

The American Express

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La Quinta, California, USA

PGA WEST Pete Dye Stadium Course

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Jon Rahm, the winner of the 2023 The American Express. Jon, you just captured your ninth PGA TOUR victory and second here at The American Express. We'll start off with some opening comments about an eventful Sunday.

JON RAHM: (Laughing.) I don't have much to say. I'm just going to say that I'm glad I came back and won the putting contest this year. That's all I can say.

THE MODERATOR: Winning in back-to-back starts. Moving to No. 1 in the FedExCup for the first time. What does this say about the season you're having so far?

JON RAHM: Heck of a start. Heck of a start. Obviously Sentry and this one are very, very different golf courses and very different golf, right. You still have to go low in both of them. So luckily the mentality is the same.

Body's been feeling great. My swing's been feeling really, really good. And it shows, right. Even when I'm saying I may not be as comfortable as I would like, I'm shooting 64s because everything is just firing when it needs to.

I'm, in a weird way, glad that today went the way it went. I've enjoyed some runaway victories, I've enjoyed some comebacks, but today was certainly a struggle. Out of the five birdies I made, what is it, one, two, three of them were tap-ins and the other two were basically 6-footers. So that tells you the story.

Didn't really make much today, even though everything looked really good and a lot of them looked like any of them could have gone in. But kept battling.

Davis played amazing golf today, even through some of the bad swings he had early on. He battled, he came back, made an amazing 6 on the 5th hole. Gave me a run.

This is just golf, right. If I don't make the putt on 14, if his ball goes in on 17, you never know what can happen. But luckily the scales tipped in my favor today and I got the

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win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go and take questions, please.

Q. Yesterday you talked about putting a lot of great rolls on putts that didn't go in. Looked like that was kind of the story today. Then you made two big putts on 14 and 16. Was that the story today, same as yesterday, good putting, just not going in?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I can tell you there's a few, I mean, on 5, 7, 8, 10, 15, 17 and 18, all of those putts were good. All of them looked like they were dead center with two feet to go and just at the end they just missed.

Luckily, the one on 16 curled in. I made the one on 14 that I needed to not give up the lead. But that's golf.

Yesterday on the front nine I basically felt like I couldn't miss for the first 14 holes. I mean, the hole looked as big as it could ever look. I can definitely say the first 54 holes some putts that weren't as good as some of the rolls I put in today that definitely went in. That's just golf. It is what it is. I wouldn't know what to say. Usually it evens out somehow.

My ball striking got better and my putting maybe not as good as I would have liked. But if I were to play at that level every single round, well, yeah, I would be winning by six or seven. That's just not easy to do.

Q. That's kind of the next question. Which is, you were playing well, you were hitting the ball well, you were putting the ball well and yet you're tied.

JON RAHM: I mean, I've shot combined 54-under in the last two tournaments and won by a combined three shots. I don't know what else to tell you. It's not like I'm putting bad, right. It's just they're really good rolls that sometimes didn't go in.

Q. You did get off to great start. Again, you were saying a couple days ago your wedge game was great. You knock it in there to two feet on both of those holes. Did you think to yourself, Okay, here we go?

JON RAHM: Yeah, honestly. After that swing I put in on 5,

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those two swings, the tee shot and the 5-iron, I'm like, Man, if I keep making swings like this, today could be a really low day. I kept making the swings, I just didn't capitalize on those. But it was a fantastic round of golf, that's all I can say.

I knew some people were going to come out and shoot 62, 64, 65s and get close, but luckily we started with a cushion of shots and was able to end up ahead.

Q. After having a chance to play in the same group as Davis today, what were your impressions of the way he handles himself and the poise -- it seemed, just looking at it, like he was awful cool for a rookie.

JON RAHM: He is. Yeah. But make no mistake, what you see and what he feels could be completely different things. We're all nervous out there. You feel it. It's just how you deal with it.

First time in this situation, teeing off with the lead on Sunday in a PGA TOUR event. I think he did a great job. He played good golf. It was just, I would say, two bad swings at the wrong time. And that was 5 and 16. One could say it was two holes where he was maybe trying to hit it a little bit hard, trying to get some extra distance. One cost him at least one shot and the one on 16 cost him half a shot. And that was the difference at the end.

