

BMW Championship

Tuesday, August 16, 2022

Wilmington, Delaware, USA

Wilmington Country Club

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We will welcome Jon Rahm into the interview room at the BMW Championship. Jon has four Top 10s in this event in five starts, including a win in 2020 --

JON RAHM: I do? I had no idea. I sometimes don't want to know those things. I don't want to think about it.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about your history at this tournament, although you may not be familiar with it.

JON RAHM: When is the last -- because we had -- we were in Boston -- not Boston, Olympia Fields, Caves Valley, Olympia Fields, and which one was before that?

THE MODERATOR: I don't know off the top of my head where we were.

JON RAHM: Medinah.

I don't know if it's the event itself that gets me going that it's a Playoff event or the type of golf course is something that I like, this Northeast part of the country, and even the Chicago area, like Medinah, Olympia Fields, and Caves Valley, all have a very similar feel as a golf course. So it's the type of golf that I like, that I feel comfortable on.

Maybe it's that. I don't know. I haven't been out there yet. But for what I see, it's pretty much another one of those golf courses that look similar to that. It looks like there's some length to it, sloped greens, thick rough and narrow fairways where you have to hit it well. It's a difficult setup where, if the weather doesn't get bad, you still have to shoot a low number out there, like we saw last year.

I'm comfortable on these type of greens and this type of grass, and so maybe that's why my history on this event has been good.

Q. Have you ever been to Delaware, and how is it so far?

JON RAHM: Well, we were in Aronimink not too long ago.



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Is that in Delaware, or are we on the state border? Same thing to me, honestly. It's an hour away. No offense to anybody, obviously.

But, no, I have not been.

Q. Might I just ask, on that, when we have a new course that you haven't been to, you are all elite professional golfers, and you have your two or three days' prep. How hard or easy is it to pick up a new place and play so well?

JON RAHM: There are some times where not overthinking a golf course helps. Meaning, a lot of times you might not be aware of all the troubles. So you just focus on what you have to do. You don't have any past experiences, you don't know what could happen. You just know there's a shot you have to hit and that's it. That sometimes helps. On the other hand, obviously seeing a golf course in all different conditions and all different wind possibilities gives you a lot of experience and with strategies and coming down the stretch, it can help out a lot.

But at the end of the day, if it was experience that was the most valued aspect of a golfer, I think the younger guys and rookies wouldn't really have a chance every week, right. It comes down to who is playing the best and who can get comfortable as fast as possible.

Q. Given you were so close last year to winning it all, do you find yourself thinking on a Sunday here, every shot really does matter? Because it could be one extra shot next week, etc., for your start or do you try to keep that out until you get to East Lake?

JON RAHM: No, we are here to win the tournament. Pretty sure if I win a tournament, it takes care of itself. That's it. So nothing else. I'm not going to be making a decision on the golf course coming down the stretch on the back nine thinking about my FedExCup position. I will be thinking about my leaderboard position and if I can win or not.

Q. That just takes all the wind out of my sails for my next question. From my point of view, this is a really big week. There's a lot of focus on top 30, obviously, but I wonder if you can speak to the kind of higher echelon of last year going into East Lake behind that

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you could have avoided with a better finish here. How important it is to have a good week --

JON RAHM: I think there's another week that could have remedied that.

Q. By and large, as we're here going forward, can you help me here?

JON RAHM: I know what you mean, but I try to focus on what's going on this week, and my goal is to win a championship. Like I said, that will take care of itself. My strategy will not vary based on my FedExCup position.

Q. Second wouldn't be terrible this week, would it?

JON RAHM: It wouldn't be bad, but whether I'm two, three, four behind, I'm still going to try to win the tournament. I'm not going to -- I don't know what the 18th hole looks like, but if I miss the fairway, and I have a lie where I can go for the green and put myself at risk and maybe make a par, I won't be thinking about my FedExCup position. I'm going to go for it.

That's what I mean. You want to finish as high as possible because that way I will go as high as possible into next week.

But with that said, goal is to be No. 1, but if you can get in that top 5, I think the top 5 really have a very close chance. You know, you're within five shots, which, over four days, is not that much. You can make up quite a bit of it that first day. I think last year I was in fourth place going into it and gave myself a really good run.

Q. And then I did have one LIV question, actually, as it related to the hearing last week, or the outcome of the hearing. Did you find yourself, not watching it, necessarily, but at least paying attention to it, and would it have been at all awkward if the boys had been let in?

JON RAHM: Well, I can tell you I had zero attention on it. I only found out that it was going on because I walked by player dining and I saw about ten really nervous people pacing all around the room and I thought, well, there's something going on. I asked and heard what was going on. But I never really -- I was in the room when the judge made her decision known, but only because I was walking by and they told me it was time. So I was like, yeah, I'll stay.

