

# The 150th Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 12 July 2022

**Jon Rahm**



OLIVIA MCMILLAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to welcome Jon Rahm to the media centre here at The 150th Open. Could you reflect on what it means to be playing The 150th Open here at St Andrews this week?

JON RAHM: It's hard to put it into words, truly. I love this game so much, and I love the history of it so much. And to be part of this edition and to have a chance to possibly win it, with everything that comes with it and how great of a venue this is, it's very unique.

I've said it in interviews, in my opinion, this is truly the pinnacle of golf. I don't think it gets any better than winning at St Andrews. No offense to any other tournament in the world. It's the oldest championship on the oldest course and where it all started. Especially when you get into the setup we have this week, nice and firm and rolling and tricked out as it can be, and it's a really fun one. I'm looking forward to it.

## **Q. How are your preparations going?**

JON RAHM: Great. Coming over from the Scottish Open, practised a little bit yesterday afternoon. I'm glad that we have the wind today, today and Tuesday before we start the tournament, because that way you can truly see how the golf course, how much of a test it can be and how different holes play.

So I'm hoping we get a couple of different wind directions today or tomorrow. If not, it is what it is. And looking forward to it looking to have some fun today. Lucky enough to be in a pretty decent group with two Open champions. Hopefully I'll learn as much as I can from them today.

## **Q. Jon, you played the Dunhill in 2019. Despite it played very different what were the takeaways from obviously somebody who is a student of the game from that experience and seeing The Old Course at St Andrews for the first time?**

JON RAHM: I didn't have my best swing that day, and usually when I'm swinging badly, I'm missing right. The front nine was left-to-right wind like today, but it was into. I think I hit it into every single right-hand bunker on the front nine that I could. Don't hit it right. That's the one thing I learned.

You can see, right, it's based on the wind. Whatever wind conditions you get and whatever wind direction you get can change this golf course drastically. You have to know when to dial it back, when to be aggressive, and what holes you have to take the right line on and what holes you can bail out left of the tee.

You can go left all day, but for certain pin locations and certain winds, you're really going to truly short-side yourself. So you have to take your chances at the right time.

So again, it's the beautiful aspect of this course. It lets you play your game. But there's some holes where you're going to have to take a risk.

## **Q. Is there anything specific in the last couple of days, given the way the conditions are set up right now, that you've been working on that's different from any preparation you might have had at this course previously?**

JON RAHM: Not really. The time I've played here before, it was soft. And I remember the moment the first time I played in competition was into the wind, I hit driver and 9-iron. Highly doubt that's going to happen today.

So I think a lot of experience comes from playing here enough, but I don't think you ever see it in these conditions. So even when people have played in the past, you're hitting different shots into the tee. The greens are reacting different. It's still a learning process when it's playing this firm. I think, if anything, it almost evens out the field a little more.

## **Q. Are you doing anything different this week?**

JON RAHM: No. Luckily, there's a reason why we played last week, being so close, is because the course the last few days played similar to what this course is going to play. So just need to be in complete command of your golf ball out here, especially when it gets firm. Those margins get a little bit narrower. And no surprise why Tiger has played so good here. The approach into the green has been really precise otherwise you see yourself in some difficult spots.

If there's anything that I'll be doing specially, it will be lag putting. You can hit greens and you can be really far away from it, so making sure your touch is there is very important. I've



seen enough interviews and enough highlights to see, if you can avoid three-putts here, you'll be putting from easily 40 yards away. If you can avoid three-putts it's going to be a huge bonus.

**Q. You mentioned that St Andrews, you feel this is the pinnacle of golf. Why do you think that is? When you compare with an Augusta or Pebble Beach or some of the other courses, what is it about this place that makes it the pinnacle for you?**

JON RAHM: History. It's as simple as that. History. I wouldn't say there's anything with the golf course itself, which is plenty special. I mean, I don't think there's many other courses where there's only five individual greens and all the shared fairways and all these blind spots and all these many different ways of playing it. It's just the history of the game and how much it means.

I know The Open first started in Prestwick, but The R&A Club has been here, being part of the Scottish heritage that it is right now. The area on the 18th green, 1st tee, it's as unique as it gets.

