks is best," Harvick told reporters. "I think they have the same interest in mind that I do, and that's to compete for wins and championships."

Asked if that means he won't leave SHR, Harvick said "I just want to win races. That's what we're all going to focus on."

Harvick said the move does not make him a free agent. He was evasive when asked about his contract status after 2016.

"My contract, I haven't even looked at," he said. "I haven't even



In this Feb. 20, 2016 file photo, Kevin Harvick, left, looks on as crew members work on his car during practice for the Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway in Daytona Beach, Fla.

(AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)

higher. If you own three-quarters of the field, your odds are better each week."

Stewart has driven for General Motors in all but one of his 18 NASCAR seasons. He is retiring after this season.

Stewart said Wednesday he hopes to continue in his "great relationship" with Hendrick Motor-

sports in 2016 even as SHR prepares "to try to be as self-sufficient as we can going into 2017."

"We see this as a lot of growth for Stewart-Haas Racing," Stewart said. "... It's a great opportunity for us to kind of get out of the shadows and, to some degree, get off the coattails, to a certain degree, and really get out on our own."

Even though he has been loyal to Chevrolet throughout his career, Harvick was firm in his commitment to SHR.

"I've got a great team," he said. "I've got great people. I've got a great organization that's wanted to win races and to not be committed to them would be foolish on my part to be in the best position I've ever been in as a driver."

Stewart said announcing the plans for Ford so early in the 2016 season could be seen as awkward when he and Harvick are still driving Chevrolets.

"Yeah, we definitely understand that, but at the same time we're committed to Chevrolet this year and we're committed to winning races and trying to contend for a championship again this year," Stewart said. "They realize that. We're still all-in this year with Chevrolet. ... That's what we do. That's our commitment as a race team. We still respect our partnership with Chevy at this point."

Golf

Rickie Fowler finishes second round with lead at Honda Classic



Rickie Fowler watches his tee shot on the 14th hole during the second round of the Honda Classic golf tournament, Friday, Feb. 26, 2016, in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP Golf Writer

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Rickie Fowler kept bogeys off his card for the second straight round Friday for a 4-under 66 and the early lead in the Honda Classic.

In some respects, it was identical to Fowler's opening round — no bogeys, another 66 in windy conditions and a big par save on his 10th hole. Having started on the back nine, Fowler worked himself out of his toughest spot well right of the fairway and managed to get up-and-down for par to keep some momentum.

Otherwise, this was a clean day. His longest par putt was 12 feet on the fourth hole after driving into the bunker, and he ended his round with a 25-foot birdie putt on the ninth hole to reach 8-under 132.

Jimmy Walker finished birdie-eagle, holing a 40-foot putt on the 18th hole for a 66 and was one shot behind. Sergio Garcia had a 69 and was another stroke back.

Fowler is the first person to go bogey-free over the opening 36 holes at the Honda Classic since it moved to PGA National in 2007.

"I'm definitely pleased about that," Fowler said. "Got a nice break on 1 to

kind of continue that. But yeah, I kept myself in it with some up-and-downs, made some good putts, and then continued to move forward. Made a couple birdies coming in, so it was a little bit of a bonus there at the last."

Rory McIlroy was hopeful of a bonus to keep playing. He headed home after a 72 and it was uncertain if he would be back this week. McIlroy took a triple bogey on the par-5 fifth — his 14th hole of the round — and a birdie on the final hole put him at 4-over 144. He would not speak to reporters as he left the course.

It would be the second straight year for McIlroy to

miss the cut.

Walker missed the cut at Riviera last week, though he has been steady since a tweak to his swing in the offseason. Except for Riviera, he has not finished lower than a tie for 13th since October.

So far, the 18th hole has been kind to him. On Thursday, Walker went into the water and made a 12-foot putt to escape with par. On Friday, he was trying to lag his long eagle attempt and "luckily, the hole got in the way."

Garcia held his own for a big part of the round until he three-putted for bogey on his 10th hole (No. 1) and Fowler built his lead by making birdies.

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