Q. It just comes back to the idea that in this game the margin is incredibly slim.

JON RAHM: Yeah. It is. I mean, we're not -- listen, we're not only shooting these scores because the courses are easy. It's just the average, the level of the average player keeps getting higher and higher. I would like to know in years past if you shoot 27-under how many of 'em you win by one. Not many. Most of the time you're winning by a comfortable margin. So it goes to show how good everybody is getting.

It's a really good time for spectators and fans of the game. Because what's more fun than to seeing people just make birdies after birdies and having an exciting game.

Q. Rory has spoken at times of how it can be almost easier mentally to chase No. 1 than staying at No. 1 and kind of the war in the mind of complacency trying to creep in at times. What's your reaction to that and kind of how it feels as you're chasing it as opposed to when you've been at No. 1?

JON RAHM: First of all, sorry for the Bills. I didn't watch the game, but I know they lost. We still keep up out there.

There's definitely a difference. When you're chasing, to an extent it's almost easier. Because you have one option and that is to make birdies.

When you're leading, yes, you want to make birdies, but you don't want to make stupid mistakes that are going to cost you a bogey. So it's obviously a little bit more difficult. But I enjoy both of them.

If I had to choose, obviously I would always like to have the lead because you always, you're always out there and if you keep making birdies, he's never going to catch you. So I would always rather be there.

But those comeback wins are fun, man. When you go on a heater and get those birdies and then all of a sudden, bam, you're leading the tournament and you win the tournament. It's quite unique.

But, yeah, if I had to choose I would rather lead. You learn a lot about yourself in 18 holes. Because it's four to five hours of a lot of stress. You definitely learn about yourself a lot about yourself.

Q. In terms of your kind of season and the last few months, winning four of your last five worldwide starts, how would you contextualize your comfort level on the course this stretch and where it relates kind of in your career?

JON RAHM: I think today was about as comfortable as I've been in a long time on the golf course tee to green. I felt really in command of my swing. The only two mistakes were the tee shot on 1 and the tee shot on 13. The one on 13 was barely a miss.

So I felt in command of my game. Made a lot of good swings out there. Always gave myself a lot of chances. Which sometimes you make and sometimes you don't. Felt about as comfortable as can be.

Every time I felt like this in the past I've ended up going on to win, just because it takes a lot of pressure off a lot of parts of my game knowing that basically I'm going to hit the shot that I'm envisioning. And that's a really unique zone to put yourself in.

That doesn't happen as often as I wish. I wish I could be like that every single time that I know I'm going to stripe it into the middle of the fairway and hit the shot at the pin. But it doesn't always happen. So I'm glad I enjoyed a day like that today.

Q. In terms of celebrating success, managing success and keeping striving forward, are there any other

athletes or people in life that come to mind that you respect how they handle --

JON RAHM: So many. So many. Sorry, I'm cutting you off, but that's a very long list. One that in college got very dear to my heart, if we go outside of golf, was Kobe Bryant. I spent a lot of time listening to a lot of his interviews and videos, because I see a lot of similarities between us in the way we approach our craft. Because craft is the key word for Kobe. And having that obsessiveness that we both have over the game. It's somebody to learn from, for sure. Work ethic beats talent every day of the week, period. And I like to think that I have a really hard work ethic and I put a lot of time in.

Like I said all year last year, like at the end of the year, you're seeing now, let's say, the fruits of all the hard work that I've put in. Like I said, I felt like I was swinging really well last year, the results were just not happening. And they're coming in a bunch right now.

Other athletes. I've gotten pretty close with Michael Phelps. I've been able to ask him quite a few things and pick his brain. But he simplifies it a little bit. I guess when you're the greatest in history in anything it seems easy, right.

Personally, there's been a few I've been able to meet. There's two football players for the Cardinals, we're in a group chat, that are complete golf nerds. One of this them is going to have a lot of time to play golf now, which is J.J. Watt, and Zach Ertz, who is now injured. I hope they were able to watch a round. Meeting them and see how they approach a game, even though I haven't asked them a ton of questions, I observe and they are definitely an incredible inspiration how they do what they do.

J.J. especially. To be a leader of a team, a captain and a force to be reckoned with on the field like he has been for so long. To still be as dedicated as he has been on, not only how much he had to eat, what he had to eat. Because, I mean, eating 10 dry chicken breasts a day has to get old very quickly. But he does for recovery and making sure his body's healthy.

Same with Zach. Both of 'em. It's been really, really inspiring. I've learned a lot from both of 'em.

