

# DP World Tour Championship

Wednesday, 16 November, 2022

Dubai, UAE

Jumeirah Golf Estates

## Keith Pelley

## Jon Rahm

### Press Conference

BRIONY CARLYON: Delighted to welcome back Jon Rahm to the DP World Tour Championship and the Media Centre here.

Jon, it's great to have you here. For those of you that may be aware, Keith Pelley, Chief Executive, is here and will have a few words with Jon.

KEITH PELLEY: If our breakfast was any indication, you'll have a lively news conference with Jon. This is long, long overdue. In fact, perhaps after Jon made the putt on 17 and then the putt on 18 back in 2021 at Torrey Pines, he became the first Spanish player to win the U.S. Open. He became an Honorary Member.

Traditionally, we present these here at the DP World Tour Championship, and with Jon not being able to be here last year, we are able to do it here today.

I want to just again talk a little bit about the sensational career Jon has already had. In the last 2 1/2 years, he's been world No. 1 for 43 weeks. But more than a U.S. Open champion, and more than world No. 1, he has what we call the "It" factor, and he's one of those few players that is purely not only an icon and iconic figure in his own country, but a superstar in the world of golf who has a presence both on the golf course and off the golf course. He can change any golf course, any golf tournament he comes to; he makes a difference. This week, his presence here makes a difference.

If you just happen to have been in Madrid at Club de Campo a month or so ago, and you saw the actual droves of fans that followed Jon with a six-stroke lead, it was something to behold. For him to win the third time; only Seve has won there three times. He actually won at club did he calm poa will Seve won his 50th event, and final event.

So it is an honour to have a true star, superstar, a legend already that supports the DP World Tour and loves Europe



and is really a game-changer any time he plays.

So Jon, this is well overdue. This is merely the formality, the presentation of your Honorary Membership on the DP World Tour. Congratulations.

JON RAHM: That's certainly a different way to start.

BRIONY CARLYON: Your thoughts on that, Jon, before we get things going?

JON RAHM: Well, you know, that's something when I started my pro career, I didn't know it was a possibility. But I think it was 2017 when I was playing in Valderrama, that Tuesday or Wednesday dinner hosted by Sergio's foundation and he was presented, it might have been 2018, he was presented with the life -- Honorary Life Membership, and I was present. I was present when he won the Masters and he was present when he was awarded with this great honour.

To join the list of the icons that have earned it, it is truly an honour. I've said many times, any time in our small country, golf-wise, any time you can write your name in history next to some of the greatest that have accomplished this before me is very unique.

To keep doing things like this, is a true honour to represent Spain. It's a true honour to receive it, so thank you.

BRIONY CARLYON: As Keith mentioned, last time we had a conversation was after you had won in Spain and we're back here in Dubai at another tournament where you've won twice. How nice is it to be here this week?

JON RAHM: It's great. I didn't get the chance to defend right away since COVID had other plans. So I'm happy to be back and I'm happy to have a chance to hopefully win this tournament again. It's a city I really enjoy and a week I really enjoy. It been fun every time I come. Hospitality has been unmatched. It's just hard to beat.

And it's a world-class golf course, especially those last finishing maybe five to seven holes where if you take the necessary risks, you can come up with some birdies like Collin did last year and end up with the win. So hopefully I have a good showing again.



But I'm looking forward to it. Like I said, it's a tournament and a week that I really enjoy.

**Q. You are 53-under par for this tournament in the three years that you've played, which is 17-under par average, more than that, which usually wins golf tournaments, and you've won it twice over the three times you've played. Can you just pinpoint, what are the things you really like on a golf course, on this golf course, that absolutely suits your eyes?**

JON RAHM: Well, it is a golf course in which if you can drive it well, like I have in the past, you can have a lot of advantages. There are certain bunkers you can cover. There are certain holes where you can have a much shorter iron coming in and actually have a chance to make birdies, especially if you put it in the fairway.

