



Jon Rahm

Press Conference

Thursday, April 6, 2023

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Jon Rahm to the interview room.

Jon, after a difficult double-bogey start, you came back with seven birdies and an eagle on 8. What were you thinking walking off that first green?

JON RAHM: You know, a couple different things. If you're going to make a double or four-putt or anything, it might as well be the first hole, 71 holes to make it up. After that, it was more, I was focused on the fact that all the strokes were good. The reads were good. The roll was good. Obviously the speed was off on the first two putts, so once I kind of accepted that there was nothing really to look into, I just got to work and I had 17 holes to make up.

I've always said and I've always told Adam and I tell people who ask me about the Masters, if you can somehow make it through the first 6 1/2 holes, and what I mean is putting the ball in the fairway on 7 and you're around even par, I think it's a pretty good start. It's easy to make bogeys. It's not easy to make birdies. So if you can get through that, you have a short iron into 7, 8, 9 to maybe make some birdies and maybe get the round going. I was able to do that and took advantage of it the rest of the day.

THE MODERATOR: Terrific round. Let's open it up for questions, please.

Q. You hit every fairway today. What was the key for the driving performance?

JON RAHM: I don't know, finally it's the first time this year that it's felt like it should in the past, my swing off the tee, definitely. Those two 3-woods on the first hole and one on 10, both well-hit. Every other tee shot, it's something I mentioned after the round to Adam, as well, is about as good as I could think so, line-wise especially, a little bit more on line, every trajectory was the way I thought of.

Being the strength of my game, I wouldn't say there was any key. I just committed to my lines and to my swing and was able to pull it off.

Q. What felt different about this swing than earlier in the year?

JON RAHM: It's not the same driver head I had some Palm Springs. Actually, yeah, even after Riv, I had a different one in Riv and I changed one or two other times after Riv because it wasn't the right one and finally found one I'm comfortable with.

Q. You said in the past that you don't want to get rid of your fire or passion because you feel like it helps you play better golf. Was today one of those days?

JON RAHM: Yeah, it helped me carry those trees on the left on 2. I definitely swung hard on that one. If that ball didn't turn, that was going to cover the bunker for sure.

Q. You are obviously the favorite pick of media experts. Is it more of a confidence or a little bit more pressure?

JON RAHM: I'm the favorite? God, I was third on the odds yesterday.

Q. You were first --

JON RAHM: Now, maybe, yeah. Afterwards. Well, thank you for that. But obviously I've played really well this year, right. Maybe not the last few tournaments, but I'm feeling confident, obviously. Hopefully I can keep it going.

I know it's the first day and there's a long way to go and a lot of great players have had a great front nine. I'm looking down so I can -- it's a little fancy here, I can see my score, I can see everything.

Yeah, it's still a long way to go. I'm mostly super happy with what I've done today, right. I didn't expect to hit a great 3-wood, a good second shot and four-putt the first hole, but to overcome that and shoot 9-under on the next 17 holes was something to be proud of. Hopefully I can just keep it going. We'll see. I don't even know if I'll be able to tee off tomorrow, if I'll tee off on time, late. There is possible thunderstorms today, so there's a lot of question marks up in the air. With that said, I'm really happy I started the way I did and gave myself a solid start to the week.

Q. Do you think that given the forecast for the rest of the week that maybe today was the day to try to make a move and score very low?

JON RAHM: No. Not really, no. I think that's the thought every single day, right. It's just hard to say what's going to happen, right. Every time we've had bad weather here, when it's as warm as it is, it's usually a thunderstorm, so we're not really playing.

But when it comes, goes through, it softens up the golf course and it gets a little more scorable. It's hard to say when is going to be the easiest day. Luckily I don't think the wind blew as hard as it was supposed to today, and starting on 13 on, I mean, we barely had any wind and was able to take advantage of that.

So yeah, if there's ever -- like I just said, if there's ever a good time to shoot a low score, obviously Sunday would be the best if you're somewhat close, but knowing that, you know, we don't know how the week is going to unfold, I'm definitely happy I started this way.

Q. Can you take us through the eagle at 8? And as you look at all those birdies lined up over there, which one do you feel best about?

JON RAHM: Oh, my God, all my stats over there, too. So the eagle on 8, it was about as hard a drive as I can hit. I mean, I hit that perfect down the center, high cut. And I had, it was 210 meters slope, adjusted already, to the front of the green, and I believe it was 244 to the pin. So knowing that you can carry at the pin, my goal was to hit a draw 4-iron and hopefully cover five to ten on and get the right bounce and get towards the back of the green, right.

I hit it a little bit lower than I wanted and it carried about 8 on and obviously on a perfect line and released all the way to three feet. I would hope I would get that close, but being realistic, it doesn't usually happen that often. I'm happy it did. I mean, it was a really good swing, and for that to end up that close is a huge bonus.

