

U.S. Open Championship 2022

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Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

Jon Rahm

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back. We're thrilled to be joined by our defending champion Jon Rahm. Jon, a year since the victory, coming back here returning the trophy. Just reflect a little bit on your year as U.S. Open champion.

JON RAHM: It's been a wonderful year. It wasn't easy having to ship the trophy a little early and then enjoy the last few weeks, but I obviously understand it's needed.

I've defended before tournaments. Obviously not majors, but usually you go to the same venue, it's something you're familiar with. It's a bit of a weird factor to defend a tournament on a golf course and nobody really has played in almost -- since the Ryder Cup really, right?

It's a little different, but looking forward to it, you know.

THE MODERATOR: Have you had a chance to play a practice round yet?

JON RAHM: I played the front nine yesterday. I think it's a wonderful course. I like to think of myself as a bit of a historian of the game, and to come to a place like this where the whole Francis Ouimet world happened, it's very unique. Very unique.

I love to hear the stories and the nuances about the golf course like this. Especially the clubhouse. Clubhouse like this, right? I've never gone to a golf course where there's a town before you see the course. It's very unique. Really looking forward to seeing the back nine.

It's a beautiful design. I always love coming to places and courses that were designed so long ago because even though they add tee boxes, the uniqueness of the architecture from back then still stands.

I think a big testament of what I saw are the 3rd and 4th hole where it's one long fairway connected but you have the rocks in between. It's very, very cool. I'm looking forward to see the rest of the course.

Q. Jon, from the front nine that you saw, what were some of the challenges you discovered on the course?

JON RAHM: I knew it coming in, but it's not the biggest greens out there, right? And the ones that have a healthy size don't play like it, like the par-3 6th. It's a bigger green, but quite a bit of slopes.

You can easily end up off of it even though on paper it is big. I think that's the biggest challenge.

I wouldn't say they're the narrowest fairways we've played on a U.S. Open, but second shots into the green are going to be important.

The rough around the greens is about as healthy as I've seen in a while, so certainly is going to be obviously key in a U.S. Open, but especially with smaller greens you're going to need to use it quite a bit.

Q. What will you lean on to kind of go about that?

JON RAHM: It's a U.S. Open. You need everything. You need to drive well, hit your irons well, chip well, and putt well and be mentally sane for four days.

You can't hide, period. I think that your biggest asset is mental strength out here, and that's what you need.

You are going to have a lot of holes where things are going to go wrong, but I just have to know going into it and accept certain things that happen.

Obviously, as every U.S. Open, par is a good score.

Q. With the Masters and PGA behind you now and here as a defending champ, what does this weekend feel like? Is there pressure? Is it go out and play golf like you said? What does it feel like for you?

JON RAHM: There's no extra pressure, no. I want to do it again. It's pretty much the same as it's always been.

With the different factor being that I've already won a major, so makes it, obviously, I feel like a lot of the pressure I used to put on myself is not really there. I feel like I can enjoy it a little bit more and know that you don't

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need to do anything special to get it done.

It's easy to think you need to be playing perfect golf, and I remember watching my highlights of Sunday last year, and I thought I played one of the best rounds of my life, and I kept thinking, I cannot believe how many fairway bunkers I hit that day, how many greens I missed, and how many putts I missed.

You know, it's golf, and that's how it is. You truly don't have to play perfect, and that's I think the best lesson I can take from that.

Q. Which golf club gets you into the most trouble, and which one gets you out of the most trouble?

JON RAHM: (Laughing) I think that can change every single day. I think the golf club -- not only for me, but for everybody, the one that can save a round no matter how bad you hit is the putter. Short game in general.

My swing coach back in Spain, Eduardo, used to say that the short game is like the hospital; when your long game is sick, the hospital usually nurses you back to health, and that's what he used to tell me.

I've taken that to heart. I would always say to every junior player I find, make sure your short game is good before you develop your long game. I think that's very, very important, developing your feel.

I think any club can get you in a lot of trouble, but if you overuse the driver, you can get in some issues. At the same time nowadays, it looks like the golf game is developing using more driver, right, so I really can't tell you.

If it's a good day, it's really not going to get you in trouble. Short game and putting is always going to get you out of it.

Q. Who are you rooting for, the Celtics or the Warriors?

JON RAHM: (Laughing) I think I have to be careful what I say in Boston about that.

It's hard now after they're down 3-2 and knowing that Game 7 is in Oracle Arena. Especially knowing that the Warriors won and Steph having an off day, it's just hard to think that the Celtics can do it two in a row and one being away.

I would love to see the Celtics win. I actually -- going on a vacation, I went to Cabo with my family, and when we landed, Jayson Tatum's family was there. He was practicing. He was training for the season, but I think it

was his father-in-law and part of his family was there.

