

Arnold Palmer Invitational

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Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Jon Rahm

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome World No. 1 Jon Rahm to the interview room here at the 2023 Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Thanks for joining us.

You're coming in off a victory at the Genesis Invitational a couple weeks ago. You played here just the once last year. What did you learn last year playing here, top-20 finish, that you can bring this year to the tournament.

JON RAHM: Well, last year was extremely difficult conditions. I had heard that it gets challenging on the weekend, but obviously last year it was a very difficult one. I learned that -- I learned why Tiger has had such success here. It's a ball-striker's golf course. We need to be very accurate with the irons, and obviously, like everywhere else, you have to be good on the greens.

But it is a golf course where I could tell Tiger could manage his way around. For the most part, you want to miss right off the tee because that's always going to give you the better chance going into the greens. A lot of the hazards are on left, so seeing that it made sense.

See a lot of similarities on the courses that Tiger did well at, and luckily, I've been able to do well on most of 'em. So I learned that this could be a golf course for me.

Even last year I had a horrible, horrible week on the greens with four 3-putts alone on the back nine on Sunday. So very encouraged knowing that if I could keep my ball striking at the level that I know I can and have a decent week on the greens, I'll have a chance.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. If you have questions just raise your hand and we'll get a microphone to you.

Q. How did you celebrate Riviera? Did you treat yourself?

JON RAHM: No. I had a photo shoot early the next morning, so I didn't really -- we went back home, had dinner, put the kids to bed, and that was it. Didn't really get

to celebrate because then the week after Kapa has been a little bit under the weather. So nothing, really.

Thursday we had a bit of a get-together with some friends, but it was also Kelley's birthday, so we did get to do a little bit, but nothing immediately on Sunday night.

Q. Courses like this one where Tiger's had a lot of success, is there any added motivation to maybe follow in his footsteps at Bay Hill or any of those other venues?

JON RAHM: No. Not because he's done well. I mean, obviously, you want to be able to play good, but obviously he did really well at challenging golf courses. When you think about the three tournaments he really asserted a dominance that we still play nowadays, Torrey, Memorial, and then this event, all of them are really challenging golf courses tee to green.

So you can tell, right, he just rose to the occasion every single time. And I would add Firestone Country Club in there, but we don't play there anymore. But all four of those courses are very challenging, but there is away to manage your way around it. A lot of those, like I said, the miss is right off the tee, which is my predominant miss, so it's probably why I like it so much.

Q. Do you kind of enjoy the game within the game with this battle for No. 1 in the world with Scottie, Rory?

JON RAHM: I mean, it's been great. There's a lot of satisfaction that comes to it when you get to be No. 1 when the other players have been playing great golf as well. Scottie had a great year last year, Rory had a great year last year, and then towards the end of the year I kind of picked up. And even with Scottie winning at Phoenix, I was able to get to No. 1 right after.

So there's a lot of satisfaction that comes to it. I mean, if you're going to do it in any way, you want to get to No. 1 but winning. I think one of those times that I got to it it was after, I think it was JT had a bad finish, and I finished 10th in a tournament and you get back to No. 1. That doesn't feel nearly as well. But when we've been playing the way



we've been playing, it's a lot of fun.

Q. Do you know the history of No. 1 to any degree, the trends and the back-and-forths some year and then some year stretches where, like, Tiger and Greg Norman just dominate?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I mean, Tiger and Greg combined reached a thousand weeks, so there wasn't a lot of moving around when they were playing. Obviously Tiger had those two stretches of 250 weeks. Pretty much anytime one of those gets to No. 1, I hear, right? Like, I would have to be No. 1 until 2035 or something like that, in a row, to reach Tiger's record, which, great (laughing.)

But I do know this is, what is it, the most amount of No. 1 changes in this short period of time. I saw some of those stats because it's just really interesting, which speaks to the greatness of the game of golf right now, how good everybody's been playing.

Q. The back-and-forth between Rory and Scottie and yourself what are things in Rory and Scottie that you appreciate, maybe parts of their game that you admire?

JON RAHM: I mean, they're both great competitors, great, great competitors. Rory, it's hard to say anything about Rory that hasn't been said already. When he's firing on all cylinders, it's a thing of beauty. The way he hits the ball and his ball flight off the tee, especially, is quite unique.

Scottie, I would say he has a great ability to post a really good score. There's a lot of times where I've played with him and maybe it doesn't look the prettiest, but you end up the round and, oh, 67. It's pretty remarkable.

