

WM Phoenix Open

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TPC Scottsdale

Jon Rahm

Press Conference



DOUG MILNE: We'd like to welcome Jon Rahm, World No. 1, to the interview room here at the WM Phoenix Open.

Thanks for taking a few minutes with us, making your seventh start in the event. Never finished outside of the top 16. Obviously a special event for you, given your history and college and so forth. Just some thoughts on being back here this week.

JON RAHM: It's always a week I look forward to. I mean, you mentioned it. Spent a lot of my time in Arizona, being an ASU graduate, that I have a lot of support this week. It's a home week. It's a special event, right? It's an event like any other.

It's one of those where luckily, you know, I'm in my home court, so I get a lot of support. It's one of those we look forward to every year. Can have a lot of fun on this golf course. It can be difficult, but moments on 16, 17, 18, and some of the holes are now creeping up and being bigger than they used to be are a lot of fun.

Looking forward to the week, and hopefully I can keep adding to the stats and hopefully I add a first place this week.

DOUG MILNE: In the calendar year, you have had three starts, finished top 3 in two of them. I know you said there ought to be asterisk by Hawaii with it being a limited field, no cut. Nonetheless, top 3 finishes. Just a few comments with how you're feeling with your game coming into the week.

JON RAHM: You know, I'm comfortable. I think one of the best decisions I have made in my life was taking those two-and-a-half months off at the end of the year. I wouldn't be surprised if it's something I do more often, because with how hectic our year can be, how much effort we put into this, to have some time to just be home and enjoy the time off is great. This is probably one of the reasons why I have started playing so good.

Even though my game didn't feel at its best, I feel like I'm

refreshed enough and we can call it, say, competitive stamina. It's high enough to where I can actually pull it through and finish strong. Shoot 33-under on a golf course where in the past I struggled putting at. Clearly I didn't struggle putting. Finished in second at Torrey when I definitely didn't have my best ball-striking week, which is supposed to be a ball striker's course.

So, yeah, I'm playing good golf and hopefully starting this week things start clicking a little bit better. Like I said, hopefully I end up on top this week.

DOUG MILNE: You had a special visitor with you today out there. If you could just comment on Phoenix and how remarkable and unique that was.

JON RAHM: It was so cool, because I keep thinking back to when I was 14, and had I had a chance to be out here with one of my heroes, I think I would have been a lot more nervous than he was and probably would have made a fool of myself, let's be honest.

He composed himself in such a great manner, it was incredible. And to play with Aaron Rodgers, as well, the CEO of Waste Management, Jim, it's a group that can be intimidating. On 16 they announce his name as well. We didn't have the time for people to hear his story, but for somebody born with both feet clubbed, you look at him, you wouldn't be able to tell.

It's amazing. It's a remarkable young man, remarkable family, and I'm sure he will have a really bright future. What they have endured early in his life, there's not going to be many challenges that will be worse than that.

Q. Going through the tunnel there to 16, it's kind of sensory overload, especially considering Phoenix had never actually been to a golf tournament before. What did you kind of tell him to calm him down and keep him from losing consciousness?

JON RAHM: Well, there is nothing I can tell him to get him ready for that. It's impossible. I mean, I still get nervous and I still don't know what to do to get ready for it. The only thing I told him is like, Listen, there is going to be a lot



of people screaming. Enjoy it. Enjoy it as much as you can. It's going to be very intimidating.

I don't know if having the loud music helped or not, you can't hear the crowd as much. But I'm pretty sure -- he had a lot of fun obviously. It's easy to freeze in the moment, right? It's hard to take it all in. Looked like he had a lot of fun. He was able to make that birdie tap-in in 17. I told him, his first birdie on the PGA TOUR. Not many 14-year-olds can say that. He seemed to have a lot of fun.

That was the goal today. He definitely has a story to tell on Monday in school.

Q. Playing a lot of golf in Scottsdale in general, when you're on this course, does it feel similar to Silverleaf or anywhere else around here? Does it feel kind of home?

JON RAHM: Yes and no, because most courses won't be able to achieve the firmness that this golf course can achieve, especially with the weather we have had. These greens are firm and firmer than usual.