Then the two birdies, I would say, both 13 and 15 were good in their own merit, really good chip shots, but I would say the one on 18 takes the cake. The one on 18 was just perfect drive, great second shot at two feet and tap-in for birdie. You don't usually get a walk-off birdie over here, and those two swings were about as good as they could feel.

Q. Obviously it's fresh in the mind, but where does today rank among rounds in your career, and also did it help playing alongside Cam who also had a great day out there?

JON RAHM: Not only Cam but Justin played good as well. I told Justin on the fourth tee, what are the odds of three guys having seven birdies in the first three holes combined? It doesn't usually happen very often.

It helps when everybody in the group is playing well, right. It definitely helps and you want to keep it going. It's kind of like a good, positive vibe everybody has, and when it comes to major championships, sort of -- probably just short of the Sunday of the U.S. Open, this has to be up there, including the first hole, to be honest, because it was a good tee shot and good second shot. Just a bit of an asterisk on the green.

Besides that, it was a very, very good round of golf. It has to be top three in my major career.

Q. You obviously made the birdies today, but how would you have ranked the hole locations? Hard? Medium? Easy? What's your assessment of those?

JON RAHM: There isn't one hole location at Augusta National that can be described as easy, that's for sure. A lot of how this golf course plays is dictated by the weather, right. I don't think there were easy hole locations if we all go hole-by-hole. That is not the easiest hole location on 1.

On 2, you could say that's the easiest one you could find.

3 is not easy.

4 is difficult, but although we were on the up tee, it's hard to hit it close to.

5 is probably one of the hardest on the green.

6 is hard.

7, because the green was soft, it was easier.

8 is difficult. Not the most difficult, but it's difficult.

9 is -- I think all of them on 9 are tough.

10, difficult.

11, not tucked into the bunker or the water or anything, but it's all the way back there. It's hard to hit it close.

12, doesn't matter where it is, it's difficult.

13, maybe 13 is sneaky, not the hardest. There's a few ways to give yourself a birdie chance on that hole.

14, I feel like all of them on 14 can be difficult.

I mean, not to go hole-by-hole, but I don't think we have the hardest pins that you can have out there, but they never do that, right. They always have a few difficult ones. Every other one depends a lot on your tee shot. If you can put it in a good spot on the fairway, you can always give yourself a good angle. But the margins on this golf course, whether it's deemed easy or not, are very, very small.

Q. 7-under after round one, what advantage does that give you going into the next three rounds?

JON RAHM: Well, depends what other players may finish at. A couple guys are 4-under through 10. It's just being in a good position, period. In the past, I haven't had my best start, and you're having to already, you know, swim against the current a little bit and try to make up shots throughout the week.

So to be in this position where, you know, I'm already starting ahead in a sense, is very, very nice. But again, still three days to play, right. There's a lot of golf to be played.

So still to have to go hole-by-hole, shot-by-shot and keep doing the good things the way I've been doing them.

Q. What was your club on 18?

JON RAHM: 8-iron.

Q. And secondly, how long does it usually take you to move on from a double-bogey to get over one? And however long that is, is it any different when you're at a major or even at Augusta?

JON RAHM: It depends on the double-bogey and when. Again, being the first hole of the tournament, it's a hell of a lot easier. There's a lot of holes to be played. It's simple as that.

I don't know, I wouldn't know how else to say. It's very circumstantial, right. It's not like I hit -- I made a mistake with a wedge shot and hit it in the water. Like I said a little bit earlier, I really didn't feel like I hit any of those putts poorly. Obviously speed was off, but everything else about it was good. So there wasn't really too much to be upset about besides just not getting it done.

Q. Were you upset?

JON RAHM: I'm not even going to say anything (laughter).

Q. Following up on that, you mentioned that you accept it and tattoo the next drive on 2. What goes into accepting it that you couldn't maybe earlier in your career?

JON RAHM: Well, I didn't do it earlier in my career, so I don't know. I don't want to sound like a broken record, but the fact every single putt felt good makes it easier. It not like I had the right line and the right read and made a poor stroke. All of them felt good. That's always a lot easier.

Then I remembered Seve's quote, I think it was here at the Masters, right, when he 4-putted. I just kept thinking to myself, "Well, I miss, I miss, I miss, I make." Move on to the next. I carried a little bit of that negative energy into the tee shot on 2, hit it about ten yards further than I usually do and moved on with my day.

Again, if you're going to make a double-bogey, might as well do it on the first hole of the tournament when you have plenty of holes to make it up.

Q. Were you cognizant at the time of Seve doing that, and had you ever 4-putted before in a major championship?

JON RAHM: Have I? I might have. I don't know. I wouldn't be surprised if I haven't done it already but I thought about that quote on the way to the second tee, yeah, yeah. It came to my mind right away. It happens.

THE MODERATOR: Great start to your week, congratulations. Thanks for your time today.