

BMW Championship

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Owings Mills, Maryland, USA

Caves Valley Golf Club

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

DOUG MILNE: We'd like to welcome World No. 1 FedExCup No. 2 and defending champion of the BMW Championship Jon Rahm. Thanks for joining us for a few minutes. We appreciate the time. Coming off a third-place finish at last week's Northern Trust, third straight top-3 finish of the season. With that said, are you coming into the week feeling as strong and good as your results are indicating?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I am. I'm confident. To be fair, I'm still a little thinking about what I could have done better already yesterday, right; it's still very fresh. But looking forward to this week.

I've heard great things about the golf course. I haven't been out there yet because I just got here, so I'm looking at the pictures I can see around me, and it looks like it's going to be a challenging one, so I'm excited to get out there and hopefully make this my first PGA TOUR defense.

DOUG MILNE: You're making your fifth start here at the BMW Championship, and then in addition to the win you've had top-5 finishes in 2017 and 2019, as well. Obviously different courses, as you mentioned. Is there just a certain vibe that kind of takes you to the next level when you get to an event like the BMW Championship?

JON RAHM: Well, typically the venues we've played and the part of the country we play on is usually a type of golf that I like. We're talking about tree-lined, we're talking bentgrass, we're talking high rough and ball-striking, right. So I think that is what kind of resonates with me in this event, especially last year.

Last year was a U.S. Open; let's just be honest about that and be fair. That event was a U.S. Open with a 70-man field.

Yeah, definitely the type of golf I enjoy, so looking forward to keeping it going.

Plus the top 70 players, right? It's the week before East Lake, so I think we're all trying to get into form right before



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our very last big event.

It's definitely something that I have in mind, and like I said, I can't help to think that I hope I make this my first defense on the PGA TOUR.

Q. Yesterday you said you hadn't had time to digest it because you had seen your son and he made you smile right away, but you had alluded to that you are still trying to get over it. What is that process like? How do you digest a tournament that you're coming off of so quickly going into the next tournament?

JON RAHM: Yeah, well, it's not digesting, it's learning from. Just think about and analyze what I did, what my thought process was in each moment and what I could have done better and what I did really well. It's a bit of all those things. The one thing I can tell you is I think it's going to be very easy to think about 15 and 16, that tee shot on 15 and that chip shot on 16.

But I'm going farther back, and if something like this ever were to happen again, I need to get the speed of the greens a little bit quicker and adjust a little bit quicker. It took me quite a while, and there was a lot of missed putts early on. The four birdies I made were literally tap-ins, all of them. Tap-ins or two-putts, which I didn't really make anything outside five feet, and I think that was the biggest difference.

I feel like I played better than my score was showing, and at the end just a couple of bad swings really cost me.

But that is really quickly in the moment. Probably today after I hit some shots and some balls out here, when I get home I'll think about it a little bit more, but still haven't really done that much of that simply because we had to get back, pack, sleep, travel. I haven't really had time to think about it.

I go back on I think there's a lot more positives to take out of it than negatives to be fair. There's a lot of good things I did last week, and hopefully I can keep those going on, and again, what is life if not a process of learning from one's mistakes.

Q. What are the key things you have to do to learn a course so quickly?

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JON RAHM: Well, you know, luckily for me I'm not a person who has a strategy set before I tee off. I kind of get to the tee and see the pin position, how I'm feeling in the wind and everything, and then I make a strategy from there.

Mainly it's going to be get the lines off the tees and then get the touch around the greens. That's going to be the most important thing. I feel like I don't want to take on too much at once because I'm not going to be able to get every single detail, so we're going to have to see basically a traditional way of playing the hole and we'll see during the week if there's a different way of doing it. But early on I feel like just generally getting a vibe for the place and starting lines, tee lines and touch around the greens I think is the most important thing, at least in my case.

Q. You have probably been asked this in different forms the entire season, but how would you characterize your year, everything that entails? It's probably the wildest one out there.

JON RAHM: You know, I'm not going to lie, I'm looking for just a normal tournament week at this point. Just one week where it's just uneventful. Golf aside, uneventful. We don't have hurricanes, COVID or anything related like that.

It's hard to categorize the year just because of how much has been going on, especially the last two months. It's been a lot.

