

# Zurich Classic of New Orleans

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Avondale, Louisiana, USA

TPC Louisiana

**Jon Rahm**

**Ryan Palmer**

Press Conference



DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome Jon Rahm and Ryan Palmer, the defending champions from 2019, to the virtual interview room here at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans. Thanks for joining us. Just got done with the pro-am, just obviously the course took a lot of water on last week, just some thoughts on the course and being back here in defense of your title this week.

RYAN PALMER: Golf course wise it was in great shape. It's a little soft in areas, pretty impressed on how firm the greens are playing and the areas around the greens the chipping areas. Today was a bit of a day with the winds, cold, blowing pretty good all day today, so it was hard it kind of get a lot of work done but overall the golf course is in fantastic shape. You're going to have the soft spots from all the rain, but overall it's set up for a nice test and a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, just a few thoughts, I know Ryan covered that, just how the course suits your game, obviously fairly well based on y'all's performance last year, just thoughts on how TPC Louisiana works out for you.

JON RAHM: Well, one of the reasons why the partnership worked so well is because we play similar game, we like to see the ball go left-to-right for the most part, so I think it matches up really well. It's a ball-striker's golf course, obviously you got to hit it tee to green really well, more so this year because what Ryan just said, the greens are a little bit firmer so if you're not in the fairway you're not in full control of your golf ball and it's going to be hard. So it should suit our strengths very well and excited to go ahead and play again this year. We missed not being here last year and really excited to be back.

DOUG MILNE: One more question for me and then I'll open it up to a few questions. Comments on your season so far, Jon, obviously great season with 8 top-10 finishes in 12 starts. Ryan, runner-up at San Diego earlier this season. Just how you're feeling about your games, what your confidence is like coming into the week. Ryan, you

can start, please.

RYAN PALMER: No, I am very confident. It's been a fun year. It's been exciting as well. To begin the year the tournament golf at Colonial, hitting the first shot was very action exciting for me and James for sure but it's been a very consistent year, great finish at Torrey Pines like you said, had some good golf at the match play, of course ran into this guy on Friday, but we both played solid golf and someone's got to win that day. But played solid at San Antonio, really solid golf at the Masters, just two bad holes, so overall excited where I'm at. I love where my short game's at and I'm hitting the ball well and we both get our games going this week, we're going to be -- we're going to have a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, same question for you.

JON RAHM: Yeah, I've been playing good. I would say obviously the last two weeks since the birth of the little one, I haven't figured out the right balance to be able to spend the time on the golf course and obviously I went to Augusta with very little practice and last week I mean it's definitely hard to leave the house now, it's definitely really hard to leave and try to focus. So I apologize in advance, buddy (laughing).

It almost as I said before and after right? It feels like whatever happened a couple weeks ago, it's completely different. It changes your life-style. But golf is really solid this year, a lot of Top-10s, I'm just looking forward to getting myself really in the mix with things on Sunday and get that win.

DOUG MILNE: We'll open it up to questions.

**Q. There were Skittles involved when you won this thing last time. Wondering if you have any Skittles lined up for this week and if not if you have maybe a substitute like M & M's and then also as a follow-up to that was it weird trying to knock one another out of the Match Play?**

JON RAHM: With the Skittles caddies had them, I think it was Adam holding them so that's going to be it's going to



be up to them again. In the Match Play, it's a bitter sweet thing. Like you know we played a lot of golf together and we want to see each other succeed, but at the same time you want to play good for yourself, right? So it's, that's right when I made that putt to win and take it through I wouldn't have celebrated like I maybe would have at another different time because I know what it means to me but at the same time it's knocking out a friend, right? So again it's a bitter sweet moment.

RYAN PALMER: Yeah, no, the Skittle thing, we'll see what's on the tee when we get there. That's up to Adam and James. But it took on alive of its own that year. It was fun. So we'll see what transpires this year. But the Match Play was great. It was, I was excited to at least play well and make it a match as well. I'm sure he did too. But yet at the end of the day somebody's got win and it took 20 holes, which was great, but I was excited that it was a match to go through, it wasn't a match that didn't mean anything. That's what was cool about the day, knowing we're playing here several weeks later and we were going head-to-head to advance. So played great golf, somebody had to win and Jon went through that day.

**Q. You guys be having dinners together this week? How close is the team sticking to each other throughout the week?**

JON RAHM: We already have, right?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah.

JON RAHM: We haven't talked about plans for tonight yet.

RYAN PALMER: We had a great dinner last night with Sean Payton and Drew Brees -- Drew wasn't there but Coach Payton and Mickey Loomis, the GM of the Saints and some other friends. So we had a nice dinner with them and James and the guys here in town. And had great day with Sean and Drew Brees today in the pro-am. So Austin was Austin, that's in the past, so, no, we had a great few days so far and we're ready to get after it.