Obviously both great players, both great champions, both of 'em work really, really hard at their game. That's what I would say about each one. I know we mention Rory's driving all the time, but it really is something to admire when you see it in person.

Q. Did you ever have the opportunity to meet Arnold Palmer, and if so, what are your memories?

JON RAHM: I was able to meet him -- last time I met him, I think it was in 2015. I think it was 2015 Palmer Cup, if I'm correct. We were at Rich Harvest Farms and I got to meet him, speak a little bit to him. There was a lot of people in line.

But I got the honor to go up on the podium as the European team representative and speak to Mr. Palmer and the audience about the Palmer Cup and basically

thank him for everything he's done.

To see him there and even at that point to see him get a little bit emotional was very, very special. I didn't get to spend in any time with him on the golf course or anything like that. I would have loved to. Yeah, that was the last time.

When you come to a place like this, even for someone like me, who loves the history of the game, to be able to see a lot of his quotes, see the part of history, how much of the history of the game he's a part of and to even just see what this golf course was, see the pictures, the before and after, and the tournament he's created is really, really unique. There's very little to say about him. Loved by many, admired by even more.

Hopefully I get to get to have a career as good as his, but very hard to, very challenging to do, especially with everything he did off the golf course.

Q. Two things, John, which is better than eight, so bear with me. When you're firing on all cylinders, can anyone beat you, in your mind?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. And then how many players would you guess feel the same way you do?

JON RAHM: I mean, I would hope a lot of 'em.

Q. What do you think?

JON RAHM: I have no idea. I don't know. The thing is, you don't need to be firing on all cylinders to win. I actually had a conversation similar to this with Tiger. I asked him, Out of the 82 wins on the PGA TOUR, I didn't get into the other ones, how many times do you think you played your best all four days? And he said, Three at most. Right? A lot of those Sundays he played his best, but the whole week, very few.

Q. Did he mention the three?

JON RAHM: Well, 2000 U.S. Open, 2000 Open Championship, and I think you can pick any other 2000 win. Those two, I kind of brought up and he said he agreed to those two. I don't know what other one.

Q. Probably '97 Masters, maybe?

JON RAHM: No, because on that front nine he shot 4-over.

Q. He's terrible.

JON RAHM: Yeah, exactly, right? He only won by 12. Imagine that.

I really don't know. Personally it's a little bit different. I've gotten to enjoy a really good form of golf. The one time I can say I was firing on all cylinders I didn't get to finish the tournament. So I would have wished to see what that was like. It all depends on who you're talking to and what level. A lot of us are such perfectionists that I think we play close to that A-plus game a lot, but we don't give ourselves that, quite that grade for all four days. I think a lot of us probably, you know, that's why probably Tiger said maybe just a few times in his career.

Q. I think you answered it, but is Memorial the one time that you played at your absolute peak?

JON RAHM: Yeah.

Q. Was there any other?

JON RAHM: Not as good as that one, no. The best I've had tee to green feeling-wise was 2017 at Torrey Pines. But I didn't have the week on the greens until the back nine on Sunday. There's weeks where you think, Oh, this part of my game is great, this other part was amazing. But for every part of your game to be a hundred percent all four days, yeah, that's nearly impossible to happen.

Q. All three days for you.

JON RAHM: Yeah, all three days. Exactly. Yeah.

Q. The Masters is close enough. Just now you're on a fantastic run. Do you think you'll feel differently going to Augusta this year and do you already feel a little bit differently about the Masters given what fantastic form you're in?

JON RAHM: No, no. It's a pretty big event. I don't know if you can feel any different to what it usually is, right? I think obviously I'm going to go in with a lot of confidence given what I've done already this year. But I don't think anything needs to be done differently. Clearly what I'm doing rights now works, so there's no reason to emphasize anything just because it's Augusta National. You got to go out there and perform and hopefully I can get that done as well.

Q. When you are hitting on all cylinders or nearly all cylinders can you let yourself kind of soak it in, enjoy it or are you always trying to think, I've got to keep this going and how do I keep this going?

JON RAHM: You should sit down and reflect and enjoy what you're doing, obviously. But as competitors you don't want it to end, obviously, right. So what's got me to this point -- again, it's kind of the same answer I just said. You don't really want to change anything. You want to keep fine-tuning things, but right now wouldn't be the moment for a major change trying to get anything to be better. That would be at least my philosophy so far in it.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Jon, thank you for your time have a great week this week.

JON RAHM: Thank you.

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