But so far, luckily I can say there's a lot more positives than negatives. There were some moments that could have taken me down that if anything lifted me up and pushed me towards greater things. You know, the overall condition that the world is in with COVID, I can be very glad that nobody in my family, my direct family has had any problems and that hasn't been a stress, when I know a lot of people have been suffering. And even in my case, right, when I got it, nobody around me got it and everybody is healthy.

Again, like I said, a lot more positives. It could have been a lot worse than it's been; I can tell you that. Becoming a father for the first time and having a healthy wife and a healthy boy, everything was really uneventful. No bad things, that's what I mean by it. It was obviously very eventful in a positive way, and even through that, playing good golf and adjusting to a new life and still playing good golf, it's been great. It's been a great year.

Still not over. A lot more things to play for, and hopefully I can keep making it better.

Q. How does having your son around change things for you golf-wise? Do you practice less? Do you think about the game less? Or has it had much of an impact on the profession?

JON RAHM: No. It changes what I do when I get home, which I can say, what I tell people, my Xbox time is decreased significantly. It's gone down very quick.

It's changed a bit of the morning routines and at night. When I wake up in the morning and I'm having my coffee when he wakes up, I spend some time with him, 30, 45 minutes where I just play with him. I'm dad, I'm having fun, and then I start my day; I go work out and start my golfing process.

Those solid hours between say 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. are still golf. When I'm home physically in the house, it's all about him and what he's up to. Still, it's a change, but it's something that I'm glad to adjust to. It's a very unique feeling.

There is some days where if I stay home for a minute too long I don't want to go anywhere else but be with him. That's something I've got to -- I know if I'm with him for 30 minutes, in those 30 minutes I got to go because otherwise I'm not going to go work out, I'm not going to go practice because I want to be with him all day.

It's been a change for the better. It's made us a lot happier. It's a great thing. But at the end of the day, golf has always been my first love, and that's going to be very hard to replace.

Plus it's what I do and it's what I love to do every day. Still a big part of me thinking about golf.

Q. I had a quick question for you about your caddie, Adam Hayes. I think we're on the fifth anniversary since you guys started working together at Napa in 2016. Recently how helpful has he been to you, to you guys as a team? And just in general what kind of caddie has he been for your career?

JON RAHM: Adam is amazing. I think what's made it work so well is that early on the best way I can say it is we're both no-BS guys. If you have something to tell me, tell me to my face, and it's reciprocal. So he will tell me if he has something to tell me, and I will tell him if I have something to tell him. That's the way things work. We're not going to shy out when something comes up.

I think that's really important in our case because we know we both have each other's best interest at heart.



Again, that's just made it work. I think the most important thing with him to understand is he wants to win as much as I want to win, and that's the beauty of it. When it's coming down the stretch, there's only been once, and we all know the moment, there's only been once where he disagreed with me. Only once in five years. I'm known to be an aggressive player, and he's fed into that.

I think the best example was when we won at Torrey Pines the first time, I hit it in that right bunker on 13. It's not the easiest shot in the world, and we were two back at that point. Still very doable on the back nine and playing good golf, and we have a little bit of a wait, and he tells me the number, and I look at him -- I'm thinking about going for it. You know, I'm standing there with him and I ask him, Adam, what do you think. It's like, Dude, grab that 4-iron and aim right at the flagstick. And I'm like, Perfect, that's all I need to know. That was only, I think, his fourth or fifth event with me, and he told me right away, do that.

You know, it's one of those things that told me, okay, he's not kidding, he wants to win. That's what we're there for.

Besides the obvious chemistry and friendship that we have, I think the honesty and willingness to work is what makes it work so well and why we've made such a good team.

Q. You had mentioned that the course is not only new to you, I'm going to presume the city might be new to you. Just getting in today, anything you want to check off your list, or is it all about golf? And also some thoughts about the course and getting out there for the first time and what that's like when you visit a venue and a town for the very first time?

JON RAHM: Well, to be honest we do this so often we kind of go on auto pilot to be fair. It's from the airport to the house or the hotel to the course, and that's about it. If we're not in the city like close to the city, I'm sorry, I'm not going to do much, especially when we come in as late as we did today because showing up on a Tuesday midday, I'm barely going to practice, tomorrow I have the pro-am, and once the tournament starts, that's about it. I'm not going to visit anything else.

