

# The 152nd Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 16 July 2024

**Jon Rahm**



STUART MOFFATT: Good morning, everybody. I'm delighted to welcome the two-time major champion Jon Rahm to the interview room. It's obviously been a historic week for Spanish sport. How would it feel for you to continue that run by lifting the Claret Jug on Sunday?

JON RAHM: Yeah, it's definitely been a great month for Spanish sports. A lot of history being done, with Alcaraz being the sixth player to win the French Open and Wimbledon in the same year and get into four Grand Slams at a very young age, Spain winning the fourth European championship, and Sergio and his team doing what they did on Sunday.

Quite special, quite special. Coming back to a venue like this with so much history, it would be quite incredible to earn an Open Championship on this golf course in this tournament.

It's arguably my favorite week in golf, and to maybe even continue that, this stretch of great Spanish sports, I mean, it would be absolutely fantastic on top of all the many things that would make this week or this championship incredible.

**Q. With that in mind, talking about Spanish sport, I just wondered if you're fully aware that up in these parts this week, particularly, every Spaniard will be a hero, an adopted Scotsman because of the result?**

JON RAHM: I noticed that yesterday. Played all 18 holes yesterday, and I think I got more congratulations for something that I didn't do than I ever have in my life, so yeah. (Laughter.)

I don't know what they've done, but anytime anybody plays against the English national team, every other country in Europe just unifies against them. I don't know why or what they've done. I'm not aware of the history.

I think because we've heard "It's Coming Home" so many times the last few years, that nobody wants to see it come home at this point.

**Q. Do you know all the words to "It's Coming Home"? Do you know all the words?**

JON RAHM: No, so I didn't know what it was until they made the championship last final, and then I didn't know it was a

song until Tyrrell showed me last Wednesday. So I really didn't know the whole history about it.

He picked it as his song on the first day, and I told him nobody in Spain is going to know what that is. There's going to be the three or four English people that are there that are going to understand, but nobody else is going to know.

**Q. Will you be giving plenty of stick to your English peers this week, fellow English golfers?**

JON RAHM: No, because the second I see one of them or they acknowledge me or any other Spanish golfer for that matter, the first instant is the, they're all smiling and they're, like, ugh. They know I'm either going to say something or the face they make says it all for me.

You get the occasional joke of, oh, it should have been a hand ball against Germany and a couple of those things, but no, I'm not going to be one to make them feel that pain anymore.

**Q. Just following up, did you watch everything on Sunday? Did you have a break and watch the tennis and then the football to clear your mind?**

JON RAHM: Well, I couldn't watch the tennis because we were playing, but the crowd did us the favor of telling us the score, what was going on. I remember playing the 17th hole, and I had to back out of my putt because somebody was reacting to the tennis on TV. There was quite a big crowd on that green.

After I walked by the grandstands, they were telling me, oh, Alcaraz won the first set. He's 3-1 on the second set, playing great. So they were making me aware.

The only thing I was able to watch, besides Sergio's play, was the football. The team was sharing a house that week, so me and Tyrrell watched it together. You can imagine that was a sight to see. (Laughter.)

**Q. Jon, you seemed really happy for Sergio on Sunday. What was it like to see him win at Valderrama?**

JON RAHM: It's just the record he has on that golf course is absolutely mindblowing. I think it was 17 starts, 14, 15 top 10s and 4 wins. It's hard to do anywhere, but in Valderrama that is



especially difficult.

It's just so demanding to the green. You have to play it really well. Obviously the familiarity with it helps, but it doesn't matter. No matter how much you know the golf course, you still need to be familiar. You still need to play at your best to be able to do that there.

It's just how close he's come this year. He's played incredibly good golf. He had a great chance in Mayakoba, obviously losing to Joaco. Same thing in Miami losing to Dean.

To see him win it on home soil, I feel like it was only right that that Sunday one of us Spanish players won. I think he's a very deserving champion. I was extremely happy for him because he's been a great friend of mine when it comes to golf. We created a great bond at Whistling Straits. To share Friday and that Sunday with him and see him win it was very special.

So, yeah, I'm extremely happy for him. I think you could see it in his face. Last time I remember seeing a reaction like that was when he won the Masters. Maybe not as big, but I think the relief was there as well. I felt like we all felt it for him.

**Q. You were -- prior to going over to LIV, you were on a really good run of form with a bunch of wins and whatnot. I'm just curious where you feel your game is now in that period since then.**

JON RAHM: Last year from Masters on I didn't really play my best. I didn't feel at my best up until Ryder Cup. Ryder Cup was the only resemblance to maybe the early part of the year.