We ended up FaceTiming for a little bit, so I would love to see him win, but I just like to see good basketball and hope the best team wins.

Q. How are you planning to take on 5?

JON RAHM: Oh, 5? Oh, man. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q. The driver can get you into trouble there, and --

JON RAHM: See, that hole is reachable unless the wind is really, really hurting. It's not like it's the best layup in the world, meaning your comfortable yardage might leave you in a severe upslope with the ball below your feet to a small green and wind. That's not always the easiest shot to control.

I feel like there's a couple of different areas to lay up. If you go over the first set of bunkers on the right, it's actually quite wide or pretty much about as wide as the fairway gets in the hole, so you can't hit a 5-wood or a 3-wood there and then leave yourself a 40-, 50-yard pitch shot.

Those first bunkers of the second set that are 20, 30 yards short of the green are not the worst because you can hit it on the green from there.

So I think you're probably going to see me try to hit over those bunkers in the right pretty much every time. If the wind conditions allow, most likely I'll go for the green because if you can get close, you should most likely be able to put it on the green.

From there if you are on the green, it's so small, you are pretty much looking at a birdie option, right? But again, a wayward tee shot can get you in a lot of trouble. Whatever you do, you just have to do it properly.

Q. Just for what's going on in golf right now and LIV. There's been a lot of thoughts. Rory was talking earlier about voicing his opinion on the players that have gone, the players that have stayed and just the state of the tour. I'm curious where your thoughts are for you personally and also broadly in terms of where you see golf -- where you see golf right now and where it's going.

JON RAHM: It's a bit of a vague question within what's going on. If you can be more specific, it would be easier. There's so much that's been going on, that I don't want to go on for 35 minutes.

Q. For you is that something you have thought about



in terms of an alternate league and how would you weigh the value of what the PGA TOUR has done versus what other players are going to do?

JON RAHM: I almost feel -- I feel for Jay Monahan. If you see his time as a commissioner, he had to deal with COVID and now this. I don't know if he signed up for all this or not.

I consider the PGA TOUR has done an amazing job giving us the best platform for us to perform. I do see the appeal that other people see towards the LIV Golf. I do see some of the -- I'll put this delicately -- points or arguments they can make towards why they prefer it.

To be honest, part of the format is not really appealing to me. Shotgun three days to me is not a golf tournament, no cut. It's that simple.

I want to play against the best in the world in a format that's been going on for hundreds of years. That's what I want to see.

Yeah, money is great, but when Kelley and I -- this first thing happened, we started talking about it, and we're like, will our lifestyle change if I got \$400 million? No, it will not change one bit.

Truth be told, I could retire right now with what I've made and live a very happy life and not play golf again. So I've never really played the game of golf for monetary reasons. I play for the love of the game, and I want to play against the best in the world.

I've always been interested in history and legacy, and right now the PGA TOUR has that.

There's meaning when you win the Memorial Championship. There's meaning when you win Arnold Palmer's event at Bay Hill. There's a meaning when you win, LA, Torrey, some of the historic venues. That to me matters a lot, right.

After winning this past U.S. Open, only me and Tiger have won at Torrey Pines, and it's a golf course that we like, making putts on the 18th hole. That's a memory I'm going to have forever that not many people can say.

My heart is with the PGA TOUR. That's all I can say.

It's not my business or my character to judge anybody who thinks otherwise. For a lot of people, I'm not going to lie, those next three, four years are worth basically their retirement plan they're giving them. It's a very nice compensation to then retire and sail off into the sunset. If

that's what you want, that's fine.

Q. Just as a quick follow-up. Obviously, your fellow countryman Sergio is playing for them.

JON RAHM: Yeah.

Q. What have the conversations been like with him in terms of his decision-making process?

JON RAHM: Zero. Like I said, not my business. He has given golf, European Tour and the PGA TOUR 20, 25 years of his life. If his decision is to go play and play less events and enjoy, it's his decision.

It's not my job to judge. That's all I can say. I don't know what's going to happen. I think the one thing that keeps coming to me out of all this and what can happen, I hope the Ryder Cup doesn't suffer.

I think the Ryder Cup is the biggest attraction the game of golf has to bring new people in, and I have such a good time with him on the golf course and on the previous one in Paris. I hope we don't lose the essence and the aspect that the Ryder Cup is.

That's one of my biggest concerns, to be honest. It's an event we all play for free, and it's one of our favorite weeks, win or lose. I think that says a lot about the game and where I wish it would be at.

Q. What are your specific concerns when it comes to the Ryder Cup being affected by this?

JON RAHM: Well, are they going to be able to play Ryder Cup or not, the players that went? In my mind, Sergio, even if he is not breaking 90, he's a no-brainer pick, right? So what's going to happen?

