

The 151st Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 18 July 2023

Jon Rahm



MIKE WOODCOCK: We'll make a start. Very pleased to welcome the 2023 Masters champion Jon Rahm to the interview room. Jon, you began obviously this major championship season by donning the green jacket. How much would it mean to you to finish it by lifting the Claret Jug?

JON RAHM: It would be obviously an incredible feeling. There's many reasons I could give you for that. To be the first one to win an Open since Seve for Spain would be quite special. It's amazing to me that some of the great golfers we've had haven't been able to do it, and they've been close. It would be a true honour to get there, to get to three majors, to be the second on the Spanish list.

And then to be able to win at this golf course, knowing the history of the players that have won here in the last few times we've been, it would be a great championship.

No matter who wins, it's going to be a great championship.

I'm excited to get it going, and it would be absolutely amazing to be sitting back here on Sunday.

Q. How have you been feeling after this break? Did you work on anything specifically in your game, or was it more to recharge mentally? Also if you could talk a little bit about the 17th hole, whether it's fair, not fair; how do you see it?

JON RAHM: Those are two very different questions.

It wasn't any work specifically on one thing. When we did the schedule early in the year we did purposefully add this three-week break because we knew it was going to be a lot going into this, and then afterwards we have the Playoffs, we still have Wentworth, Ryder Cup, Spanish Open.

There's a lot of golf to play after this. Kind of needed to have a little bit of time to rest. We all need it. And because of the schedule we had this year I haven't been able to have as much as I would have liked.

That was the main reason. It was nice to be at home and be dad for a change without having to think of golf for a few weeks.

And 17, well, I see what they tried to do. The old 15, par-3, was

the complete opposite of the hole. You have a short downhill hole most likely downwind with basically all the edges sloping towards the centre of the green. I thought it was a good hole. You could make a birdie, and if you miss the green, a bogey was lurking.

This time they made a really difficult turtle shell par-3. If you hit a good shot, put it on the green, you have a clear look at birdie. If you miss the green, you have a clear look at bogey. It's hard to say anything is fair or unfair because it's so short.

I would say if it is it's fair, because it's unfair to everybody. Like it's golf, and it's life. Simple as that.

We all have to play the same holes. If you hit a good shot, you'll definitely most likely have a birdie chance. If not, you'll deal with it. I get you're going for that on a championship Sunday. You have a one-shot lead, that hole can be pivotal.

Q. Off the beaten path, I know you're concentrated on your own thing, but Rory has played so well over a number of years, and we're going on 10 years without a major for him. I'm wondering if you've gone through a period where you almost want something too much? He's gotten so close obviously and he's trying to find that path back.

JON RAHM: I don't know. As long as it's a good thing. I don't know if you can want something too much.

I can't speak for him. I can't speak for him. He's obviously a tremendously talented player and he's put himself in position and it hasn't happened yet. I can't say what goes through his mind, obviously.

Undoubtedly he wants it. He wants to get to five. Not many players have gotten to five. He still has a lot of years to play ahead of him, so I know he wants to keep adding to that tally. I wouldn't know what else to say.

I'm hoping he does it. I'm pretty sure he will get that number five at some point.

Q. To clarify on No. 17, are you saying you think the 17th is unfair as a hole?

JON RAHM: No, I said it's fair, because if it's unfair, it's unfair



to everybody, so it's the same for all of us. It can't be unfair. It's the same for all of us.

It's way more difficult than it was before.

Q. With apologies, I have two really, really different questions, so bear with me. We haven't seen you in a couple months, and Jay Monahan is back to work. Has your opinion of him changed in the last six months, and if so, how?

JON RAHM: My opinion of him? Well, there's been obviously big changes for all of us. First, I would like to say I did get a text from him but I haven't been able to speak to him. I hope whatever he had wasn't too serious, and I hope him and his family are doing good and his health has gone back to normal.

I wouldn't say it's changed. Jay has behaved so professionally and so well with me and my family. I've seen him stop to talk to my dad and my mom at a few tournaments now, and he's been really good to my family. In that sense, he's a really good man. That's all I can say.

Now, as it comes to what he's been doing for us and the PGA TOUR, I think he's done a fantastic job. I would say it was unexpected what happened. I think what the management of the PGA TOUR, the turn they took without us knowing was very unexpected, but I still think he's been doing a great job. And right now after that happened, I only think it's fair to give them the right time to work things out.

I still think they have the best interest of the players at heart. All we have right now, it's a framework agreement. It's an agreement to have an agreement. We really don't have anything right now to be able to say or judge what they've done. That's all I can say.