So off the tee, it's a massive advantage. It's no surprise that Rory has had success here as well. I'm not surprised by Collin last year, one of the straightest drivers on tour, had such a good week as well, right.

It's a combination of things. It all starts off the tee. Your iron game needs to be precise. These greens are very undulated, and you want to be on the right section of the green. If you are on the right section, you will have a birdie chance; if not, you will have a complicated 1-putt. So it really -- I could go down every aspect of the game.

But I think what it boils down to is being off the tee. If you can hit it long out here with some accuracy, you're going to have a lot of chances. The par 5s are long and you have a couple long par 4s.

**Q. You mentioned Sergio there. Are you worried that with everything that's happened that his legacy might be affected on The European Tour?**

JON RAHM: I hope not. It's very unprecedented, right, what we've been dealing with in the game of golf, in the last -- it hasn't even been that long, what, six months. And there's certainly going to be a before and after at some point, and there's definitely some division going on.

But I think to the core fans who have been fans of Sergio, I don't think they care, really, where he plays. Some of them might but most of them I don't really think they care. It still shouldn't change what he's done in the game; what he's done in The Ryder Cup, European Tour, PGA TOUR, shouldn't be affected by where he decides to play golf, at least in my mind.

It could have somewhat of an impact. I have a hard time

believing a lot of those players are going to have a positive impact with their legacy right now. We don't know what's going to happen, but if it does, I hope it's not a big one, let's say it that way. He's done a lot for the game of golf, so it would be sad to see that change.

**Q. Could I just ask about next season, are you going to commit to the 20 events?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, CJ Cup counted as one; so 19 to play. That doesn't change. I played 19 events last year from Tournament of Champions to TOUR Championship.

So it really doesn't change the way I plan my schedule. I will play some events that I haven't played before, so I will play -- I think I'm in Harbour Town and Travelers, and means I won't be able to play some other events, but the number of tournaments is the same.

**Q. How do you rate Rory's action on and off the course during this year of golf, special year with a lot of moments in the world of golf as an ambassador and world No. 1?**

JON RAHM: How do I rate? You're putting me in a difficult position here.

He's played amazing golf to win the FedExCup, and to have a chance to win The Race to Dubai as well, it's unique. This would be I think the second time in his career he wins both, which is quite an accomplishment. He's played amazing.

I think the only thing he will tell you that's missing is a major championship of having a pretty amazing year. It's great to see somebody with his platform to take a stand as he did, whether you agree with it or not, he's taken a stand on what he believes in and that's it. I think it's great.

He's had a lot of input. He's been on the board of the PGA TOUR and tried to make a change. To be honest, with how long those meetings are and how much as players we talk to each other to play as good as he has, is pretty remarkable. I mean, in this profession, we are all basically CEOs of our own little golf company, and now he has invested in so much more. Again, the role he's had in both is quite incredible.

**Q. We're in the early stages of the sort of re-working of the OWGR. The immediate perception is that the DP World Tour has been adversely affected as a result. I just wondered what your take is on that and whether you feel the Tour is being treated correctly. What's your take?**

JON RAHM: I'm going to be as blunt as I can. I think the OWGR right now is laughable. Laughable. Laughable. The fact that the RSM doesn't have any of the top 20 in the world has more points than this event where we have seven of the top 20 is laughable. The fact that Wentworth had less points than Napa, having players in the top 10 in the world is laughable.

I understand what they are trying to do with the depth of field but having the best players in the world automatically makes the tournament better. I don't care what their system says. I think they have made a mistake. I think some aspects of it might be beneficial but I think they have devalued the value of the better players.

Like easily, for example, you have the 30 best players of the year should not be punished because it's a smaller field. Depth of field doesn't mean better tournament. I could go on and on. I think they have missed the mark on that stance quite a bit.

**Q. As we're talking about World Rankings and the LIV thing floats around, where do you stand on that, for instance? Is that another glitch in the system?**

JON RAHM: We need to stop giving LIV the publicity. They are not asking for it. That's the first thing I'm going to say.