This year the first half hasn't been my best, but I would say it started in Houston where I kind of started feeling that comfort with the swing again. And I'm talking about such a small margin. I still have been playing good golf all throughout that time. Too bad I couldn't play in Houston, obviously in the U.S. Open.

But Nashville and last week, I felt closer to getting to a higher level of golf where maybe there isn't as many thoughts on my process. Maybe I'm playing a little bit more freely and seeing the ball flight that I want to see more often.

Yeah, I'm getting much closer to what it might have been early last year.

**Q. If you moved your feet like Scottie Scheffler does when he swings, what would happen? Also, why do you think that works for him so well? Why is he so good doing it that way?**

JON RAHM: I probably -- I might have not studied his swing enough to understand how it really works, but it seems to me that a lot of that movement happens after that club face has

made contact with the ball. So whatever happens after doesn't matter. Once that ball's flying, it doesn't matter.

It seems to be what helps him keep the club face square. It's that simple. Do your own swing, whatever seems repetitive. He clearly can repeat it very well and under pressure.

Greg Norman, who was a great ball striker as well, had a very similar move with his foot. Maybe not as much as him, but similar. It's almost like a little bit of a resemblance of when you go bowling, of that back foot going towards the side. It's almost like a way to keep your hands straight towards the target. I don't really even know how to explain it any other way.

I feel like so much of my stability of my swing comes from that rear foot, and I'm almost the opposite for most of my career, that rear foot being planted for so long, that I don't think I would be a very efficient golfer if I did that. I don't think I'd be a pro whatsoever. Could I hit it? Possibly, but it wouldn't be pretty.

**Q. Just going back to the Sergio question, you mentioned his success at Valderrama. Just wondering, is there a golf course where you feel like you have sort of a similar or have had a similar level of success?**

JON RAHM: If you had to say one, which one do you think I'm going to say? There's one clear one that I always talk about where I have won twice.

**Q. Torrey Pines.**

JON RAHM: There you go. If I had to say that, it's Torrey Pines. I don't know what it is, but every time I go there -- I maybe don't have as good a record as Sergio, but I feel comfortable. I get so many -- especially when I see the paragliders, I get so many images of what I see at home where I grew up, where I didn't necessarily play golf right on the coast, but it's such a good feeling that I always feel like I have a chance to win there.

I think every time I've teed it up there, at some point I've held the lead or been in the final group on Sunday. I've had a chance to win multiple times besides the two times I've done it. I feel like there isn't really any other golf course where I think I come close to that.

**Q. Then just totally unrelated followup, but I was just wondering what your response is to Keegan Bradley being named the captain of the U.S. Team?**

JON RAHM: I'm not going to lie, I haven't thought about it very much. I think a lot of people had an initial thought of maybe unexpected just because I heard so many rumors of

Tiger being it. I don't know why. Everything I heard from the Ryder Cup is, okay, Tiger's the captain.

I guess you shouldn't always believe what you hear, but I think my mind was made up. When I hear anybody but Tiger being it, I was like, oh.

He was definitely a bit of a Captain America figure when he was there, very energetic. Had a great partnership with Phil, played really good golf, especially at Medinah. I'm not surprised. I think he could be a good captain. Cares deeply about the country. Cares deeply about the Ryder Cup.

I don't know if having a Boston native being a captain in New York might be the best thing, but I think they can put their difference aside for that week. I think he can be a fantastic captain.

**Q. Just on your own Ryder Cup situation as we're starting out, have you paid fines to the Tour, or will you continue to pay fines to the Tour? Do you think it's right that that is the necessary system, it seems, for you to play?**

JON RAHM: We're still in conversations with the Tour. I haven't been able to play any Tour events, so yeah, we're going to have to sort it out before I want to tee it up hopefully at the Spanish Open.

At this point, I'm so still waiting on what might happen with my wife and daughter that I don't know if I'll be able to play or not. So my fall is still a little bit of a question mark when it comes to playing golf.

**Q. Just to be clear, they said you have to do two things. One, remain a member of the Tour, which you have done, and two, pay these fines that were issued to you for not being released.**

JON RAHM: Well, I haven't paid yet, but again, I just don't know when I'm going to play. It could very well be a chance because it hasn't been the easiest pregnancy, that I just simply don't have the chance to tee off. My mind is not thinking on that right now.

**Q. Jon, it seemed only non-Spanish winner on Sunday was Bob MacIntyre. What did you learn about Bob as a golfer and a person in Rome?**

JON RAHM: That I have a really hard time understanding what he says. (Laughter.)

Yeah, as much as I might seem like I was born into the English language, whenever Bob speaks, to this day, I remember a few conversations where he said something, and I just look at him. I remember, I think of myself at Arizona State when I was

brand new, when I was like, what did you just say? My mind just goes to yes or no. Just yes or no, and try to skate by.

Besides that, he's a fantastic player. Very resourceful. Even when he didn't have his best that week, there was a time still hitting the shots that he needed. Especially that finish on Sunday, getting a little bit of a stroke of luck of finding the sprinkler on 16, hitting a 7-iron that close and then making the putt and making birdie again on 18 to win it is absolutely special.

Reminds me too, I think it was him on a chip shot on Sunday on 15 from short of the green, hit a fantastic chip shot to a tricky pin location to keep that lead going into the last few holes, not knowing what Tommy might be doing in front of him.

Yeah, he definitely has that clutch factor when he needs to. Got it done in Canada as well. Clearly a really good player.

**Q. Last time some of us saw you, you were telling us you were going to try to play at the U.S. Open. What happened in those few hours in between that led you to withdrawing and how did you spend that week?**

JON RAHM: I wish I could post a video. We went from there to trying to source a podiatrist. Once we found one, we went there. Obviously the X-rays on my foot, we knew there was nothing wrong with my bones. He saw the wound and saw the infection, and he tried to clear it out. It callused over obviously to protect, and we thought we had cleaned it out.

I don't want to get too graphic for people that don't like it, but he basically cut part of that callus out, and the second he put a little bit of pressure, which still hurt a lot, and you could still see some wanting to come out. He's like, all right, Jon, we have to do it. There's an abscess in there, and we have to see how much and how deep. I'm like, oh, boy.

So yeah, basically he numbed my foot and grabbed the swabs they did the PCR test with basically, stuck the cotton part a little bit in, so it was deeper, turned it around and just jammed it in my foot.

Pretty much, when I saw that go in, I said, okay, I'm not playing The Open. Took all the infection out. Took another sample to see if I was taking the right antibiotics, and that's when we made the decision.

He's a military guy, ex-military guy. He had seen that before; apparently it's quite common. Never heard of it. It's quite common among athletes and military and stuff like that. He told me I probably shouldn't play.

It was hard to make a decision then because he had numbed my foot so I couldn't really feel anything. But based on the

progression, he said, yeah, you probably shouldn't play.

That's when we made the decision. Had it made it worse, had the infection spread any more, it could have started going up my leg and created a bigger issue. We decided to take the week off as hard as it might have been.

The next morning I knew I had made the right decision because the pain I was in after that was pretty severe. But it was clean. Then as soon as I could, I went back home and watched the Open. I think I posted on social media on Thursday morning I had the baby monitor, the coffee, and was ready to watch.

Once I accepted the fact I couldn't play, I think it was quite enjoyable. I think, as much as any other, I kind of enjoyed watching some of the best players in the world struggle. Weirdly, it was fun to just see. It was fun for people, to see people play well, and it was a lot of fun to almost be a spectator again, a fan, and just enjoy it.

I could at least give a little bit of a better commentary to my friends and family that were watching with me because I could put into perspective certain shots that they might not be able to appreciate on TV.

I think the best part of all that, being bedridden, as well, because I couldn't get my foot dirty, I had to maintain it clean and disinfected and all those things, was being able to spend time with Kelley because while she's on bedrest, I had to somewhat be on bedrest as well. So to keep her company was probably my favorite part.

**Q. Sorry to go back to the football again, but I'm just fascinated by you and Tyrrell watching the game together because I remember at the Ryder Cup he described himself as the sweariest man in golf during one of his press conferences. I'm just wondering what the language was like from Tyrrell while you were sitting there watching that match?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, it was fun. It was a lot of fun for both of us. Yeah, it was Tyrrell Hatton. It was exactly what you would expect it to be.

Honestly, he's no different to any other football fan, I would think, out there. I've seen enough football with both Spanish and English supporters, and everybody's language is extremely colorful. So I would say he was right up the line of basically any other football fan that was watching that game.

It was fun. It was just interesting seeing somebody else from the opposing side complain about fouls, was that a foul. Having the argument about whether -- the most two hated players on the team, just because how good they are, Carvajal and Cucurella, and I don't blame them. They're both good at

fouling when they need to foul, and obviously he was just going off a bit on that. As well as whenever he had to criticize anything on the English team, that was just fun to be a part of.

No, it was good. I think he knew, especially early on with how good Spain was playing, that it was going to be a tough match for England. His reaction when Palmer scored was an electric one. Let me just say that.

**Q. I'm just interested, realistically after this week, it could be nine months before you get to tee it up again alongside Rory and Scottie and Collin. How frustrating is that for you? Secondly, the men's majors feel like they come and go quite quickly these days, three months between all four. Would you like to see them spaced out a bit more, or do you like the schedule as it is right now?**

JON RAHM: I haven't thought about that. Wow, I haven't thought about that ever. Is there a discussion of changing the schedule that I'm not aware of?

**Q. No, I don't think so. I just feel like, particularly for you guys, if you're in good form, it's great. You see someone like Bryson this year. But if you're having a poor run in the majors, is it better to give you longer to prepare for the big events? Obviously for you it's a few months again until the Masters now.**

JON RAHM: In the past, it was really three majors in four months, with three of them coming in pretty quickly. It was just the Masters that was a bit of the one earlier in the year. So really I don't feel like it's that different, I guess.

For me to think about maybe spacing it out, it all depends on when you play what event, where -- I feel like I need to hear other opinions. I really haven't thought about it enough to give you an answer. I think the governing bodies in charge of those major events kind of understand probably better than the rest of us.

We all understand probably that you can't really go against football, right? With that, meaning American football. So if you have the playoffs in August, it's going to be hard to have a major in August. I kind of understand why we have the system we have right now. Haven't really thought of it.

With so many events, PGAs and U.S. Open being in the northeast, you can't really go earlier in the year because it might be unplayable. I wouldn't know how to talk or think about that.

Should the NFL make a change, maybe we could make a change. I don't see that happening because, if anything, they keep adding games. I think we're okay right now, but I'd be interested to hear what other people think.

**Q. Do you think between now and the Masters, you'll have the opportunity to play against people like Scottie and Rory again? You might not be in the same field as those guys again until April of next year, which is a bit crazy really.**

JON RAHM: Yeah, it is, but it's also a decision I've made. Hopefully at some point golf can figure itself out, and we have opportunities to play against each other more often.

But like I said, I'm not going to lie, anything past September, October right now, with the situation I have with my wife and daughter, I'm really not thinking about it, to be honest. I can't really put myself past it. I can't give you an opinion in full judgment in that sense.

**Q. You look back at Augusta and Valhalla, what was most frustrating? What do you think you were lacking in your game? From what you've seen of Troon, what do you need to be doing your best this week?**

JON RAHM: I got to enjoy Troon yesterday in the easiest weather you're ever going to see in Scotland. I was only meant to play nine holes, but I looked at Tyrrell, and I said, it's sunny, there's no wind, it's perfect temperature. Let's just enjoy the walk.

How often do you get to come to a major and just truly enjoy the beautiful golf course, kind of put on a little bit of a show for the few fans that are out there, take care of the kids. It was a very enjoyable second nine in which I know we're never going to play the golf course like that ever again.

It's like any other links, right? Keep it on the fairway, avoid bunkers. That's obviously going to set yourself up to -- put you in a position to where you can maybe attack some pins and make some birdies. Everything depends on the weather. If the wind comes like it can come, especially out here, it's almost a bit of a survival.

I think last year's score or last Open's here score, two players were the anomaly. I haven't seen anybody have a low score here. It's tricky golf course, especially the stretch of 9, 10, 11, even 12, 13, 14 now with the other tee, and I guess 15 can get quite difficult. All of them play almost in off the left. That's a difficult part of the golf course.

You need to do everything well. Obviously having control over the spin and the trajectory of the ball is almost the most important part.

**Q. How much do you look back at the other two majors this year? Do you let that go and say, that's just golf, or do you learn from it?**

JON RAHM: There's always things you can learn from it. It's almost a bit what I said earlier answering to a question. Perhaps I had too many thoughts on my swing, where I wasn't just letting it go and having flow on the golf course the way I would have liked to flow and probably why I didn't perform the way I would have liked to perform.

Friday at Augusta as well, when you're not feeling your best and you're playing an absolute hurricane of a day with firm greens, I was just trying to survive and hoping to make the cut.

Valhalla was almost the realization that I needed to make a change, where I was making good swings, and just the ball wasn't doing what I was expecting it to do. That's why I believe that might have been the last tournament I had my old driver shaft, and then I changed it after that, and I've been more comfortable ever since.

I think that was a big change, right? Being able to swing at the driver more freely and without having to think about technique so much I think has been quite nice.

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