Q. Has he lost your trust?

JON RAHM: My trust? No. Again, he still has all this time to work this agreement to basically prove that this was the right decision. No, as of right now, no.

Q. If you don't mind a golf question, there's a number of players, whether it's Spieth, and you could throw Rory in there, Harrington, who won multiple majors quickly and then it's been a while. Why do you think that is?

JON RAHM: I have no idea.

Q. What would be your guess?

JON RAHM: I have no idea. Don't throw me in there. It's a question for them and other people who have done it. I don't know. I really don't know.

Q. Should I go back to Monahan?

JON RAHM: I don't think he knows that, either. (Laughter.)

This would all be just complete guesswork. I could be very far off.

It's hard to say. I think what those three players were able to do and be able to win -- Jordan won three in a span of, what was it, two, three years; Padraig won three in two years; Rory did it in two years, won four in two years.

It's incredibly difficult to do, and I can understand how when you get on a roll like that and win one, next time you're in position you win another, well, it's only fair to believe that the next one you're going to be ready to handle the moment, as well.

As to why it hasn't happened again, I really wouldn't be able to give you anything, to be fair.

I've heard the stories in the past of people that change their swing, but I don't think that's the case of any of those people. So I don't know.

Q. It's been quite a disrupted sporting summer in the UK. There's been a series of protests by a groups like Just Stop Oil, who are environmental activists. You might have seen their orange branding at the cricket, at the tennis, at the horse racing. They come on to the field of play and disrupt the sport. It seems kind of inevitable that something like that will at least be attempted here and might well happen. I wonder if you as players have been told or warned not to interfere, and if someone runs on to a hole that you're playing and glues themselves to a flag, would you be tempted to try and intervene or stop that? Would you be able to keep your concentration during it?

JON RAHM: Well, I don't know. I do have a reputation, so I hope they don't catch me on a bad hole. (Laughter.)

I really don't know. I've seen a couple of those things. I know they're going for an impact. I saw a couple of them intervening in Wimbledon, and obviously this looks like it could be a perfect spot.

But we have nothing to do with it.

Q. Just organisers haven't told you as players not to get involved or --

JON RAHM: I haven't seen anything, no. You don't want to disrupt play, which they're trying, so if it happens where I'm at, I'm obviously going to try to clean up as quickly as possible so we can resume play. That's all I can say.

Being a golf course in a bigger area they might have more room to run around and do what they need to do, but what I can assure you is you don't want to get hit by a golf ball. Whether it's on purpose or even by accident, you don't want to be caught in the middle of that.

We haven't been told. At least I haven't. We might start hearing it tomorrow or even on Thursday morning. I wouldn't know.

Q. You mentioned reputation briefly there; how much is strategy and keeping your cool and staying focused with links golf and the odd inevitable setback, how vital might that be for you to maybe triumph Sunday night?

JON RAHM: Links golf, a lot of it is going to be dictated by the weather, right, on what you can or cannot do on the golf course, especially on a golf course like this.

The last two Opens, the scores have been relatively low. We don't have 10 as a par-5, so I think both Rory and Tiger would have been around 12-under if you changed that a little bit. You still have to go make some birdies.

It's just being able to pick your spots and play your best golf. It's always in golf where you need to have certain control over what you're thinking and what you're doing, obviously.

That's one of the largest parts of the game. It's obviously a factor always.

Q. We have a Spanish Wimbledon champion, and I hope for your sake you win on Sunday. Why is sport so important to Spain, and more to the point, why are you so good at it?

JON RAHM: I don't know. I don't know. I've actually been asked that question, what's going on with you Spanish athletes lately. I couldn't tell you. I really don't know.

I think when you have the right people to look up to, it's a little bit easier to get to that. Rafa obviously had a few major tennis champions to look up to when he was coming up and he did what he did, so it's obvious for Carlos to grow up watching Rafa do what he did.

Not that it's easier, but it makes you want to be the next -- obviously when you're talking about football, there's a massive list of great football players that we've had in Spain, so that's obviously part of the culture. When it comes to golf, we've had incredible reference, as well.

I think a lot of it is thanks to people like Seve and other athletes that did it before us.

Q. Is it something to do with also simple pride in your country, representing the country?

JON RAHM: It could be. Yeah, if anything, we're proud people. It could be. I really don't know. I wish I could give you an answer.

Q. What was your early experience with links golf? Do you recall liking it right away? Did it take a little while to figure it out? How has it evolved to this point?

JON RAHM: I think it takes quite a bit to figure out. Where I grew up in Spain it's usually colder, wet, soft, no roll-out, no release, none of that.