I think a lot of people are against them having World Ranking points. I'm not necessarily against it but there should be adjustments. If your requirement is to have World Ranking points as 72 holes and a cut, maybe you don't award them 100 percent of the points since they are not fulfilling all of the requirements.

I also believe, it's probably a couple-year process, so they need to respect that as every other tour has. But yeah, I mean, like we say, if there's some requirements and it's only 54 holes and you don't have a cut, maybe you award them, let's say the winner will get 30 or I give them 75 percent of them, I don't know. They do have some incredible players. To say that Dustin wasn't one of the best players this year would be a mistake.

So I think they could be awarded. I just don't know where the math, how we could work it out. I don't know if they necessarily deserve 100 per cent.

**Q. Our playing this first round with a young Scottish guy named Ewen Ferguson won twice this year, first time he's playing here, and you've probably been in this situation before. But when you get a young guy like that and knowing what you've done now in your own career, do you feel these guys should be**

**nervous? Do you go out of your way to engage with them or do you just go out there and have your blinkers on?**

JON RAHM: Nerves are good. It means it matter, right. So I would expect him to be nervous. I was nervous. I'm still nervous when I go to the first tee on Thursday just because it matters, right. You've put a lot of work in.

So I wouldn't try to get away from that. I would say, you're here to do a job and try to win a tournament. So focus on that and utilise that intensity because you can use it to your advantage.

**Q. I met Eugenio quite a few times and he's a big, big fan of yours. What did you think of this entire situation of young athletes just coming out and going through, potentially making more money -- golf as careers. You are a big influence on them. What are your thoughts? And do you think the PGA TOUR has done the right thing by increasing the number of PGA Tour U, the University rankings?**

JON RAHM: None of them asked me directly what I think, so I don't know. I know David a little bit. I've never met Eugenio, right.

All I can say is, I don't blame them. You're in college. I think if I told my dad, hey, dad, I have an opportunity to play for \$10 million, guaranteed, if I say no, I'll probably get smacked in the face, right; if I said let's see mini tour in Latin America, how that's going to work out, or Q-School.

It's an opportunity that wasn't there, and I can't tell you I would have said no. I can't tell you many people would have said no. I mean, it's an incredible opportunity and it's a new platform. With that being said, I do support the PGA TOUR youth program.

As somebody who actually went four years to college and earned my starts, with some help, I earned my starts, I was invited to six events and earned my TOUR card that way. Many pro sports, especially in the US, it's a direct path from college to the professional ranks, right.

I think they need to do more than what they have done. I would have given more starts -- I would have given at least the best two guys in college a full PGA TOUR card including Invitationals, no questions asked.

Because again I'm going to say this one more time: If you put the same player in this position and say you're going to make 10 to 15 million guaranteed the next three years, or you can have some conditional status, a lot of them are still going to pick LIV. So I would say you need more incentive

for that to happen. I haven't read all the policies about it, but from what I've talked to people, I still would have given them.

**Q. About the World Rankings, you said you thought they were laughable. Do you have any concerns what it could do to fields like this and Wentworth, attracting the top names because the ranking points are not there?**

JON RAHM: Listen, it's above my pay grade to know how the math works, and I understand they are -- prioritising is not the word but they are giving certain value to the depth of the field as well and the ranking on the lower parts of the lower.

But would you rather win a tournament when you have the No. 1 player in the world there or because you have the 30th or 6th there? I think it's more valuable if you're betting best players in the world. I think a lot of people would agree and I think it should reflect that.

And if it's not like that, at least the point gap shouldn't be as vastly different as it is right now. Because we are not talking about the best PGA TOUR events in the season where you have multiple, multiple high-ranked players. We are talking about a tournament that didn't even have one player in the top 20. That to me is an issue when you have seven of them here.

I don't know what the fix is, right. I understand what they were trying to do when they changed some things, but I think like I said, they missed the mark.

BRIONY CARLYON: Thank you, Jon, for your time this week and all the best.

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