**Q. Is there any added pressure on you guys in a team event to play well for the other one? You're obviously not playing just for yourself, any added pressure there or are you guys in a good enough position with each other where that pressure kind of eliminates itself and you're just able to have fun. Ryan, start with you?**

RYAN PALMER: I think there's always a little pressure there because you want to play well for your partner and but at the same time I'm very confident in his game. I don't worry about what he's going to done an I think he feels the same way about me and so for me it's just taking care of

my business. I know what I've been doing the past several weeks, and I think my game will be there and that's all I can take care of. And it's not going as well, I know he'll be there to pick me up and vice versa. So I mean there's always pressure in the game of golf. Everybody's going to feel pressure. So, yeah, you want to play well for him, but you are also trying to play well for yourself as well. But nothing abnormal I don't ever feel when we're out here.

JON RAHM: I wouldn't say it's added. It's still even though your partner is still one guy hitting the shot, especially in the alternate shot day, right? So it's not added pressure. Obviously we're both trying our hardest and that's all we can ask for and what he said, and if somebody needs a pick me up you have somebody there to help you, which that's a great thing about it.

**Q. How about the decision on who tees off in odd/even holes and in foursomes what's your formula for the order of tee off and so forth?**

JON RAHM: Same as last time, right?

RYAN PALMER: Yeah. James and Adam kind of came up with it and certain holes that kind of fit our game. So I tee off on the odds, he tees off on the evens. So that was the strategy back then, we use each other's ball when needed on certain holes because we're playing two different golf balls, that's where you got to try to find the, to work with each other. I was helping I was working with his ball a little bit last week at home and which is fine, it's not that big a difference, we're both pretty good at this game and the ball really doesn't matter for us this week. So it's a simple strategy that we used back then so hopefully it will work this week. We're planning on it to work.

JON RAHM: Yeah, I mean it is crazy, but that's the thing, right? Like sometimes it all depends on how your playing on doing your best on tee shot are you doing your best on who you want putting more, who you want hitting the iron shots. All you can do is strategize, at the end of the day you still need to execute and hit the shots. So I don't think we ever got too caught up on that, we just doing exactly the same thing we did last time because it worked out and feel that we have some familiarity with certain tee shots and feel more comfortable with others than others.

**Q. The Player Impact Program, which I'm sure you're obviously aware of it at this point. Do you like it and do you see either of you benefiting from it or would you change anything in terms of social media and how you do things and so forth?**

RYAN PALMER: For me personally, it's not going to change what I do day-in and day-out. I'm not going to

change what little I do on social media. It's not in my interest level from a social media standpoint. I just go out and play golf. I don't expect my TV coverage to get bigger and better or more to help with that, so but I understand the program itself, what it's there for and, yeah, it's going to help reward those players that, like I say, they move the needle out here on the PGA TOUR and there's certain guys out here on this TOUR that deserve it, they help drive the game, they help grow the game and if it takes an impact program like this to keep moving and keep growing the game then I have no issue with it whatsoever at all with it. But it's not going to change what I do, I've been here long enough now and I'm not going to change my regular day routine or what I do at home to try and be in that top-10. So it's not putting any added pressure on me for sure.

**Q. Jon, anything to add?**

JON RAHM: Not much to what he said. I'm not going to -- I think you might see some maybe some players that could be on that list or are on the edge over the years who maybe tried to use some of those criteria points to move or boost themselves up and into a higher position. Like myself I'm somebody who somewhat stays away from social media, but now that knowing that social media, it's a big part of one of five things that counts towards the ranking, what I might try to start doing some things to maybe just boost the following a little bit. To be honest I don't even know what the other points are. I think social media is one of them, Google searches is the other one. It seems like for the most part if you play good golf things take care of themselves so social media is the one that you can kind of control, right? So you might see some people maybe more Instagram Lives or whatever it is or maybe lessons or Q&As or things like that. So you might start seeing more involvement. I'm pretty sure you'll definitely see more involvement on my part and I think it's a good thing because you don't necessarily have to be one of the Top-5 players in the world to have a chance, right? There's so many other ways to get around it and if you have a strong immediate presence you might be able to get there. But I think obviously I think it's a great idea.

**Q. Secondly, different question, format of this tournament, four-balls and foursomes, assuming you obviously both like that. But if you could change any element of it, is there something that you would change or rather what would you do scramble, scotch foursomes, anything along those lines?**

JON RAHM: Scramble would take so long to play.

RYAN PALMER: I don't know what you would do to change it. I think it's --

JON RAHM: Keep it the way it is.

RYAN PALMER: It's been pretty good the way it is. I think when they reversed the day, foursomes were on Thursday and then four-ball was on Friday, I think reversing that to playing foursomes on Sunday it makes for a more exciting finish, when you're playing that alternate shot format on Sunday, that adds a little more pressure on that type of format for sure. So I think it's been great. I've heard nothing but great things from the Zurich folks, fans at home, so there's really that I would change whatsoever.

