

The 149th Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 13 July 2021

Jon Rahm



OLIVIA McMILLAN: Jon Rahm, thank you so much for joining us today. Welcome to the 149th Open here at Royal St. George's. Have you played the course yet? Can you give us your first impressions?

JON RAHM: I haven't played this week yet. We came in yesterday morning and then had to get tested and wait quite a while. So I didn't want to come in later when it was raining.

I have played here before. I think I played in 2009. The course hasn't changed. I've changed quite a bit. It'll be a different experience. We played the British Boys over here, and that was my first-ever tournament I believe in links golf, so some fond memories from the area.

I'm excited to see it this week. I've heard nothing but great things, and really excited.

Q. How would you sum up the week at the Scottish Open, because at times you played some fantastic golf but didn't quite get over the line?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I mean, I feel like I managed pretty well. Thinking about it, you know, back about the tournament, there was a couple strategy mistakes that cost me a couple shots, but the main problem was on the greens. Which is expected, right? When you change from greens that are really fast going to slower greens it can be a little bit difficult and sometimes you start thinking too much instead of just acting.

Overall it was a good week. Not that I expected, but I was prepared to play a lot worse than what I did, so I'm happy that I started playing that well and got a really good form coming into this week.

Q. It seems like we see so many guys with so many swing coaches and such big teams out here. You seem to do things a little bit differently. Are you working with anyone swing-wise, and how do you go about working on stuff mechanically?

JON RAHM: Well, I have a team, as well. Just the way I think about it, you do the work at home and then when you come to a tournament it's time to perform. If you're searching for a swing during a major championship week, it's usually a red flag

for me. That's just the way I choose to do things.

With that said, my swing coach, his name is Dave Phillips, TPI. He is the I been seeing for the last eight years or so. And it's also a little bit different for me because I haven't actively tried to change my swing in over 10 years.

I have the swing I have, and I've gotten more mobile and stronger in some parts of my swing so that might slightly change it, but I have certain unique parts and certain unique, let's say, physical limitations that let me swing the way I swing, and I don't deviate from that.

I've been able to slowly improve my game with what I have and learn how to hit different shots without having to change my swing keys, and I think that is one of the keys to why I'm consistent. I don't change it. I play with what I have and try to improve from what I have.

Q. As someone who performed so well in links conditions, how special is it returning to the Open after it was cancelled last year, and with 32,000 people per day, biggest crowd we've had since golf returned, how excited are you for big crowds?

JON RAHM: Very excited. We've missed it. We've missed it. To be fair, I did not expect this tournament to be the first one we're going to have full crowds, just because of the lockdown and limitations and all.

But excited. Especially on a course with such history as this one. It's known to be a difficult links golf course, so I'm hoping it plays like that, and I'm looking forward to the challenge.

It's always a week I really cherish, I really enjoy. Like I said earlier, this was my first links golf experience, so it's a little bit of nostalgia in there, too, so I'm excited about it.

Q. How different does it feel coming to a major as a major champion? Does it feel any different? And also the question about sort of joining the elite gang of people who could win the U.S. Open and The Open Championship in the same year.

JON RAHM: Yeah, I'm usually pretty good in golf history. I know Tiger has done it. Might have been maybe Ben Hogan has done it, too, and not many more. I'm assuming Jack. Jack is



always in all of those lists. It would be pretty incredible to win both Opens in one year. It would be amazing.

Now, you do have a sense of -- at least I did have a sense of relief after winning the first major. I felt like for the better part of five years, all I heard is major, major, major just because I was playing good golf, as if it was easy to win a major championship.

But the fact that you are expected to win one means nothing, but you're playing good golf, so a bit of relief in that sense, but it doesn't really change. There's still the next one to win, so I still come with the same level of excitement obviously and willingness to win.

More focused on would be pretty incredible to be able to win The Open. Nobody after Seve has been able to do it, so to give Spain that, that would be pretty unique, as well.

Q. You mentioned your debut on links golf here. You've obviously had success at the Irish Open. You played well last week. Has your opinion of links golf changed since that first maybe experience?

JON RAHM: No, I've loved it every time. Mainly because you truly have to play your own game and learn from the golf course. You have a little bit more variety of golf. It's the unique part about it. It's the ever-changing, let's say, wind, the weather conditions, the ever-changing state of the golf course.

It's what makes it such a great week, and every time you come to the UK. It's something I've always enjoyed. There's always a little bit of luck involved in what part of the draw you are on, depending on the weather you get, and that's part of golf.

Again, if anything, if it changes, it changes for the better. I feel like I love it more and more every time.

Q. You've talked about your physical limitations which affect your swing. I think a lot of people would like to know what they are and maybe wish they had these physical limitations.

JON RAHM: I'm going to say I've been pro for five years. I've mentioned this before. This is the first time I'm getting this question because I'm tired of hearing that the reason why I have a short swing is that I have tight hips or other things.

If you know anything about golf, that is the stupidest thing to say. So for people that don't know, I was born with a club foot on my right leg, which means for anybody that's sensitive about that, my right leg up to the ankle was straight, my foot was 90 degrees turned inside and basically upside down.

So when I was born, they basically relocated, pretty much

broke every bone in the ankle and I was casted within 20 minutes of being born from the knee down.

