

# WM Phoenix Open

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Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

## Jon Rahm

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome Jon Rahm to the media center here at the WM Phoenix Open. I know this is a place you're very comfortable; being a Scottsdale resident and Arizona State alum, your family has been out here on the West Coast. What is it like to be back here, a place that's familiar?

JON RAHM: It's always good. It's always good to stay at home for a tournament even though it's a little different, the dynamics we usually have, being in a hotel or not being in a hotel. That's the best part is just being comfortable. It's not like I'm overly having to try to learn the golf course or get familiar with the area. It's a lot easier, a lot less stress to deal with. Very comfortable, very happy. Looking forward to continuing the good play, and hopefully showing up Sunday with a chance.

THE MODERATOR: You're looking for a win here; making your eighth start, but you've finished T16 or better in all of them. What about this course suits your game?

JON RAHM: I think what I just said; it's more than the golf course. Being from Arizona State, I'm plenty familiar with desert golf. It's just a place that I'm comfortable. It's also a course that at first glance it might seem easier than what the scoring usually is. With the scoring conditions getting as hard as they get on the weekend with the firm greens and fast, ball-striking obviously is a premium. So I think that's always given me a chance to stay up there.

Haven't really had a chance to win coming down the stretch. My best showing was as an amateur, and even then I had a great back nine to put myself in fifth place. I'm hoping come the weekend, I've done a good enough job to go to that back nine knowing that I have a chance to win it.

**Q. It feels like even before this tournament became designated or elevated, with now unique it is, it's emerged as one of the premier tournaments on the PGA TOUR. I'm wondering among players, where does this tournament rank among ones that you want to pick off before you're done?**

JON RAHM: I think this was a designated event before we ever knew what they were going to be. No matter what the purse is, this tournament is going to be what it is. Very few sporting events in the world can comfortably happen in the same week as the Super Bowl and still have the impact that they have like this one.

With that said, I don't think it's everybody's favorite. I think either you love it or hate it. There's no in between. With my case, I love it. I want to come every year. It ranks highly in my list but I know a few people that put it far down their list, so I don't know what to say.

**Q. Because they don't want to deal with the hectic and craziness?**

JON RAHM: Whatever it may be, yeah. Since I came first time eight years ago - I can't believe it's been eight years - it's gotten exponentially louder and louder. It's been a significant difference every year. I get it.

16 last year when Justin Thomas chipped in, I didn't want to see the water bottle coming straight for my head from the third story, but I did see it, so hopefully those are things they rein back on and keep it strictly about the game, but again, those are things people don't want to deal with on a regular basis. It's one week a year, so I think a lot of us welcome it for one week.

**Q. You talked about how it's the Super Bowl week, everything is happening here. This is also a betting state that fans can legally bet here. Do you think that the onsite activations both here and what they're building across the road give another level for fans to sort of get excited about?**

JON RAHM: I'm not going to lie; I know very little about gambling. I don't like gambling in that sense. On the golf course with friends maybe because I have some control over it, but I don't do the sports book or DraftKings, things like that. I don't know what's going on.

I really don't think -- I mean, I'm pretty sure that was going on before it was legal, so I don't think that's going to change much.



**Q. You had mentioned this being a home tournament, and I'm curious if you have any normal specific day-to-day routine that you're excited you get to enjoy this week while teeing it up.**

JON RAHM: Sleeping in my own bed, big plus. It's just waking up at home and knowing that you're home. There's something relaxing about it. Morning and nighttime routine with the kids. Hotels, sometimes you're not always in the same room, or it can be a little bit more hectic. They're comfortable with it. It's very easy in that sense.

There's little things. Knowing that there's certain restaurants I can go to and know I'm going to be taken care of; being a Silverleaf ambassador and living at Silverleaf, knowing I can go to the club and have a relaxed afternoon if I need to. I feel like I have a few more ways, a few more outlets to kind of R&R if I need to throughout the week more than a regular TOUR event where I don't know the city well.

**Q. When you think back to the end of last year, as players started talking about what the designated events would look like, have the details of that played out the way that you envisioned personally?**

JON RAHM: I think we were all aware of what the general plan was going to be. Yeah, for the most part. I kind of equate these two -- the designated events to when they started the Rolex Series events. It's almost like, okay, you have these highlights in the calendar.