I'm hoping my good friend Michael Phelps tells me a couple things to do because being from here he should know a few spots we need to visit, but that's only if we have time and if the baby wants to cooperate. That's the most important part. It's not up to me anymore.

But yeah, in this case, this time of year, I know nothing of Baltimore, so I'm sorry, and that's why I don't have

anything on my list to check out.

But I will talk to the people that I know that are from here and they'll probably give me a few things to do. For now priority is the golf tournament. Rest, recovery, stretching, workouts and then practice takes a lot of time. If we do have the time to do something else, I'll probably do it.

Q. When it comes to Caves Valley, what do you know about it being recognized around the world? It's a new venue, obviously, to you guys, but what about the reputation?

JON RAHM: If I'm honest, I know nothing about it. Zero. Absolute zero, and I should know more because my swing coach was -- he was a golf instructor here for a while. He left in 2002, but he worked here. I should know more. My fault or his fault, whoever you want to blame. But I'm sure he's going to give me a lot of details when I see him today.

I really know nothing. For everybody I've asked that has played here it's a great golf course. I know it's a big property, elevation changes, and that's about it. Between that and the pictures I'm looking at right now, that's all I know about Caves Valley, and I can't wait to get out there based on what I hear.

Q. You were just talking about how you spoke to Michael Phelps. How often do you talk to him and what's the biggest thing you've learned in your relationship with him?

JON RAHM: You know, he's a great guy. He's gone through a lot, and as an athlete he's somebody to look up to very easily. When you're the greatest Olympian of all time, you definitely have a couple tricks up your sleeve, a couple good moments of wisdom in that sense.

You've got to also understand golf and swimming are very different, very different sports, and I'm not going to disclose too much on what I've asked him golf-wise, but he has helped me a lot.

He has texted me every once in a while when I'm doing good or bad. The last thing we talked about is trying to figure out how to play in the pro-am together, and that's about it.

You know, he's been very open to my questions. Any time I have a question about anything, he would respond. The one I can talk about or that I'm willing to talk about was mainly when Kepa was born he texted me right away because he was in Colorado when his first child was born, and he flew back for the delivery, and then two days later he had to get back to keep training for the Olympics.

He knows how hard it is to be there and then right after that, gone, I have to go train, and not see him. He did help me out with that. That's not an easy feeling. It wasn't the easiest thing to do, even if it's the Masters.

I really did not want to leave that room, but he helped me out with that.

You know, at the same time he's a great friend. Great guy to be around. Trying to become a good golfer, and that's about it. When it comes to the advice he's given me, yeah, I'm going to keep that for myself.

Q. Are you a good swimmer?

JON RAHM: Do I look like a good swimmer?

Q. Not really but I'd let you answer that.

JON RAHM: No, no, I'm a diver. I'm not swimming for very long.

Q. There was a nice picture that I saw yesterday of you congratulating Tony where you looked really, really genuinely happy for him. I know it's tough when you don't win, but what is it about Tony that made you so happy for other people? Why is everyone so fired up for the guy?

JON RAHM: For Tony? Well, because first of all, if you don't like Tony Finau, there's something seriously wrong with you. He's about as nice a guy as you'll ever meet. He's a great friend, a great father and a great golfer. We all recognize his talent. We all see it. He's been close so many times.

Unfortunately it hurts that it had to be me, one of those guys he had to beat to get it done, but at the same time I'm happy for him. Plus I know he was wearing green again because it was his mom's favorite color. If you ask him, I don't want to talk too much, but the day his daughter was born, part of her name is related to his mom.

I was happy for him because I know that was something special. I know what it is to win when something is that meaningful; there's something more special than just a TOUR win. I know that's a big one for the Finau family.

As a friend I was really happy, but I know there was something up above willing for him to win that helped him out.

Q. When you as a player for Europe can see some of the stuff going on with Brooks and Bryson, some

uncertainty with Patrick Reed, is there any part of you that's glad that Europe doesn't have that much drama on their side right now?

JON RAHM: Yeah. I mean, it's definitely easier not to have to maneuver through that. But at the same time, like I say, the Ryder Cup seems so far away right now because all the stuff that we have coming up. I haven't given it too much thought in that sense. And to be fair, I think more about my team and what I can do to make my team better and be the best teammate for the European team. I haven't really given that much thought to what the Americans do, to be honest.

DOUG MILNE: Jon, that's all we've got for you. We appreciate your time. Have a great week.

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