You're used to playing desert golf, and I think the altitude, just living here, I'm used to how far the ball goes, which can be a challenge for some people, but, you know, it's hard to get used to how firm and fast the greens are, right? I play in Silverleaf a lot. The greens are just as fast but they're definitely not as firm. That's something you can only accomplish here.

Plus each course is a little bit different, right? Everybody says it tends to break towards the Valley, but each green is a little bit different. Some things you learn only by playing a golf course enough times. One of the reasons I have done well is because I feel like I have a bit of the home field advantage.

Q. As a leader on TOUR, No. 1 player in the world, I wanted to ask your thoughts on Phil Mickelson's comments last week about the PGA TOUR and what he deems to be obnoxious greed?

JON RAHM: Listen, I try to stay away from those things. I'm here to play golf, and that's about it. Phil has been on TOUR for a very long time, and I'm not here to judge anybody, right? Phil said what he said. That's it.

He's still a great friend of mine. I don't know why he said what he said or why he said how he said it, but all I can say is I support him as a friend, yet I don't agree with everything he said. I'm 27 years old. I can count myself pretty lucky to be where I'm at in life.

Q. With how frequently you have finished in the top 10, do you derive any satisfaction from top 10 finishes, or is it at a point in your career now if you don't win or challenge for the title is it almost a disappointment?

JON RAHM: It would be a very sad golfer's life if any time I finish in the top 10 it's a disappointment. We are in a sport unfortunately where the winningest player in history won, what, 30% of the time, so we lose most of the time.

You can't take every week you don't win as a disappointment. If I'm finishing in the top 10, I can't say it's a bad week. It all depends how it happens, but there is always something you can call an achievement in a week where you finish out there. Plus I do make it a point to be consistent. I have mentioned that before. If I don't win, I want to finish as high as possible. It matters to me.

Fifth is better than sixth, definitely. Obviously I want to finish higher. And 34th is better than 35th. That's probably why my top 10 percentage is higher. I'm never going to give up no matter what point I am on the round or on the tournament. I'm a competitor. I'm going to try my hardest on every shot. If I can finish one higher, it makes a difference to me.

Q. ASU has produced a lot of great players. They have got another one in Preston Summerhays. I wonder if you have met him and if you see any similarities between his career and your career.

JON RAHM: I've played quite a bit with him, actually. They live in Silverleaf. Me, Preston, and Tony Finau have played quite a few rounds of golf.

I'm sure a lot of people saw when us three played together, Tony shot 59. What people don't know is that Preston was 8-under through 9 that day. He's definitely a very talented player. He's only a freshman in college, right? Still has like his whole college career ahead of him.

Do I see similarities so far? No. We grew up in very different environments. He has a very different personality to what I have. The one thing I can say, you know, maybe both at this point in age we are both talented golfers, and he definitely is an amazing golfer and has what it takes, has the tools and the determination to be out here, not only be out here but be one of the best in the world. I wouldn't be surprised if we see him out here soon.

Q. Did you get your exemption when you were a freshman at ASU?

JON RAHM: Junior. Little different. When I got here, I think I was already, I had won the World Amateur, played

really good college golf. If I wasn't No. 1 in the world I was close to being No. 1 in the world, but I had three years of college.

We'll see in three years what Preston has done. He already has won a college event early on, and the team is doing amazing, right? If he stays in college that long, which most kids tend not to nowadays, we will see how far he can get.

Q. I know DJ is walking with you this week. How would you describe your relationship with him?

JON RAHM: Great friendship. You know, when I first heard about what he did and what he stood for -- it was actually very smart of him, he befriended Kelley before me, right? She explained what DJ did. I seen him on the course but I didn't really know what he was working on every time he was out there.

I thought it was such a cool concept that as soon as I could I jumped on his team and got to meet him, got to spend some time with him. I think we got really close a few years ago in Hawaii. He was walking for somebody else in Maui, but we met each day at the bar, that bar they had at the Ritz in the lobby, and we were watching college football and just hanging out.

Came to realize how cool of a person he is and how amazing it is that somebody that was born with such a condition turns it all around and becomes such an inspiration not only for myself but to many people in this world, right? Since 2008 the guy has walked more golf holes than I have played, than most people have played, actually, almost double on the PGA TOUR. Travels 48 weeks out of 50 weeks a year and is really committed to what he does and helping people out, especially helping people with needs. It's really, really incredible, really remarkable.