In my case, it made it a lot easier to clearly come up with a schedule quickly because you have to play certain events if you want to access the PIP money, so kind of made it easier to -- in my case at least, it was a lot less stressful to decide, and then, like I said, I think the idea was pretty clear from the start what the events were going to be. The only question mark was going to be how many of them were going to be required to play, and that was it.

I think for the most part, it's happened the way I envisioned it was going to happen.

**Q. You obviously are no stranger to the valley. You know this course very well. What do you think is your favorite part about this tournament for you personally?**

JON RAHM: Hard to say. Hard to say which one exactly. I think what makes it so unique and what makes it so special is the fans. That's what I'm going to have to say.

I like the golf course, as well. Obviously there's some highlights on the golf course, but the last three, four holes

wouldn't be the same without the atmosphere you get out here, so I think that obviously what the Thunderbirds have done to create this is pretty special, so I would say the fans, when physical harm is not in danger.

**Q. You love playing here, but has it frustrated you that you haven't been able to get in the mix really since that first time?**

JON RAHM: It's not like it's easy.

**Q. Seems to be for you.**

JON RAHM: No, no, it's not easy. Frustrating, no. But it is something that I want, obviously. I would never call it frustrating in a sport where you lose more than you win even at your best capacity.

It hasn't been frustrating. I just obviously really want to be a part of it because I live here and I would love to win this tournament. It's something special. I was able to do it in Spain and haven't been able to do it here, so I want to show up for myself and for the people that are here supporting me. But I wouldn't say it's frustrating.

It's not easy. This course gets difficult when it gets firm and fast. I know people still post scores, but you have to play really good golf.

**Q. You said this tournament doesn't really need to be a designated event. Do you think it should be given that it already sort of, as you said, is?**

JON RAHM: Oh, that's not for me to decide. As I said, this would be one of the few events that if it wasn't designated would still rival designated events. Now, with that said, we have the strongest field we've ever had here because it's a designated event, so I wouldn't know exactly what to tell you. That's a question for the sponsors.

You can make arguments both ways on why this should be or why this could still stand without having to be a designated event, so I can't really -- I don't know, it's up to the people in charge of the ship.

**Q. They're still kind of figuring out next year. Do you think the current number is the right number of designated events?**

JON RAHM: With all the possible changes next year, I have no idea. I don't know. I don't know. That's all I can tell you.

Do you mean like the number of tournaments we have to play? I just don't know all the options yet. I think a lot of us

want to have more time off in the fall. As long as we get that, I think people will play more or less what needs to be done to be able to have that time off. Again, I wouldn't know what to tell you.

What I do hope is that some other tournaments that want to put up the resources to become elevated events might get the chance. That would be epic. I would love to see this rotating, not always being the same ones every year. That's my personal opinion.

**Q. I'm curious, do you get a chance to follow Arizona State, Arizona State sports, Arizona State golf, things around ASU, football, whatever it is? Do you follow them?**

JON RAHM: Yeah.

**Q. Closely or...**

JON RAHM: Define closely.

**Q. Do you pay attention to how the golf program is doing or new football coach, things like that? Do you find yourself plugged in?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, of course.

**Q. You're plugged in with them?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, obviously I pay attention.

It's a little hard in the fall, especially this past fall because we travel quite a bit, so I actually didn't get a chance to go to any games this year because my family wasn't traveling with me, so I didn't want to take away time from them when I was home, and I haven't been able to go watch the golf team play, but I do follow it closely.

Luckily we get a summary from Coach Thurmond every once in a while, so I get to see what's going on.

**Q. Do you have any kind of a souvenir other than a tournament trophy of the first time you made it to No. 1 in the World Ranking? Did you keep anything? In general, how nice is it to have that on your resume, even if it's a printout?**

JON RAHM: No, I do. His name is Kupa. He's almost two years old. Sorry, Kelley, but yeah. She can tell you the story more than me.

We suspect that it was that night. Sorry. (Laughter.)

**Q. I know you've been on pretty good form. You've**

**won two of your last three tournaments, and you mentioned it's nice being home. How do you kind of capitalize on those aspects looking in on the tournament coming up?**

JON RAHM: I mean, I've been playing pretty good golf, right, so just the fact that I'm familiar with the week, it's a little bit less stress.

