

TOUR Championship

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Jon Rahm

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Jon Rahm to the interview room here at the 2023 TOUR Championship. This is your seventh consecutive appearance at the TOUR Championship, tied for the longest active streak. So just some opening comments on being back here, being back at this golf course, and chasing your first FedExCup.

JON RAHM: It's always great to be back. It means that you've had a really good year. It's a very select group of people that get to enjoy playing this golf course. To me, it's one of the favorite tournaments that we play all year. It's a great quality golf course. It's always in great shape, even the years we've had quite a bit of rain. So looking forward to it, looking forward to hopefully winning my first FedExCup. I've been close in the past and I've played good here, so looking forward to the week.

THE MODERATOR: Specifically this golf course, you've had a lot of experience here and a lot of rounds, what makes this a course that's worthy of the playoff finale here.

JON RAHM: I like it because it's very difficult to assert a dominance. Like, Rory's played good here, obviously. But you can't shy away, you can't be missing shots and somehow maneuver around this golf course. Like, you eventually have to play good golf and put the ball in the fairway to give yourself a chance to attack those pins.

And those greens, some of them have a lot of slope to it, they're tricky. So even though you can score out here, you need to be the better player, you need to be the better player for the week. That's why I think it's very fitting for this tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. We'll open it up to questions.

Q. When you hear a stat like that, that you are the longest-tenured guy at this tournament, that's usually like a real veteran-related stat. Like, how does that make you feel when you hear that?

JON RAHM: It feels good. It feels really good. But to be a hundred percent honest, I'll gladly give up that streak to be able to say that I have a win out here, right?

So the stats, I feel like, are going to be a lot more meaningful maybe later in the career. But right now, with the good position I've given myself almost every single year I've come to the playoffs, I want to be able to say I'm a FedExCup champion.

Q. Does any part of you still feel new out here in general on the TOUR?

JON RAHM: New? (Laughing.) Well, you always learn things, but, no, no, I think that feeling of being the rookie is gone. It's gone. I would like to say so, but no, obviously, it's been seven years already, so I can't say I'm in that position anymore.

Q. With so many big titles, you got the majors, The PLAYERS, the Ryder Cup, where does winning a FedExCup rank for you and do you get the sense that it might be of more importance to the players than maybe people understand?

JON RAHM: Well, I wouldn't want to give you a ranking while I'm here at the FedExCup finale of what's more important than others, but obviously, majors are the most important thing in golf, right? That's how it's been and that's kind of how it is.

But there's a difference to being the FedExCup champion, just because you enter the playoffs in certain position, you earned your spot to this week, and then to just be able to finish it off, right? It feels like it's more than just one week. It's a culmination of a whole year in these last three weeks in a row, right? So it has a little bit of a different special feel to it.

With that said, you might be able to get a more elaborate answer from somebody who has actually won either one, right, like, a major and the FedExCup or PLAYERS or something like that, to be able to assess. Because a lot of times I don't realize the magnitude of certain things in my mind until it's happened.

I would have told you that the U.S. Open would have been my most meaningful win until the Masters happened. Even



though it was my first major, that Masters win felt very, very different for some reason. I can't explain why, but it was very, very special above what the U.S. Open was.

Q. Then you made some comments, I think it was a couple weeks ago, that you got a little bit tired after the Masters, that there was a little too much that you took on. What did you learn about yourself this year?

JON RAHM: Well, it was the first time for me being in contention for so many weeks in a row, and being in contention every time it's a little bit more taxing, especially Sundays if you're on the lead or close to the lead mentally, right? You think you're always putting the same output, but the pressure's a little bit different, right?

So just leading up to the Masters and what that week was, I mean, with the delays and the weekend I had to play, I was a little bit tired. I went to Hilton Head and still performed good. I never quite did have enough time to be able to, like I would say, fully recover from that. It was like a slow process for that to happen.

But I mean, that's the beauty of golf, there's always the following week. And it's a good thing that happened. I learned a lot about myself and hopefully for the next time I'll be better prepared to handle it.

Q. You talked about the specifics of the course, but when you come back next year, it's going to be a totally different course. I just wondered what you know about that and then how you think those changes might affect things.

JON RAHM: So is it a renovation or a redo? I don't know yet.

Q. It's a renovation.

JON RAHM: So are they just redoing the -- like, reshaping the bunkers or actually redesigning the golf course, like holes at all? Like, I really have no idea. So if it was up to me, there's not much that this golf course needs changing.

With that said, the golf course does belong to the members, so the members should do whatever the members think is best for the golf course. That's what I would say. I think it's great the way it is right now, but if they want to make it member-friendly, I am nobody to object against that.

Q. Those of us on one side of the ropes can look at Rory, someone of his stature, and how he hits it so far and am amazed, frankly. I don't know how people a little closer to the situation look at how far he can hit

the ball.

JON RAHM: I mean, at this point -- maybe the first few times you're impressed. At this point, it's just the norm. You know he's going to step up there and hit it past you. So I think it's more of a surprise when maybe loosely he hits a good one and we get close to him, right?

But I mean, there's no ego involved in that. Like, I'm a hundred percent confident he can hit it harder than me if he needs to. Like, at this point, it's not a surprise, no.