I think it could have made things a little bit awkward, yeah. They chose to leave the PGA TOUR, they chose to go join another Tour knowing the consequences; and then try to

come back and get, you know, courts and justice in the way wouldn't have, I would say, sit extremely well with me.

But at the same time, they are adults, right. They are free to do as they please, to an extent, and that's what they chose to do. If they are allowed by a judge, I'm nobody to say otherwise.

Would have been awkward, possibly, but I guess we'll never know.

Q. Did you get any sense that we're not going to see these guys for a while?

JON RAHM: I mean, it doesn't look like it. I'm confident that the LIV side of things are still going to push strong to keep trying to change some things. But also know that the lawyers on the PGA TOUR side are going to keep fighting for the way things are going right now.

It's not the last thing we are going to hear from them, but I don't know. I just started watching the show "Suits," so I'm kind of learning now about what happens in a courtroom (laughter).

Q. Following up on that, when you look at the top six in last year's BMW, three of them are in LIV now and not here. What's your perspective this time around with some of those great players not here?

JON RAHM: One of the great things about the PGA TOUR is the depth of field. And three of them won, but we got Will Zalatoris and Cameron Young, who are two amazing players that have played amazing this year, and the rise of many other great stars.

So there's always a hungrier future star coming that's willing to put in the work and make themselves known. Lack of talent on the PGA TOUR and the world of golf is not an issue.

Again, you might have lost some names, but you're gaining some great golfers. And those two players have done amazing this year and made themselves known.

I don't think we are essentially losing that much because, like I said, you're just getting to know some great players that were there that you haven't heard of before.

Q. One more on that. There have been various reports that Tiger is coming in today to talk to some of the players about the PGA TOUR and LIV. Can you give any insight?

JON RAHM: Boy, news can be wrong sometimes. Yeah,

there is a player meeting, but that's all I can tell you about that. There's also a PAC meeting. I don't know if on the news they were talking about the PAC meeting or no. I saw Alan Shipnuck Tweeted something, the most reliable source in golf. I don't know what to tell you. I don't have Tiger's phone number, so I can't tell you if he's coming or not.

Q. I wanted to go back to 2016 and talk about your start on the TOUR. We've seen over the years a number of really good amateurs, college players, and they either haven't won yet out here, struggled out here, some don't make it out here. It could be hard sometimes to tell what the progression is going to be like. And from your standpoint, I was curious if you knew you were good, and what kind of level of confidence did you have that you were going to succeed, however you want to measure success?

JON RAHM: Lack of confidence has never been an issue for me. I've always been extremely confident in my abilities. But unlike many amateur or college players, I was able to test myself on PGA TOUR events, and Phoenix being a massive one, and compete at what I -- it wasn't my A Game but still post a top five and actually have a decent chance of being up there. So that gave me a massive boost of confidence of confirming what I already knew; that I had the talent to be out there and play with some great players that have played really good in the past.

When I turned pro and I went to Congressional, to the Rocket Mortgage event, I only had one goal in mind, I had six events to get my card, but I can guarantee you I was trying to win those six events and almost succeeded twice.

So again, I've said it many times, when I tee it up in a tournament, I tee it up to win. And that's what I try to do. And thanks to some of those showings in the past, I know I have the ability to play my game, and I knew my game was enough to get a win.

Now, with that said, a lot of it is also how you're mentally prepared to handle it. Life as a PGA TOUR golfer is not easy. And that's the reason why I stayed a fourth year in college, was to get ready. I could have turned pro as a junior and I didn't because I didn't feel like I was ready. I also promised my family I was going to graduate.

I think having an extra year to get ready and mentally prepare for what PGA TOUR life is helped me out a lot.

Q. So as badly as you want to win, when you did really well at Rocket or Congressional -- and what was the other? Was it Canada?

JON RAHM: Yeah.

Q. Was there any part of you that was happy to have made progress towards your card or still upset that you lost?

JON RAHM: No, I was upset that I lost. There was two instances. On 17 on Sunday, I was in the second-to-last group and Billy -- I was charging up at Billy --

Q. Are we at Congressional?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I was playing great. I was a couple back, and on 17, because of adrenaline, I hit my lay-up a little too hard and it went through in the rough, and it never crossed my mind to try to hit it to the center of the green and 2-putt and par 18 and guarantee myself second place. I just went straight at the pin.

Got a flyer, went long, made bogey, made par on 18 and finished third; and the first question they asked me is you just gave up \$300,000, which would have pretty much guaranteed your card. And my response was, "I'm not here to finish second. I'm here to win."

