

# BMW Championship

Tuesday, August 15, 2023

Olympia Fields, Illinois, USA

Olympia Fields Country Club

## Jon Rahm

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Jon Rahm into the interview room, our current FedExCup leader, and he returns to Olympia Fields, where he won this tournament in 2020. If we can get some comments on being back at Olympia Fields and with fans here this week.

JON RAHM: It's always great to come back to somewhere I've already played a tournament and did so successfully.

It's obviously a very different week. We don't have COVID rules. Everybody is here present, and we don't have those Zoom media calls.

Personally, my life has changed quite a bit, as well. Kelley was pregnant with Kepa, early stages of the pregnancy when we came, and we're a little bigger family now with two young ones.

It's good that you get to see that after a great win, things have improved so much both on and off the golf course for me.

**Q. Four wins on the season, and FedExCup leader. Talk about this stretch of the last two tournaments of the year.**

JON RAHM: Well, point of coming to the Playoffs is to give yourself the best chance to get to East Lake on the No. 1 spot. I've done a pretty good job so far. Hopefully this week I can have a good performance like I did last time and earn it and clinch it and give myself the best shot for the win.

It's been a great year so far, so hopefully I can end it off the way I started it.

**Q. Do you feel like you're a different golfer than you were three years ago when you won here?**

JON RAHM: I don't know if "different" is the word. I would say better. I think I've improved quite a bit since then.

**Q. When you think about that improvement, could you**



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detail it?

JON RAHM: We don't have enough time to give you everything. Even though I'm talking about arguably some of the best 36 holes I've ever played on a weekend, quote-unquote, bogey-free, minus the penalty on 5, but yeah, I would say I've improved in many categories, and I think it's shown on my accomplishments since then.

I can't tell you exactly one thing. I just feel like I'm capable of -- I'm a little bit better in certain departments that I wasn't as good at back then.

**Q. You touched on the good vibes coming back to this course, obviously the way you won back then. Where does that moment rank in your career, and what do you like about this course?**

JON RAHM: So I was able to play this golf course twice before being a pro, the U.S. Am that Bryson won and then the college event we play here. It's always been a favorite of mine. Every player I talk to that's played here say it's a golf course they've enjoyed.

It's a great layout, a great test, especially last time getting to see it basically as a U.S. Open setup, right. We don't usually get at this time of year events where 4-under goes into a playoff. That was unbelievable to see.

It's going to be a little bit different because we're not going to get that. It's been wet and rainy, so we'll see how it plays. It's going to play a lot longer, let me tell you.

At that moment, I think if there were crowds and I made that putt, it probably would be a unanimous No. 1, but because there was nobody there and there was really no reaction besides mine, it's not that it's anticlimactic, but it's a little bit. It's a bit lackluster because of what you're used to seeing when you make a good putt like at a moment like the U.S. Open.

It wouldn't be No. 1, but it's definitely top three.

**Q. Kind of navigating the course three years ago without many fans, is that something kind of the adrenaline that goes through and how you manage it in a tournament, does anything in that process change when you look back to that week and any moments**



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**that it might have affected a club choice or decision or anything about your vibe with that different kind of layout?**

JON RAHM: Not that week, but early on, the first few tournaments during COVID, having no spectators, what I found myself was there was some lack of intensity that the spectators bring, at least within myself, and that's why I struggled early on.

Once I figured that out, I think I did pretty good with the situation that we had.

Particularly this week, no. At that point I think we had played enough that it kind of became the new norm. It was this is the new what we have to do, and we knew we had not only the FedExCup and TOUR Championship and at least one major we were going to play without spectators.

Nothing particularly this week, but yeah, early on the intensity wasn't quite there on the first few days.

**Q. Would it be something that might affect a club choice or you hit it a few yards longer --**

JON RAHM: No, no, not decision when it comes to the game but just maybe the overall feeling on a Thursday morning or Friday morning.

**Q. I was curious, has the Player of the Year crossed your mind at all at any point in time? I know it feels like, at least in my opinion, feels like it's yours at this point in time, but obviously anything can happen down the stretch here. I was curious, is that any added motivation? Has that crossed your mind? Are you going to let your play take care of all that stuff?**

JON RAHM: Well, you guys keep mentioning it the last few weeks --

**Q. Apologies.**

JON RAHM: You're good. That's your job. It would be about the only time it crosses my mind.

Player of the Year is earned on the golf course. That's what I focus on. Because of what I've done this year, I've earned the spot to be considered Player of the Year, but we've got to finish it off. I would like to play good this week and next week to leave no, let's say, questionables in there and just clinch it.

**Q. There were some guys who were pretty crest fallen and disappointed to not get here. It looks from the outside looking in like the way things are structured**

**now with getting into the designated events next year and whatnot that the new structure has sort of shined a brighter light on how competitive it is out there and how hard it is to be at the top of the PGA TOUR. I was just wondering if that feels like that being on the inside.**

JON RAHM: I think from the outside without real experience and what we experience as players, you're never going to get the full scoop on how difficult it really is to be out here, and the more we can do to show the elite level of some players, it's pretty special.

I'm pretty sure you can go down the stats of 51st to 55th in the FedExCup and consider they've had a pretty darned good year. They're incredible golfers, yet they can't make it to the end of the Playoffs.