I think every week I had to go back to the hospital to get recasted, so from knee down my leg didn't grow at the same rate. So I have very limited ankle mobility in my right leg. It's a centimeter and a half shorter, as well.

So what I mean by limitations is I didn't take a full swing because my right ankle doesn't have the mobility or stability to take it. So I learned at a very young age that I'm going to be more efficient at creating power and be consistent from a short swing.

If I take a full to parallel, yeah, it might create more speed, but I have no stability. My ankle just can't take it.

Now, also, and this is where I've learned doing many TPI tests, my wrists don't have much mobility this way, but I'm hypermobile this way. That's why I also naturally turn to bow my wrist to create power in every single sport I do.

So that's why my swing, I bow my wrist and that's how I hit it. It's little things that I think a lot of people can learn. Let your body dictate how you can swing. Simple as that. That's why Dave has been such a great addition to me when I started going to TPI with the Spanish Golf Federation, because they can teach me how my body moves and what I can -- not what I can or cannot do, what I'm going to be more efficient at doing.

The main thing is my right foot. It's just that ankle does not move much.

Q. I bet you often think how efficient a short swing is.

JON RAHM: I mean, it's efficient for me, right?

Q. Very efficient.

JON RAHM: Yeah. It's what works for me. I think it's the biggest lesson I can give any young player. Don't try to copy me. Don't try to copy any swing out there. Just swing your swing. Do what you can do. That's the best thing for yourself.

I used to not be a good ball striker. Terrible. And slowly, once I started learning in college, I became a good ball striker. Learn from your body. Your body is going to tell you what it can and can't do. Some things you can improve, some things you can't. In my case, the right ankle is not going to move any more than it can right now, so that's the beauty of that.

Q. Just wondering with the Olympics coming up, obviously a number of top players have decided not to play. You have stated that you are very thrilled to play in the Olympics. Can you say a little bit about why you chose to play in the

Olympics and why you think that many people opted out of it?

JON RAHM: I mean, I can't speak for other people, so I don't know why they're opting out of it. You'd have to ask them. I'm not going to speak for them.

In my case, I've been really fortunate enough to represent Spain at every level as an amateur since I was 13 years old. I've been able to win many team events representing Spain worldwide. Once you turn professional you don't really get that chance. You get a little bit of the Ryder Cup, but it's not the same thing as the Olympics or a World Cup maybe.

To be able to have that chance as a pro, something that up until four or five years ago was not even a possibility, to me it was something I would never doubt. You get the chance to call yourself an Olympian, which is only a very select group of people in history that can call themselves that, and if you were to get a medal, especially a gold medal, you're even more of a select group, right? Especially in golf -- I mean, last time was early in the 1900s when golf was in the Olympics, up until Justin Rose, right? In recent memory you would be the second one with a gold medal, which to me, it's very, very enticing.

So yeah, even though I can't go watch other sporting events and support my countrymen and my friends, we're all going to be there, and I would say in spirit not physically. But to me it's a great opportunity, so it would be a great, great moment for me if I could deliver a gold medal for Spain.

Q. I'm just wondering, with let's say the physiology, do you think links courses suit your game better than let's say parkland courses, or have you kind of got a happy medium between the two?

JON RAHM: Well, I grew up it was more parkland. I grew up on traditional golf in Spain, so I'm used to playing golf with trees in the way. That's how I grew up.

But I think Jack Nicklaus said it best: A lot of times you hear that the course needs to adjust to your game, and I'm one of those who believes that the player needs to adjust to the golf course. So no matter what it is, I'm going to try to adjust, so you do whatever needs to be done to do that.

I like to think I'm a very complete player, that my game travels everywhere where I go. That's probably why. That's probably because of the mindset I have.

I do change my game quite a bit based on where I'm playing.

Q. There's been a lot of talk since Sunday about England football team, and the word "failure" has been mentioned because they didn't win, runners-up and so on. You have

won, and you've also finished second. What is your view about finishing second?

JON RAHM: Well, we're talking about very different things because in golf you're going to lose a lot more than you win. When you're not winning, you still need to get the positive out of it. A second place is not necessarily a bad thing. Depends on how it happens.

It's a little different because it's not a one-on-one competition, so I don't think it's fair to compare it.

Now, it's not easy to win a Euro Cup or World Cup or anything as a team, especially when you don't have that much time to prepare. England has such a young team. Such a young team. I feel like some of them need a little bit of time. Even if they've accomplished a lot with their clubs, playing together is a little bit different.

I feel like when you keep mentioning that it's been 55 years since they've won anything, the amount of pressure you're putting on 19-, 20-year olds, it's a bit extreme, apart from what they already feel themselves. I feel for them because they played wonderful the whole tournament. They played great, and they had a really good chance to win. I just hope they can get past it soon, and two years you have a World Cup.

Like I said, it all depends. Did I have a six-shot lead and lose it or was I 10 shots back, shot 9-under and finish second? There's a big difference; that's the thing. It all depends. If you're in contention and you don't get it done, it's not necessarily a failure. You've got to see what happens and you can learn from it. There's always moments.

If somebody came in and finished with five straight birdies and they won, you don't necessarily lose it, they won it.

It all depends on the situation and how it happened. That's why I'm thinking and saying it's not fair to compare it, because in golf there's so many situations. It all depends on the scenario.

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