You have quite a few young Americans. Bryson went, somebody that's probably going to be on the team in the future. Phil's captaincy is probably in question now, where the PGA stands on all of this.

We don't know the European side of things yet. I have no idea what's going on or what's going on with the European Tour. In a worst-case scenario, I don't know what's going to happen.

How many people may not be able to be around the Ryder Cup and things like that. Like I said, I think a week like that is a true essence of the game. That's where we all love to play.

Q. Are you surprised that LIV has kind of gotten this



far, and then I guess the second part to this question is, do you feel maybe that the cloud is less now that they've had a tournament in the books? The cloud is less this week than it was the last few months, or is it more?

JON RAHM: I'm not surprised. I mean, hundreds of millions of dollars are a pretty good damn reason for people to decide and go, and I see a lot of comments that's regarding it, but the high majority of the population, if they offered you 100 million or more for the next four years, a lot of people would go, right?

I'm not surprised at the amount of players that went. I don't know about the cloud. I think the events are spaced out just enough to where when the next one comes, we're going on have the same talk all over again, right?

I did watch a bit of the broadcast, and to me the only thing they had to talk about is the fact that if Charl Schwartzel won he was going to make \$4.7 million, right?

When I hear stories of Seve and great players in the past, yes, obviously, financial stability is amazing, but when they talk about majors or when Jack talks about the U.S. Open and winning the U.S. Open and winning the Open, it's more than just the money.

Prizes will always go up, and I consider I make plenty of money doing what I do, obviously. Nobody is talking about winning that event in London with the essence that some other events have, and that to me is what's attractive, being able to consider yourself champion of this with a history that comes with it.

I don't know. We'll see. I really can't tell you.

Like I've said all along, I'm about as far away from this whole dynamic as can be. I go about my business. My job is to hit a golf ball to the hole as quick as I can, and that's about it. That's where I stay. Can't really say much else on that.

Q. Jon, if more players go to this tour, if more good players are tempted by this money, what is the tipping point at which the PGA TOUR really is negatively impacted?

JON RAHM: I have no idea. I really don't know. I'm sure that's something that Jay and Andy Pazder are thinking about, and I'm assuming there will be changes in the future that would probably try to prevent that from happening, but I don't know.

I think that the one thing we've got to realize is LIV Golf is a

48-player tour. What about the other hundreds of players that want to make it? They don't really have a path to get there.

You get signed or not, but you need some type of a name to get there, right? What about the other 150 players that are worthy probably, have a lot of talent, but haven't shown it yet? They all need a platform.

Again, PGA TOUR has been that platform forever. It's all I can say. One of the reasons why I made it on tour so easily or quickly is because the PGA TOUR had faith in me, and I was given seven starts as an amateur before I even turned pro. Seven. I played, I believe, five events as an amateur and gained a ton of experience.

I don't know if you can do that when they're limited to 48 players. That's one of the things. I don't know what's going to happen, but it's more -- let's say the people out of the elite small number, what's going on with them? They all need a platform. Again, PGA TOUR is the best platform.

Q. What was the best part of being U.S. Open champion from the last year that you didn't realize until you were champion?

JON RAHM: I'm pretty sure I realized it right away. (Laughing.) Like I've said before, I think getting the first major was a big weight off my shoulders. I think the surprise is I didn't expect it to be that.

Right away when everything happened and I was done with it, with all the media obligations, it was just I felt so tired and just could just take a breath and sigh of relief from what had happened. Obviously, the euphoria came afterwards, but I didn't realize my first reaction would be that.

Q. You've spoken about the kind of golfing concerns you have with the whole LIV setup. I just wonder, do you have any concerns over the source of their funding as well, i.e. Saudi Arabia?

JON RAHM: I'm not going to get into politics. I see that's a narrative a lot of people are trying to go towards. I'm not going to get into it. They're professional golfers. They're not politicians. They're just trying to improve their life and their future wherever they may be. I'm not going to comment on that.

Q. Just a quick question about playing in New England. What kind of atmosphere do you expect from fans? You kind of hinted at it.



JON RAHM: I've seen a little bit of it already.

Q. Yeah, right.

JON RAHM: Usually at TPC Boston we didn't get the crowds we're going to get this week. So from the little bit we had there, it's going to be loud, and it's going to be a lot of fun.

Anytime we come to the Northeast it's very unique. People love sports. There hasn't been a U.S. Open here in a very long time, so they're hungry for it, and you can tell.

They want to show the world, and you could see it last week in Canada, and it almost feels like with what's going on in the world of golf, they almost want to show their presence even more.

I don't know exactly what to expect, but I'm really looking forward to it. I know it's going to be fun, and the U.S. Open crowd is always about as energetic as you can get. It's going to be really, really fun.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, thanks for your time. Good luck this week.

JON RAHM: Thank you.

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