Q. A question about the Sunday at the BMW with Viktor shooting a 61. Can I have your thoughts about that achievement? And two, do you think he's going into the TOUR Championship as the biggest favorite?

JON RAHM: I mean, that's an incredible round of golf. If you told me that Scottie was going to shoot 5-under on Sunday, I would have said there's no chance that doesn't win. I would have not expected somebody to come out and shoot 9-under with -- what did he shoot? Was it 7-under on the back nine or the front nine? I don't know. He went off.

Yeah, I have a lot of respect for that round of golf. He broke the course record that had been broken twice on that week, and to do it to win a golf tournament, it's impressive. A 61 there on that golf course, it's an extremely good round of golf. There's not much margin of error to miss off the tee and to keep hitting fairway after fairway and keep hitting those shots close to the greens.

And where those pin positions were it's very hard to give yourself an easy putt. Those pins down the stretch, they were all on certain slopes and to make the putts when he needed to, that was an impressive round of golf. He's a hell of a player and he showed it.

Q. Off of what happened with Max this past weekend, have you had a gambling-related interaction with a fan and then about --

JON RAHM: What happened? I don't know what happened.

Q. Well, there was a fan who was trying to get into Max's head and talk during one of his putts and said he had a bet on him missing the putt. Max made the putt. But obviously it was a concern that the fan is trying to impact the game. So my question is, have you had an incident like that with a fan and do you have concerns about that going forward?

JON RAHM: I feel like we hear it every single round. That

happens way more often than you guys may hear. I mean, it's very, very present.

In golf, spectators are very close, and even if they're not directly talking to you, they're close enough to where if they say to their buddy, I bet you 10 bucks he's going to miss it, you hear it.

So it happens more often than you think, yeah. But not only that, on the tee and down the fairway. I mean, luckily golf fans are pretty good for the most part and you're hearing the positive, I got 20 bucks you make birdie here, things like that. But no, it's more often than you think.

Q. Is that something --

JON RAHM: It's not caught on TV maybe, but it's something that happens, yeah.

Q. Is that something that you think the TOUR ought to step in and take control over or is it just part of the cost of being that close?

JON RAHM: You know, in a game like this where you're allowed to have your favorites, but it's not a team aspect, right, it's not a home team against a visiting team, I think the TOUR maybe should look into it because you don't want it to get out of hand, right? It's very easy, very, very easy in golf if you want to affect somebody. You're so close, you can yell at the wrong time, and it's very easy for that to happen.

So I think they could look into it, but at the same time, it would be extremely difficult for the TOUR to somehow control the 50,000 people scattered around the golf course, right? So it's a complicated subject. You don't want it to get out of control, but you also want to have the fans to have the experience they want to have.

Q. This is year five of the staggered strokes format at the TOUR Championship. Having done both, do you have a preference? Are you good with this, the way that we're doing it now, or did you like the old way better?

JON RAHM: I think the last few years I've spoken about this format. It's easier to understand. I don't think it's the best we can come up with. I think I've expressed my dislike towards the fact that you can come in ranked No. 1 in the FedExCup. You can win every single tournament up until this one. You have a bad week, you finish 30th, and now you'll forever be known as 30th in the FedExCup this season. I don't think that's very fair.

I did like the old format where, if you came in as No. 1, you

really rarely ever fell out of the top 3. I thought that was a little bit better. And I know the people that are good with numbers and statistics and all this and that, and probability, they ran the numbers and I know they say this, basically, this format comes out to the same. But when you're in fifth place you are, what, 5-under, so you're five shots from the lead. But you're also five shots from 30th place. So that to me just doesn't make much sense.

So I think they could come -- if you come in in 30th place it's a much better chance now of actually finishing in the top 5 than you had before. Before you had to win. Now you don't have to win, right. So I don't think it's the best, but it is the easiest to understand, right. So if you ask me I think we can come up with something better.

The other thing I do think is you can come in on the 18th hole with a 5-shot lead, right. You play it easy, let's say you make a bogey, and you risk losing World Ranking points, but you're winning the FedExCup. It's a little odd that you get awarded world rankings points for a tournament you may not win or you may not celebrate at the end. In my case I like the previous format a little bit better than this one.

Q. So obviously couple weeks ago in Memphis it was really hot, humid. It's going to be very similar this week. So what have you learned from playing through that heat and humidity in Memphis and what are you going to try and focus on to try to battle through that this week?

JON RAHM: I just got to deal with it. There's no way to hide around it. Even though there's a couple trees and there might be shade, it really doesn't make that much of a difference. Especially with twosomes, this is not the time to wait. So just hydrate. That's all I can say. You got to make sure you're hydrated and keep on going. Not only, not necessarily for the first day, but making sure Sunday you have the energy and your body has what it needs to be able to perform. There's no trick, really, I could tell you.

Q. You talked earlier about winning the Masters and etching your name in that history. If you looked at 2023 as a whole and you finish it this week by winning, how special and significant would that cap off 2023 as a whole for you?

JON RAHM: Oh, it would be incredible. It would be really, really -- it's already been a great year, right, and to cap it off winning the FedExCup would be absolutely incredible. It would be something that very few players have done, right, win multiple tournaments, a major and the FedExCup. So I'm hoping I can be the one that can etch his name next to that.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, thank you for the time.

JON RAHM: Thank you.

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