JON RAHM: Yeah, there's nothing I would change about it. I think it's a really good format the way it is. Really fun. What he said, right? Having the key day Friday, the cut might be, you might be missing or making the cut and then Sunday being the foursome, yeah the foursome day, being alternate shot, having the extra pressure I think was a great idea as well.

**Q. Lastly, just how do you decide on the ball, who is playing who is ball and what goes into that decision maybe?**

RYAN PALMER: Well, for example, we'll go off No. 1, I tee off on the odds, so I'll tee off with his ball, just knowing that he can hit his ball with a wedge. And par-3s we play each other's ball. And then par-5 what we do is if he is teeing off, he'll tee off with his ball, that way I know for sure he's going to have his ball around the green, using his short game. So that's kind of how -- we kept it to where you're hitting your iron shots and your wedge shots with your ball and as long as we're playing well, that's usually how it works out and like I say it worked out pretty good and I've been able to work with his ball a little bit and he's played my ball in the past, so no issues there whatsoever.

JON RAHM: Yeah, I would say the rule of thumb is to have whoever's hitting the shot into the green the one where you need the most control on be your own ball. Unless there's certain scenarios, obviously the par-5s when you hitting long shots into the greens it won't make that much of a difference, but the spin rate on a wedge, 9-iron, does matter, right? So I think having the confidence on that second shot is the most important thing.

**Q. First of all, where did you go for dinner last night with Coach Payton?**

RYAN PALMER: Desi Vega's Steakhouse. I've got to know Desi Vega really well throughout the years. We have become pretty close friends so we always make that kind of a standing tradition Tuesday nights and we go there and hang out. So great spot.

**Q. Jon, what was it that made you interested in playing in this event the first time?**

JON RAHM: I just thought it was fun. We don't get to play this format and actually count the strokes, usually it's a Match Play in the Ryder Cup, right? That's the only time. And growing up as a junior golfer in Spain we have plenty of opportunities to play events like this one or play with a partner and I thought it's so unique, it was the first I ever seen on the PGA TOUR that it was fun, obviously we both entered with different partners, but it's something that's different, it's appealing to me and it's, you know, you get to experience different things on the golf course, you can rely on a partner, you get people going double digits under par pretty easily it's just a really exciting week.

**Q. Ryan, was Jordan Spieth trying to get back in with you?**

RYAN PALMER: No, we have joked a lot about it in the past few years but I knew he wasn't playing again, he -- I know I always tease him about who he's going to play with, so but, no, it was, there was no intention of him playing again, so, it's been great, we still play a lot of golf together at home, so but, no, he wasn't trying to get back in.

**Q. How important is team chemistry in this event and what made you guys mesh so well?**

RYAN PALMER: I think it's very important. Of course it's important in any team competition to get along with the guy you're walking in the fairway with, for sure. We have met way back when, we played his first tournament at Scottsdale at the Waste Management, we were paired together in the final round and after that played some practice rounds together and James and Adam are both close friends, I've known Adam a long time as well, so easy decision when I was wanting to play and looking for a partner when I shot him a text and we play a lot of practice rounds together as well, so we definitely connected on a personal level and it's shown on the golf course as well. I think it's huge when you're playing this type of format to definitely want to enjoy the time with your partner, for sure and if you butt heads it's going to be hard to rely on each other one the golf course.

**Q. Jon, they showed some video at the Masters of you getting a little club for your son as a gift. What's the best thing that someone's given so far?**

JON RAHM: Well Callaway did that without -- it was a surprise. So that was, they kind of gave it to me on the range, it was pretty cool. There's been a couple things. Mostly just onesies, a couple hats, nothing that really stood

out. I think that club is one of the most special things. My swing instructor sent me a book and he sent me a text before I got the book, it was a book of Seve, signed, personalized, and with his pictures and a bit of the history of Seve. And he said, The little guy is going to have to know who this one was. And I thought that was really special, right? Knowing what Seve met to me. There was a couple from sponsors, Travis Matthew made a onesie with the logo of my soccer team, knowing how much passion I have for that football team back home. But the best one, and it wasn't for the baby at all, it was a friend of mine who made a yardage book, he made me a new one and he's got the logo, the Sun Devil logo, the soccer team logo and my nickname. And then inside he had, he already wrote down, before he was born, he had the baby's name and Kelley's name on the bottom. It was really cool. It's not so much for the baby, it's a little bit for me, but I thought it was such a thoughtful thing from a friend, it's so simple and something I use and see all the time that I thought it was really, really thoughtful. And that friend is actually on the field, he caddies for K.J. Choi, his name is Ki Taek Lee, I went to college with him, and it's probably the best one I've gotten.

DOUG MILNE: Well thank you, that's all we got for you we appreciate your time and wish you guys the best of luck this week.

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