I wouldn't know how to tell you I know how to capitalize on anything, because golf is very difficult, and even though it's the same course, it doesn't always play the same and you're not always playing the same, so I wouldn't know what to tell you, but knowing the golf course is a big part of it, and being able to be at home and have friends supporting me, it's always a plus.

I wouldn't know what to say how to capitalize except the fact that it's a little bit less stress around the week.

**Q. Who's your pick for the Super Bowl?**

JON RAHM: Are both quarterbacks healthy?

**Q. Yes, somewhat healthy.**

JON RAHM: Exactly. I don't know. I don't know. It's hard to make a prediction on one game. It's like one round of golf; anybody can show up and play good. Obviously if the Eagles continue the form they've had, they would be tough to beat, but it's just hard to bet against Patrick Mahomes. Really hard to go against him, so I don't know.

I'm not confident enough making a prediction. I've played golf with Patrick and Travis Kelce, so just because I've spent some time with them, I would love to see them win, but yeah, I'm not confident enough to make a prediction in that.

**Q. How was the round with J.J.?**

JON RAHM: It was great. J.J. has become a really good friend of mine. He wanted to prep and see the golf course before he came here tomorrow, and like he likes to say, embarrass himself, and he won't be the worst golfer out here by a longshot. The way I like to say it, he's got way too much power and strength to play golf right now, obviously, for somebody who barely plays. He's really talented. I think he shot 102 his first round here from the tips, and a lot of shots were very easily -- I don't know how to say it, treatable, because the guy doesn't like to warm up at all. He just goes to the first tee. I told him if he just chipped and putted right before the round, he could have saved at least five shots on the entire day just from touch around the greens.

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It was fun. I mean, it was a really fun day to come out and get to play with two of the greatest athletes of all time, and then Tom Kim and myself, not nearly in the same category. But yeah, it was a really fun day. They're all really great guys.

**Q. We know your focus obviously is on the tournament starting Thursday, but how special is it for you to take part in events such as the Dream Day clinic like you did earlier today, get more involved with the community and spread the message of positivity and getting involved in the game of golf and stuff like that?**

JON RAHM: I'm ashamed to say that I didn't know that clinic was happening, has been happening for 20 years, to be honest. I wish I would have known earlier because doing clinics in tournaments is something I've mentioned to the PGA TOUR that I will do more often because I think it's really fun for me, and it's great to engage with the younger audience very often.

I hope -- I'll say it right here, I hope if we keep having this designated events or as max capacity as possible, I think there should be one every single week and have one of us big players do it. It was one hour of my time in a morning where I just made the day of 200 kids by being there, not only myself, but in a week like this, we had Larry Fitzgerald and a pitcher for the Diamondbacks over there, as well. You have three athletes from the valley that they get to show. Obviously they're not in their element, but they're still there.

I wish this was something we did more often. I would love to see it next week in LA. You could do something. Doesn't always have to be on-site. But in big tournaments like this, I think you could do it more often because I would love to do it. It's something I have no problem doing. Clinics are a lot of fun.

**Q. In San Diego you had mentioned with the quick turnaround you couldn't really celebrate what you were able to accomplish back-to-back. Were you able to at the off week?**

JON RAHM: No. No. Both kids were sick. I got a little sick last week, as well. It wasn't the time to be celebrating at all.

We will at some point eventually. In this line of work, you can't really go day by day. We'll just take it whenever we have free time and enjoy it.

**Q. This being one of the first super events of the year, does that alter your preparation, and how do you feel**

**about that?**

JON RAHM: Nothing changes. I want to perform well in every single tournament I go to, no matter what it is. I will not do anything special this way or any other tournament for that matter, so nothing really changes.

Now, I do have a question for the media here. I'm asking everybody that I know if LeBron gets 36 points tonight, who's calling him the GOAT and who's not calling him the GOAT? Because I'm loving this debate with everybody at this point. I'm not going to say my stance but I love talking to people because everybody gets very intense about it. Media experts...

**Q. It's like Tiger against Jack. Jack has more major wins, but Tiger was better.**

JON RAHM: Okay, so who's the greatest?

**Q. Do you want to define it by wins or better golf?**

JON RAHM: I'm asking you, who's the greatest?

**Q. I define it by better golf, so I think LeBron is more than Jordan.**

JON RAHM: So if LeBron is better -- a lot of LBJ fans.

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