Same thing was in Canada. In Canada, I had a 10-footer on 18 to tie Jhonattan Vegas and get into a playoff, and I missed it. One of the first things Tim Mickelson told me, my manager at the time, is you secured enough money -- at the time it was money to guarantee your TOUR card. The whole flight back home from Toronto to Phoenix, I was only thinking about the fact that I missed a 10-footer to possibly win a tournament.

So no, maybe a couple days after, I realized, oh, my God, I have my TOUR card. But at that point it was only my fourth start, so I wasn't thinking about it.

Like I said, I played to win, and that was my goal, I wanted to win. I didn't want to have to play all six events. I wanted to win one and be able to choose my schedule and make the FedExCup Playoffs.

Q. Lastly, as a student of the game, when you see young kids coming through in college, is there anyone that you can -- I'm not looking for a name, but can you look at somebody and say, oh, yeah, this guy can't miss?

JON RAHM: I think it kind of goes back to what I said earlier. I think a lot of them have the physical talent to be PGA TOUR golfers. It's all up to what's here. I don't know. You don't know what's going on in their head. You don't know how they are thinking and you literally don't know. There's many first round draft picks that don't make it that

are supposed to make it.

There's so many things that go into it. It could be you get a small injury, right, that can maybe that path a little different. You have family situations, you have personal situations. There's so many variables that go into it. And I consider you need to work very hard and to an extent get lucky to have an entry to the PGA TOUR the likes of mine or Jordan Spieth, or Tiger and Phil, a little different, or people that make it straight through college like Matt Wolfe, like Collin. You need more than physical talent. It's what's in the head and how you can handle the life.

Q. I talked to some players yesterday, and they were surprised by how long the course is playing. Some were comparing it like almost a U.S. Open setup. What's your impression? Do you share that view?

JON RAHM: I'll let you know when I play because I'm not out there yet. I heard there's some length to it, and we had some rain yesterday, too. I'm guessing it's not releasing on the fairway quite as much. If we get days like today for the rest of the week, Saturday and Sunday will be a different story.

It's kind of how the event is played, right. They like the long rough and they like the course to be long, but at the same time when you have soft greens at this level of the game you will have some players that have enough distance to attack anything and you still see low scores.

So I don't know. I really haven't been out there. I wish I could tell you.

Q. Just curious about your view on the Playoffs versus the regular season, how does your mindset change when it's so different in the scenarios?

JON RAHM: It doesn't change. My goal is to finish as high as possible on the leaderboard. I play to win; and if not, I'm going to try to finish second; and if not, third; and so on. 30th is better than 31st. Simple as that, right.

My mindset doesn't really change. I know the consequences could be greater if going into next week if you miss a shot or not, but you can't be down the stretch thinking: If I don't make a birdie, I'm going to be in 17th place next week.

When you do with that, it's a consequence of what you do on the golf course, and I just choose to focus on what I have to do at the moment.

Q. Just made me think, I thought you were really gracious last year when you didn't win the FedExCup,

and there was a lot of talk on our end, you started four behind, did you not, something like that? Had the better score, blah, blah, blah. You seemed to really accept the system.

JON RAHM: Well, I can't change anything.

Q. I know that. But do you have a pretty good understanding that this is the way it's going to work, the best score doesn't win --

JON RAHM: I have made my position clear on that in the past. I don't think it's the best system. You don't get to the Super Bowl and the team with the better record starts with a two-touchdown advantage. I think it's absolutely ludicrous, but it's the best choice we have right now. Or Djokovic didn't have a one-set advantage over Kyrgios at Wimbledon. I understand that's how the Playoffs are made and I understand it's easier for the viewers and us to know what's going on.

Because I've spoken to past champions, and sometimes they would be on 16 and they didn't know, oh, if I make one birdie, I win the FedExCup; and if not, this can happen. It was a bit confusing. So I understand that aspect of it.

But you know, it's a bit odd that you just are given -- I've said it a couple times before, but I think it's good for what we have right now, I don't know what the solution is.

Q. In that vein, you make the Super Bowl, and you start level; if you make No. 1 and No. 31 starting at scratch, you would be okay with that as the winner of the FedExCup?

JON RAHM: No matter what, you have to accept it, that's what it is.

Q. Is that what you're suggesting, that everyone there -- just get there and then it's level playing?

JON RAHM: Oh, no. No. I think -- listen, I've been told different things. One of the main things is the Patriots make it to the Super Bowl, they don't win the Super Bowl. My response is always they finish second. I think it's ludicrous that you can win every event of the year to that point, you have a bad week and you can finish 30th. I don't think that's fair, but it is what it is.

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