People like that, like I said, are very inspirational. They inspire me to be a better person. As a father now, he could be such a great example for my son, right? He was born perfect, had a great delivery. Blond, blue eyes, good looking. Has it all already. To be around people like DJ can put perspective in life and realize how lucky he is to be in the situation he's going to be growing up.

Like I said, me, as well. I'm very fortunate to call him a friend, because the best thing about him is, excuse my language, if he needs to call you a shit head, he will call you a shit head, which is amazing. It's one of the greatest things about him. He doesn't care what you've done, how much you've accomplished. He cares who you are as a person. That's the beauty about him.

I can't say enough nice things about him. That's why he's a great friend of mine, and hopefully he can walk with me and follow me many more tournaments, and hopefully we can keep contributing to the foundation.

Q. Was the U.S. Open last year the last time he walked with you?

JON RAHM: Yes, yeah. You can have him twice a year. He's really booked up, so a lot of players do walk with him. If you can have him twice a year, that's lucky. He's walked with me here before, I believe, and he likes to say, my worst finish while he was following me has been 13th, which was actually here.

We are looking to improve. He said yesterday he's very competitive. He's looking towards going for back-to-back trophies, so hopefully I can do that for him.

Q. You're World No. 1. You get to play nine holes today with Aaron Rodgers who is probably going to be NFL MVP again. What is nine holes with Aaron Rodgers like? How do you guys go back and forth picking each other's brains?

JON RAHM: You know, there wasn't much brain picking. Tried to get out of him what he's going to be doing next year. (Laughter.) I bothered him a little bit, because it was one more of 3,000 people that asked him on the first few holes.

It's just fun to see him mess with me and interact with the crowd and try to put me off. Then it's also more and more enjoyable after he's done that, see how nervous he gets. He has no reason to be nervous. The guy plays in front of a crowd every week. See him hit bad shots, I mean, I don't know if you saw, but that second shot on 18, Jesus Christ. For that good a caliber player, that wedge shot came out like a home run. I mean, and it's all due to nerves.

It's just funny to see, somebody who is out there, who is MVP, who is one of the best quarterbacks of all time be that nervous, it's just really fun. We had a great group. It was really, really enjoyable.

One of the things we talked about, we shared, my physio has been his physio in the past, he's seen him as well, so we talked about a little bit. Asked him how bad his body hurts after a football game, things that us golfers don't experience.

It was fun. Too bad it was only nine holes.

Q. Getting back to inspiration and being inspirational,



what do you hope comes out of your relationship with Phoenix and sort of the message to other people maybe with clubfoot? What do you anticipate going forward in your relationship with him?

JON RAHM: I have no idea. He's the first person I have met that had this condition. What I have realized is how far the treatment has come, because basically when I was born they broke my foot in place and got casted, and that's why I have the limited mobility I have.

In his case, they had a different system to where they put, I don't know if it's a cast, but basically they mold something to your foot so slowly keeps going back into place, and that's what they did with him. I think he has some surgeries for that reason.

I'd love to meet more kids. I know on a scale of 1 to 10, I think mine, severity-wise, was maybe a 3. I think he told me he was around a 6. I know if you're past 8 is inoperable. I think there is no comeback, right?

Obviously we think what I had I was very, very, very well off, right? When I was born, if you had told my parents I was going to be an elite golfer, I don't think they would have believed you.

Like I said to his parents, I think when he was born, when all that happened, had we told them that today he'd be walking out here the way he was walking, be a golfer, trumpet player, I don't know if they would have believed it either. Like them, there's probably many more kids out there.

I have said it before, this should not limit you in life. And DJ, as well. Just because this happens to you, yes, you can't do certain things, but you can be an inspiration to many people. Phoenix has a great story to tell that he's going to be able to tell in the future, much like DJ has a great story to tell.

Truly we need more people like them in this world to be shown out there. It's not all about TikTok dances and being popular. This is people that make an impact in life, people that make a difference.

I'm glad Shriners Hospital has helped me put that together, so hopefully I can keep meeting more with the condition and make them realize that they can be pro athletes. We have seen NFL players without hands, so anything can happen.

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