Q. Two questions. First one, you've talked a lot about how comfortable you feel in the American southwest. Arizona, California, obviously two wins here, two big wins at Torrey. Could you just talk about, was that just a matter of having gone to college in the American southwest or is it something else that turns you on out here?

JON RAHM: No, I think that's it. Having played college for Arizona State, we played a very large amount of our tournaments Arizona, California. Southern California especially. For some reason I'm just comfortable. Palm Springs, I mean, might as well be Scottsdale. It's pretty much the same thing. So golf is very similar.

But I wouldn't know why. I think it's because I grew up on poa annua greens. Southern California I feel really comfortable on. It's something that feels really familiar. I think it's probably because the success I had in college was followed and kind of led into the PGA TOUR and I won in my first few events in California, right. Honestly, if we start counting from 2012 until now my percentage, I don't know what it is exactly -- we know about Torrey Pines -- but everything else I -- it was probably because I'm just so comfortable. The life-style suits me. My wife and I love this part of the country. She's happy, I'm happy, our kids are happy. It's a lot easier to play golf.

Q. You talk about how the margins are pretty thin out here. You seem to be making the margins a little larger. Four wins in your last six tournaments. Despite what some computers might say, you seem to be the best player in the world right now. Do you feel like you can just maintain this or how much better can you get?

JON RAHM: In my mind I feel like I can get a lot better. I feel like that's the mentality I should have. Again, I work very hard to do what I do. I could find mistakes in every single round I've played. Very few times I would say I've played a flawless round.

Even though there's a massive amount of positives, like the one massive positive is how good my wedge game was this week. The amount of tap-ins that I've had these four days is unlike anything I've ever had. If I had to put a MVP to something it's that 56 and that 52 degree wedges were key. So if I can keep that going and the ball striking at the level that I know I can, I know I can get better. Again, it's my job to try to do the best I can and so far I'm doing a pretty good job.

Q. (No Microphone.)

JON RAHM: Precisely. Yeah. I'm out there to win. I said that many times, I compete to win. No matter how I feel. Sometimes it looks better and prettier than others. I'm glad that the last few have looked as good as they have.

Q. We just ran a graphic on our show that this being your ninth PGA TOUR win you tie Seve for nine PGA TOUR wins from the country of Spain. I know how



much you look up to Seve. Just sort of your reaction to that.

JON RAHM: Are you counting his five majors as PGA TOUR wins?

Q. Yes.

JON RAHM: Yeah, well, slight asterisk next to that one, right. (Laughing.) I mean, Seve didn't play full-time PGA TOUR. So the fact that he had nine wins is pretty spectacular.

You know, I've been fortunate to tie a lot of things he's done and if I ever get to surpass some of those things it would be incredible. I've spoken many times, the reason why I play golf -- not like motivation. Meaning my dad started playing golf because of the '97 Ryder Cup and Seve's captancy. That's basically why I'm here.

I asked my dad recently, If your friends hadn't been down there to see that, what would we be doing? Who knows. I have no idea. That's why I take representing golf in Spain so seriously and why Seve's legacy is so important to me.

When he started playing golf I think there were 30,000 people with a golf license in Spain. At the time he died it was over 350,000. So when I started playing I think it was three hundred something thousand. So I would love to be able to escalate that. I know it will be hard to do to the level that he did, but if I can increase that number and make golf more popular in Spain I'll be a happy man.

THE MODERATOR: Can you speak to the momentum. You have four wins in the last worldwide six starts heading into Torrey Pines next week. Can you talk about this momentum you've been riding?

JON RAHM: It's too early to be asking me right there now. The fact that we're teeing off in basically, what, 72 hours, it's another factor than if I have time to reflect on that. But obviously, like I've said, I feel really healthy and I feel really comfortable in my swing. So I'm going to go to Torrey, a place that I'm already very confident at, with very high hopes, knowing that I'm doing all the right things.

If I can keep hitting it off the tee and my iron game keeps staying at this level I'm going to have a really good chance at that golf course. So I can't help to smile because, again, it's a very, very emotional week every time I go. In a very good way. It's a very special place in my heart.

So going very confident and very willing to tee off, very eager. It's a very fun week. It's one of the best courses we play all year. You really have to tough it out out there and

be the best. So I'm looking forward to have a chance to do that again.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, again, congrats on the win today. Thanks for taking the time.

JON RAHM: Thank you.

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