Like it happens in many other sports, but we carry what we've done all year around.

I'm glad it's showing how difficult it truly is, because it is.

But I can tell you that it probably is more difficult and more challenging and more competitive than what you can probably see or imagine in all these players' heads just because it truly is. It's an elite number of players that can call themselves PGA TOUR players, and the elite of that elite will be making it to this week and a more selective group to next week and even more selective to Ryder Cup.

Even within the greats, there's some little divisions of great players. Yeah, it's extremely competitive.

**Q. Obviously your focus is right now and heading into East Lake, but there was reporting that came out last week that you have already seen the TGL practice facility out in LA and you had been there. Can you just give your thoughts on what that simulator and what your thoughts were on it when you were out there?**

JON RAHM: I've seen a virtual reality little video of it. I haven't seen it in person.

It's different to what I expected. I didn't realize how big it was going to be, which makes it a lot better.

I'm looking forward to being able to start it. I don't know really what to expect with playing -- I have a simulator in my home and it's a 14-foot screen TV and you're 12 feet from the screen, and from what I hear we're going to be 35 yards from the screen and the screen is going to be 60 feet wide and 40-some feet tall. I can't even picture how big it's going to be. It's going to be like that wall right there and taller, and we're going quite a bit away, and we're going to

be playing from 50 yards into the pin.

It's going to be a very, very unique circumstance, but I'm really looking forward to it. It can make a really fun atmosphere.

Besides that, I haven't really seen other -- I don't know how the ins and outs of it are going to be yet exactly. We don't know exactly how it's going to go.

**Q. Do you think there's going to be a huge appetite for it? Obviously the new schedule is going to come in and it's kind of replacing the winter swing, but where do you think golf fans are going to fall on this, or what do you hope for?**

JON RAHM: I think so. You're appealing to maybe a little bit of a different audience with the time of day we're playing, the type of golf we're going to be playing.

Like many sports nowadays, I think that is going to allow for probably a lot more live gambling, which is what a lot of people are trying to do nowadays when they're watching sports.

I think we can appeal to a different audience, and I'm looking forward to that, as well. I've heard a lot of great reviews and thoughts from friends of mine looking into it before they knew I was invested in it and wanting to play.

I think we have the opportunity to do something very special.

**Q. The DP World Tour came out with its schedule for next year. Did you get a chance to look at that at all?**

JON RAHM: (Shaking head.) Past East Lake I haven't really thought about anything right now.

**Q. In general when you look as probably the preeminent guy who will bounce back between both tours, how many events for you is too many events on the annual calendar year?**

JON RAHM: It's hard to say. It's hard to say. I think it all depends on the scheduling and how those events are spaced out.

My fall the last few years has looked pretty much the same. I go to Wentworth, Spanish Open, Dubai. I wouldn't be able to tell you an exact number. It really depends on the year.

I've been comfortable the last few years playing around 22, 23 events, but I can tell you I'm one of those players that

wishes we could have an actual off-season, and with the PGA TOUR and the DP World Tour coming together closer, I'm hoping I get to a point where maybe October, November, December, there's no events for me to play. I can be home and be dad and earn an off-season like basically almost every other athlete in this country can do.

**Q. As the defending champion, how much have you been paying attention to the fires on Maui, and do you have any sense about we're starting to hear some questions about are we going to be at Kapalua this year, and your thoughts on how you think that will play out?**

JON RAHM: Obviously the priority right now wouldn't be Kapalua. I'm deeply sorry for everybody that lost somebody over there. I know Collin shared a bit of his story, and I'm hoping his grandpa can open his restaurant again as soon as they can, but I'm hoping they can rebuild Lahaina as quickly as possible. It's really sad that it happened over there, especially for a culture that cares about their native land as much as the Hawaiians do. You don't want to see that happen.

If we do go and play, I'm hoping through the tournament we can help the community as much as we can.

**Q. Looking back from your win three years ago, the opening round 75, was there anything that kind of kicked you into gear across from Thursday to Friday, Friday to Saturday, looking back, that really spurred you on?**

JON RAHM: Well, I think was I 6-over par through two rounds? Honestly, it was a very small tweak on the setup of my swing that allowed me to play the way I did on the weekend. Nothing else.

I feel like every part of my game was fairly comfortable. There was just one little missing piece, and that was it. It was about as good a ball-striking as it could get for me on that weekend.

The one thing I can tell you, which is funny, I don't think I attempted to hit one draw on the weekend whatsoever. It was just not happening that week, and I was like, well, we're going to be hitting fades.

Tried to hit greens, and that's what I did. It's a golf course in which you just had to keep the ball in play in the right spot no matter how, and luckily besides the tee shot maybe on 15, because the wind was left to right that day, the fade fit perfectly pretty much throughout the entire golf course.

**Q. Is that something you consciously decided**

## Saturday morning or Friday night?

JON RAHM: I don't know if it was conscious or not, but I just had supreme confidence that my stock shot, my fade, was going to be a pretty good result, in my mind at least, and anytime I tried to hit a draw, it just wasn't happening. I decided not to.

If it's not working, why use it.

There's many ways to play this game, and it's funny that the two guys that went in the playoff are two guys that predominantly you wouldn't see them hit a right-to-left shot.

THE MODERATOR: As always, thank you for your time.

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