I've heard multiple champions say it. I think it was Jack and Tiger both accomplished it. You can't really call yourself a great player unless you win The Open at St Andrews, which is a very selective group to say. I think it's a bit of an exaggeration, but I do know what they mean.

And it can almost put your career to another level just because how great of a venue this one is. Mainly history. That's what I would say.

**Q. What are you thinking on the 17th tee? And from tee to green, how challenging and unique is that hole?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, I mean, very hard. Very, very hard. Again, wind direction plays a huge role. Today it will be into off the right. You'll have to start it either over the roof of the hotel or somehow cut it into the wind and try to find the fairway and have a really long iron coming into a very narrow green.

So it's a proper championship hole coming down the stretch. 16 is not easy. 17 is not easy. 18 obviously not as hard as it could be, not that it's the easiest. Obviously under pressure any hole can be hard, but 17 is a proper test for somebody that has a one-shot lead. If you can make par on that hole, it definitely feels like a birdie anytime. Just difficult. Just difficult.

I think it was Lee Trevino telling me yesterday how this golf course is meant to play clockwise. So you were meant to play from the 1st tee to the 17th green. And that almost made sense, because that way the green would be uphill, the bunker will be on the right, it's almost easier to access, because it's definitely a really tricky entrance to the green, from the fairway we play at

and then the green from there it's all downhill.

A little bit of interesting history. I don't know if it's true. I don't know if he made it up or not, but it actually makes sense. Just a curious fact that he told me about it. But it's a proper championship hole.

**Q. What do you think is your biggest takeaway from Brookline? What was your biggest learning moment?**

JON RAHM: You don't need to play perfect to win a championship. I was fighting my swing all week. I still gave myself a chance. I think that's the biggest takeaway.

If it wasn't something I already knew, it's something that is known outright. You have to post a score and find a way to do it. It's simple. I know that's the game of golf. Truly the whole week I was not comfortable, fighting my swing and trying to put the ball in play, which ended up working out for the most part.

**Q. Secondly, I'm guessing this is your fourth or fifth full season of a major schedule. Have you found at all that when you get to the last one of the year, does it put any more emphasis on it for you? Are you aware of it? Is there any more urgency?**

JON RAHM: No. I think it's pretty equal throughout. To be honest, because my first few years I still played the PGA after The Open, sometimes when I get to The Open I don't feel like it's the last one. I don't know how long it will get to set in.

But I wouldn't want to go to the first tee on Thursday, Thursday on with the urge of having to win because it's the last one. Not really. It's just being the tournament it is, it's a big enough deal.

**Q. You mentioned speaking to Lee Trevino and I know you said about J.T. getting a dissertation off Tiger. Have you had any more luck picking the brains of these guys in recent weeks?**

JON RAHM: I've tried to. I tried to ask Lee, but the game of golf has changed quite a bit. And the golf balls we play and the materials we play have changed a little bit.

So he can give me some pointers what he did but it's not always transferrable to what we do now. But he told me a few things that were very interesting, but nothing special.

**Q. Part of the specialness of this week obviously is being back here in St Andrews and being in the town and whatnot. Do you get an opportunity at all to go into town, to experience any of the things outside of the golf course, if you will, on a week like this?**

JON RAHM: No. There's too many people. When you walk around with logos on your shirt you're pretty recognizable already. So I wish I could. There's a couple of stores -- bookstores, golf history books -- that I would love to go into and possibly buy and purchase a few. But we drove by it yesterday and there were so many people, I was not going to deal with that.

I would love to be able to go. Hopefully I can come back at some point and go in and at least see it. But I don't think I'm going to this week. We did go to this one Indian restaurant, which I forget the name of it, the last two nights, just unbelievable. But that's as far as I've ventured into the town.

**Q. You clearly love the history of this place. Have you got any favourite moments that you can share that you particularly like about being here?**

JON RAHM: I mean, I don't want to go with the obvious, but '84 was very special for Spanish people. I'm going to go with that. That image of Seve celebrating, it's an iconic image not only for us but for the world of golf. So I would say '84.

OLIVIA MCMILLAN: Thank you very much, Jon.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports