

The 153rd Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 15 July 2025

Jon Rahm



OLIVIA McMILLAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am delighted to be joined by two-time major champion Jon Rahm.

Jon, welcome to Portrush. How are the preparations going, and how much are you looking forward to this week?

JON RAHM: Look forward to it intensely every year. Ireland and Northern Ireland have been very good to me in my golf career. It's been a lot of fun to be able to play here, have done well in Portrush in the past and have really good memories in Portstewart, so I'm really, really looking forward to this week.

Q. Do you remember your first round playing links golf, proper links golf, and what your impressions were?

JON RAHM: Yeah, you know it's funny, out of a question like that, my dad got a membership at the golf course. It was at Royal Cinque Ports, and I think it was 2009 or so, British Boys, and my first ever round was early in the week there. I think St George's. It was at Royal St George's. It was closed for whatever reason, so we went and played Royal Cinque Ports, me and my dad.

I remember getting to the 1st hole, it was downwind. I don't remember the length of the hole, but there's a creek short of the green. I pulled a driver, and my dad was like, you might want to hit a 3-iron. I was like, no way. I was still young, like 14 years old, there's no way. It was like 300-some yards. Hit the 3-iron, listened to him, hit the 3-iron, realised -- and I saw the first bounce and the second bounce and the third and so on, and it was quite eye-opening to start with.

The next hole was into the wind, and it was the complete opposite. We had a fantastic day. I loved it. Had a good experience at St George's as well. My first ever experienced in links golf was a lot of fun.

Q. Then your dad joined after?

JON RAHM: After I gave an answer like this, we had a friend -- I don't know why this ever happened. He was already a member, and he reached out to give me an honorary membership. He brought up the good point that I would most likely never go, so they said, just offer it to his dad, he'll be here

quite often.

I believe, yeah, that was when we played The Open there. Shortly after, he was able to join.

Q. On that same topic, talking about links golf, what are some of the most important lessons. You talked about the 3-iron and the driver, but what are some of the really important technical differences that you have to learn if you're going to be successful?

JON RAHM: That's so personal for everyone. We all have different strengths in our game. Obviously what I would think is the most important one due to the severity of the wind is understanding how to control the trajectory of your golf ball and controlling spin rate for all those shots into the wind. I would say that's basic, the most basic thing you need to do to probably be an Open champion and understanding how that ball flight will make the ball react on the green and on the fairways.

Then there's a lot more around the greens, right? Possibilities here are endless when you're facing a shot. You have more than the usual. Most of the golf we play nowadays, if you miss a green, 9 times out of 10, it's some kind of sand wedge, lob wedge, hit it high, make it land soft, and hopefully it rolls close to the hole. Out here, you're going to have every possible option you can think of, unless you have a bunker on the way. Even then, sometimes you can putt around it as well.

It's too many things that goes into it to say just basics, right? I would say understanding how the ball is going to react in the wind is obviously the most important one.

Q. When you talk about trajectory, a lot of people say, well, it's important to keep it low in the wind, but it sounds like you're saying there are opportunities to go higher; it's not always just keep it low trajectory-wise?

JON RAHM: Well, not always. I have to think through the whole course, but it all depends on the situation. Sometimes you do need to hit it high. Sometimes you do need to stop it. Very few times in links golf, but for the most part, you can use the contours of the green in the beginning.

I think on the 4th hole, if the pin is toward the left here, you do



have those hills in the way a little bit. If it's downwind, you definitely need the height to be able to stop it properly. Most of the time you can use the ground to your advantage, but it's also are you moving it left to right, right to left, where's the wind. All those things affect it.

Q. You've been playing some really good golf this year in the majors and on LIV. Just how close do you feel to your best game going into this week?

JON RAHM: In a weird way, I always feel close. I'm always confident that I'm there. Last week, especially on Sunday, it was very nice. It was a very good round of golf. It was by far my best round at Valderrama, and to play it bogey-free, with really, besides the last hole, never really being in danger of a making a mistake or a big mistake. So feeling good, feeling confident. Hopefully I can give it a run again this week.

Q. 37 years since a Spanish player has won The Open Championship. We all know how creative the Spaniards can be around the greens with the shot making. Why do you think we have not had a Spanish champion in these 37 years? Secondly, was Valderrama very good prep for this week?

JON RAHM: I can't answer why. Obviously there's been a few. The main ones, Ollie and Sergio, have had their chances. It's never easy to win a major, and it's never easy to win an Open. I can't really give you an answer why. The way Seve played, it's a bit of a different way to play on links courses. I think one of the reasons he was so loved in Great Britain and Ireland, because I don't think anybody conceived that that was the way to play links golf, just hit driver everywhere and somehow find a way to put it on the green and chip and putt. It was not normal, which is a testament to how good of a golfer he was.

If anything, after that, it might have been good short game among Spanish players, but none of us have played that way. I think Sergio and I are obviously more known for being ball strikers. Ollie, besides the driver, everything else was outstanding, one of the best iron players ever. Incredible golf game, both Ollie and Sergio; it's just never easy to win an Open.

In Valderrama, we had quite a bit of wind, and that's always going to be a very hopeful week to get ready for it. The other thing Valderrama does, it's challenging. Every golf shot you hit there, it's very little margin of error, so it does prep you mentally to get ready for a challenge that a major can be. Not to the fullest, but it's challenging enough to where you have to think about it quite a bit. With the wind obviously there's differences, but in those two aspects it helps.

Q. Firstly, I play at Royal Cinque Ports, so it's nice to hear your dad is enjoying the membership. I saw him there a few months ago. Portrush, you've been here a few times now. Have you got a favourite hole out there?

JON RAHM: It's not there anymore. Would have been the old 17. I think my caddie Adam is sick of me telling him how the old 17 used to be. This is where the tee box used to be. With this wind yesterday, the wave bunker would have been in play. That was definitely my favourite when I played the Amateur here. It was just striking.

If I have to choose an actual hole that we're playing, it would probably be the 4th or the 5th. I think the 5th is quite an unusual hole in links golf. It's a big elevation change, drivable par-4. I'm not used to standing on a tee on any links course and actually getting a view of the entire course like that, looking into the ocean. I think it's quite a good hole. And the 4th, just because of its difficulty and intricacy as well, I've always enjoyed it. It would probably be the 5th over the 4th though.

Q. I know scheduling is very important for all the top players, and time you tee up, it becomes a very important tournament for the player. But how difficult is it to wait for eight months after The Open? It's now eight months for the next major. I know the majors are the absolute pinnacle. So how difficult is it to wait for eight months?

JON RAHM: Luckily, we still have things to look forward to in between. It would be a lot more difficult if the second The Open was over, I would strictly be thinking about the Masters. Luckily we have some big events that also matter in between.

I wouldn't say it's difficult. I think we're so used to it at this point, it's just kind of what it is. I don't find it difficult at least now.

Q. You mentioned you've had some success playing in Ireland throughout your career. I guess I'm just wondering what's distinct about Irish golf relative to anywhere else in the world?

JON RAHM: Links golf in general, it's hard to replicate it unless you're in this part of the world. If you're asking the difference between Irish and Scottish golf, I don't know.

From what I've played in Ireland, I think maybe the designs -- or I really don't know how to explain it best, but it just seems they use the contours in different ways. All the courses seem to be in a way where there's a few more dunes.

If you take here Portstewart, Ballyliffin, Lahinch, all those courses, it's a lot more -- even Ballybunion, it's framed around the dunes and using the elevation a little bit better. Not better, like using the elevation. Even at Portstewart, you're going up-and-down a little bit more. When you're playing Troon, flat as can be. Birkdale, flat. So I'm not used to seeing those changes.

If you're playing Lahinch as well, you do have those up and downs, and you're going into plateaus. There's dunes in the way. You have a par-3, but you can't see the green. It's different, but at the same time, almost the same. It's just a different way of using the contours of the courses. I don't know if it's just the natural landscape or the way they decided to do it when they came over, but I would say that's the main difference.

Q. Last year at Troon we talked about the charm of a short par-3 like the Postage Stamp. What do you like or dislike about a long par-3 like 16 here? Do you think we need more challenges of the long irons and fairway woods at majors?

JON RAHM: More, no. I think when you find a short hole, we all enjoy the difference in scores. You can take 12th at Augusta, you can take the Postage Stamp, you can take 17 at TPC. There's so many courses in this world that have short par-3s that can lead to a birdie or lead to a big number. That's what makes the hole a lot more interesting.

When you have a hole that the main difficulty is the length, I feel like that variability is just not going to -- you're going to see a 3 or 4 for the most part and move on. Mainly because, if you make a 250-yard par-3 with water and crazy bunkers and things like that, it would be a little bit too much, right?

I think in my case it's just more entertaining because in theory, due to the length, we should be able to make par or birdie easily and it just doesn't happen because the elements get in the way. So I just find it more entertaining in that sense.

I think one of the better par-3s I've played was that 15th hole on Saturday at L.A. Country Club. It was 80 yards, and there was virtually no chance of hitting it inside 20 feet. I think that tells you about those holes that in theory should be easy but it's not.

Q. Tom obviously played well on Sunday and comes into this week with a lot of form. What do you think about his game, and what have you learned about him that you didn't know before becoming his teammate?

JON RAHM: Well, Tom McKibbin should be really looking forward to this week, being a member here and being from Northern Ireland. He's a fantastic young man. For a 24-year-old to be as calm and collected as he is is quite phenomenal. He's quiet by nature, but even in competition when things go wrong, he stays quite calm, and it's just remarkable and an incredible gift to have for a young player.

I don't think I can relate to that whatsoever, so I'm a little bit jealous of that. I think it's going to serve him very well in the long run.

Obviously I think he's obviously internally processing the same

emotions that all of us are processing, but outwardly he stays really, really calm, and that helps him quite a bit, on top of having a fantastic golf swing. I don't know what it is about Northern Ireland, but they have two of the most beautiful golf swings ever produced in golf. He's a fantastic golfer in general.

He's got all the tools he needs to succeed in this game, and so far in his early career, he's done so.

Q. What does The Open Championship mean to you? Have you ever visualised yourself raising that Claret Jug?

JON RAHM: Yes. In my opinion, The Open Championship is the most prestigious event you can win in golf. For my understanding of the game and the history of the game, I think the Claret Jug is the most special one. There's an order to it too because it changes venues, so if you can win it in St Andrews, I don't think anything in golf can come close to that. Obviously there's different ones that have a lot of significance as well.

The Open to me, I think that's what it is. It's the home of golf. Golf started in this part of the world. It's the oldest championship we have, and that's what makes it so special -- the type of golf we play, the links courses where in theory is meant to be played, the elements, the weather, it's quite unique. I don't think there's a word to describe it, but all together it's what makes it so special.

Q. Just to follow up to the answer you gave me, I know you are a very aggressive player yourself, but would you consider playing Seve-like golf to win The Open Championship?

JON RAHM: I don't think anybody can play Seve-like golf. I think Seve is the only one who could play Seve-like golf. That was it. His ability to do what he did in general with a golf ball is unlike any other and due to his upbringing.

I was very fortunate to grow up with a full set of clubs instead of a 3-iron. So he learned how to play the game in a very different way. If you would guarantee me I could win an Open doing that, then absolutely, I would do it, but there's no way to guarantee.

Q. Which other players could you have a conversation about the beginnings of the game? You obviously know its history. Who would you go and chat to about the history of golf?

JON RAHM: It's not something I talk about with other players really. I try to chat to some of the players that have played The Open quite a few times and ask them their experiences or see what I can see online, but I haven't talked to them about the history of the game itself.

The main one I have conversations on both sides would be Phil. I spend a lot of time with him. When I can get my time around



Chema, I will as well. But it hasn't been a conversation that's come up.

Q. Does it help to know all that? Is it a good background for your career?

JON RAHM: I don't know. I just love it. My dad was a history major. I've watched a lot of history documentaries growing up, so it's something I enjoy. I like history as well. I don't know if it helps me or not. I just enjoy it, and I think it makes me get a different understanding when we come to courses like this.

Q. You mentioned a tournament that you were looking forward to. Is Bethpage and the Ryder Cup in your mind, or are you able to separate it completely this week?

JON RAHM: I don't know how many times I can answer yes to that question. Yeah, it's been on my mind. It's been on my mind a year ago, and it will continue on my mind as long as I play golf in my career. So the Ryder Cup is always there.

Obviously when I wake up in the morning here, I'm thinking about this, but the Ryder Cup will always be on my mind.

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