When you come to play links for the first time, it's a bit of a change.

My first round was right before we played the British Boys at Royal St. George's. My dad and I played -- and I'm going to butcher the pronunciation, Royal Cinque Ports. So my dad and I played there for the first time, and he had to tell me -- I had driver in hand on every hole and he's like, yeah, you might want to hit a 3-iron.

I'll never forget the first hole was playing downwind and I hit 3-iron and I saw that ball bounce once and twice and three, and just keep on going, which I'm more used to see the ball bounce backwards and that's it. It was a really fun day, really fun experience.

I actually played pretty good for my first showing, and I think I've done okay in links golf, and I've played some good golf and I enjoy it every time. I think it's, in my mind, golf at its purest state, no matter what the weather is.

There's so many ways of getting it done. There's just so many possibilities that makes it even more fun.

Q. You were pretty vocal in support of being on the PGA TOUR when all this LIV stuff started, and you never wavered from that. There's been discussion about the possibility of players being compensated for staying, depending on how all this works out. Do you feel like you should be compensated?

JON RAHM: It's a tricky question. So I understand the PGA TOUR wanting to do something for those players who helped and stayed on the PGA TOUR, but at the same time -- and I'll be the first one to say -- I wasn't forced into anything. It was my choice to stay.

Do I think they absolutely should be and there must be a compensation? No. I just stayed because I think it's the best choice for myself and for the golf I want to play.



Now, with that said, if they want to do it, I'm not going to say no. (Laughter).

We all had the chance to go to LIV and take the money and we chose to stay at the PGA TOUR for whatever reason we chose. As I've said before, I already make an amazing living doing what I do. I'm extremely thankful, and that all happened because of the platform the PGA TOUR provided me.

As far as I'm concerned they've done enough for me, and their focus should be on improving the PGA TOUR and the game of golf for the future generations.

Q. Would that include trying to improve the PGA TOUR, letting some of those guys back if they want to come back and play?

JON RAHM: See, that's one of the things that the agreement needs to sort out. From what I hear, they don't really want to come back, so I don't know. I really wouldn't be able to tell you.

It's tricky, right. I can understand people on the PGA TOUR not wanting those players back, and I can also understand why some of them want to come back. There's some great events that a lot of people probably want to go and play again, some great golf courses, as well.

I wouldn't be able to tell you. I do believe that some punishment should be in order, but I don't know what -- I'm not a politician. That's not my job. That's for the disciplinary board and other people that are paid to do that. My job is to hit the golf ball and try to do the best I can.

Q. How involved are you interested in being in all of those discussions going forward?

JON RAHM: I'll tell you the same thing I told the people on the PGA TOUR. If you want my opinion, ask me. If not, I'm not going to go out there and impose what I think on you guys. That's what I said.

I think they should talk to the membership and get an idea of where the players are at. But it's not about just myself. Obviously it should be a general feeling of what the partnership wants to do.

I'm not going to be calling every single day telling them what I think and what should be done. Let's just say that.

Q. Since you delivered that message, have they reached out to you to --

JON RAHM: Yeah, they have. When they need to know where

our heads are at, they've reached out, they've called me, and I've given them my opinion. They've been fairly open on that. They've hired some people on Tour to come to tournaments, and they're kind of in between us and some of the higher management.

Yeah, there's been communication, yes.

Q. I know there was a lot of initial frustration when the deal was announced, not just from you but a lot of players that they weren't clued in. Is your sense now that some of that has cooled down a little bit? You mentioned it's fair to give them some space now.

JON RAHM: Well, what you guys saw was a lot of initial reaction. Obviously it was our initial emotions as to what happened, and now a bit of the realisation, of okay, now we have to wait until, what is it, January 1st or whenever the agreement says they need to finalise those negotiations.

Right now it's kind of the game of waiting.

Hopefully they can reach to -- I don't even know what the word is, a partnership or -- because it's not really a merger. I don't know. A partnership that they both are happy what the outcome is going to be, and everybody can move on and be the best golf product we can put out there. Whatever that looks like, I don't know.

I think it's obviously cooling down, and now we're all waiting to see how this moves forward.

Q. Much has been made recently of the run of form that Scottie Scheffler has been producing over the last few months. I wondered how big a fan you are of that sort of consistency as opposed to winning four times and missing every cut?

JON RAHM: Well, the better you play, and if you're more consistent, the more chances you're going to give yourself to win. Tiger didn't only have an incredible win percentage. His top 10 percentage and top 5 percentage was even higher. The more you put yourself in position, the more you're going to be able to win.

I'm a fan of what Scottie has done. I've prided myself in the past on consistency, even though this year has been a little bit less. With that said, I'll take four wins and play a little bit bad for a couple months.

I think if you ask him, he'll probably give a couple of those top 5s away for an extra win because that's what we're here for, but nevertheless it's really impressive what he's done, and I'm a fan of players that can keep playing golf at that level for a long time.



Q. You were talking about representing your country, and I couldn't help notice your new logo on the sleeve there. Can you talk about that a little bit?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I was wondering if somebody was going to pick up. Not everybody is paying attention to that. I'm really thankful. Obviously Santander being a big bank in Spain and Europe and worldwide, I'm very excited to be able to partner with them. It's my first Spanish sponsor. It's the first time I'm an ambassador for a Spanish company, so I'm very, very excited.

They don't only help over 150 million people worldwide, it's mainly also related to golf in Spain in a massive way. I don't even know what her title is, president and CEO on our team. They're related to Seve's family. He was married to her sister, so related to golf in a massive way, and their dad was also involved in golf in Pedrena, as well.

It's really great to be part of a company that's the best of both worlds and be able to represent them. I know they want to have a bigger influence in the U.S., and I'm glad they chose me for that.

Q. It was announced yesterday you extended your relationship with Callaway, and I guess you got an equity stake. What was your reasoning behind doing that, and also do you feel like you'll have more of a voice in equipment decisions in the future?

JON RAHM: You know, I like to be involved in companies I believe in. The fact that they allow me to have equity in it, it shows faith in both parts. I'm all in on what I do, and I'm going to give it my best on the golf course, and they're showing me that they trust me enough to be a part of it, and I know they're going to give it their all to give me the best product possible.

With that said, even before that, before this deal was signed, they've asked me my input in equipment, and I probably could have demanded a lot more, I'm just not going to be the kind of person who is thinking about what to do so much.

They obviously have engineers that are much better at that than I am. I can only give them what I'm feeling on the golf course. They've taken that into consideration and they've come up with some products.

So, yeah, if I think of things I'm definitely going to voice them, and they've heard every single one of them.

Q. Do you think it'll change your opinions on maybe the ball rollback or stuff like that?

JON RAHM: My opinions?

Q. Yeah.

JON RAHM: What do you mean by that?

Q. Whether the equipment company might have a specific view of how they feel about it; now you're a part --

JON RAHM: Oh. I think no matter our view, it looks like it's happening, so it doesn't really matter what I think or not. But if it can be at the forefront of a big company like Callaway who can get ahead of it and that could be invested a little bit earlier, that could be great.

But yeah, it doesn't really change. The USGA and the R&A are going to do what they want to do, no matter what I think.

Q. Sadly we missed seeing you at the Renaissance Club last week. What was your view of the way that tournament played out with Rory and his magnificent 2-iron and Bob MacIntyre going head-to-head with him? Follow-up to that, and what do you think Bob's chances are now of being part of Luke's team for Marco Simone in a few months' time?

JON RAHM: Well, given the fact that he beat Rory and Fitzy a couple years ago at that golf course to win the Italian Open in a playoff, I think his chances were always good, but he's definitely been in good form lately, playing good golf.

He had a good chance in Denmark. He played really good last week. It was an incredible finish by Rory, even though that pin on 17. Even though that pin on 17 might have been the easier one, in the last hour or so of broadcast, I didn't see anybody get within 20 feet. To finish the way he did was absolutely incredible.

As well as how Bob finished. It was unfortunate that he made that bogey on 16, but that birdie on 18 was nothing short of miraculous. Get a little lucky on the tee shot and hitting that second shot into the green was incredible.

If somebody who can do that, shoot 6-under on those weather conditions, is not a candidate, I don't know who else can be. Yeah, he should definitely be a candidate. I like his chances.

Q. I'm wondering how you practise and prepare for high-pressure situations like a major.

JON RAHM: Obviously it's very difficult to put yourself in that position. It's very hard to be able to replicate the scenarios, golf course, circumstances.

I spoke briefly in the last press conference I did. If you can -- it's all about competition. So if you can create an environment where you're competing against yourself and put yourself in



somewhat of a position of being able to feel the same things, at the end of the day it's reputation.

Pressure is pressure, higher or lower. If you can act the same every single time and have the same routine and perform, you might be able to do it when it really counts on the golf course.

A lot of times you don't know until you get yourself in that situation. You find yourself for the first time in a major championship with a chance and you're going to learn a lot about yourself.

But before that, I would say in my case I've always said I'm competitor, and if I can somehow create that in practice, it's always going to carry on.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time today. Best of luck this week.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports