

LIV Golf Chicago

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Bolingbrook Golf Club

Legion XIII

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome captain of Legion XIII and defending LIV Golf Chicago champion John Rahm. You're currently second in the individual standings with two events to go. What's your mindset heading into this final stretch of the season to try and close the gap on Joaquín?

JON RAHM: I don't think my mindset would be any secret. Joaquín has been playing really good, as have many players who are also behind me in the rankings. The only thing left to do this year is to get a win, and I think for there to be a realistic chance of winning it all again starts with a win here, obviously combined with Joaquín maybe not having a great week.

I definitely need that to go into next week with a realistic chance and hopefully have another showdown again on the last event.

Q. Legion XIII are leading the team standings with four wins this season, chasing a third victory in a row with wins in Andalucía and the UK. What's been the key to your success and the consistency that you've shown this year?

JON RAHM: I think the format change, allowing all four scores to count all three days was something that I thought would be very beneficial for us, the second I knew we were going to add Tom McKibbin to the team, somebody that was relatively unknown to almost everybody at LIV, who now is not, knowing how good he was, obviously Tyrrell doing Tyrrell things, and Caleb with more experience playing better.

I was always confident we could do really well, and it's funny, we started great and had a bit of a slump, then our second win, and almost going into summer we're all playing at a much higher level getting those two wins in a row and being consistently in a good place. At this stage obviously getting the No. 1 spot to where we can control as much as we can control going into the last event is something important.

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Q. Given that Joaco has won five times, are you surprised you even have a mathematical chance at catching him?

JON RAHM: Yes. I think it was after Valderrama when finishing second and he didn't have a great week that week, when I looked and I was only 16 points back, it was just kind of one of those moments where math wasn't mathing very well.

But I guess afterwards where -- somebody told me, I think it was yesterday, actually the weeks he hasn't won, he hasn't had his best stuff and hasn't added a lot of points, so that's where keeping my consistency, I've had a chance to stay somewhat close.

Now, he has won five times, so that gets us as close as I can get without getting a win. That's why I'm saying if I can win this week and he doesn't have a great one, I think it's definitely going to be a fun week going into next week.

Q. We mentioned you guys have won eight times as a team and you've got the two tournament wins and the individual championship. How do you process a team victory versus an individual victory? Is it similar kind of gratification? Is it somewhat different? How is it in your mind?

JON RAHM: It's very different. The team victory is a collective effort. It's something we share between all of us. At different stages of the year, I feel like they have a different meaning.

Earlier on when you're getting those wins, at least in my case, I feel like I'm much more excited about the actual win, and then later on the year like right now, it's almost more about, okay, one step closer to having the No. 1 spot going into the final event and obviously the Team Championship starts to take much more of a presence and weight and almost thinking about that more. Throughout the year it's a weird way how it changes how I feel about each spot.

Individually obviously you always want to win as well, but it's a different feeling. It's just a different feeling. But even then individually the team is there to celebrate with you, which is quite special.

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Q. Beyond the victories themselves, what kind of moments have you experienced as a captain that have been gratifying, whether it's watching Caleb develop, maybe it's a moment that sticks out in your mind from a team bonding standpoint, maybe it's a sponsorship? What kind of gratifying moments have there been there?

JON RAHM: I do get some moments where some players can be a little bit more vulnerable towards me more than they would ever have been because of the position I'm in as captain, and I think they're also more willing to ask for help because of the environment we're in as opposed to any other tour being more individual. Sometimes people can hesitate asking for advice.

Without getting too much into what people have asked, I think my favorite part of this year, having arrived early in Hong Kong and having plenty of time until Friday after a team dinner, for some reason, I don't know if it was me or Tyrrell, I think it might have been me, who had the brilliant idea of let's go find a karaoke bar, and Google Maps works as it works, translated from Chinese to English.

Finding myself and Tyrrell in this building in Hong Kong Island, not that we were ever in danger, but somehow I ended up on the roof looking for this place. At some point we ended up in the basement finding a different place. So that whole story as a team and almost showing -- the one that's traveled the least, and I know his name comes up in a lot of it, but it's Caleb; Caleb hasn't traveled that much, hasn't seen that much worldwide. Him telling the story of we were in the sketchiest part of the city. We were not. We were in a very nice part of Hong Kong Island, never in danger.

Almost having those team experiences -- we ended up finding a very nice place. It was a lot of fun. Jet lag hours, your brain and your body are obviously operating in different places and you're awake at weird times, so it was in a weird way a very fun night with the team, unexpected because not that it was the plan, but recalling that story the next morning from Caleb's eyes thinking that we were -- I wouldn't know how to explain it, but if he were to tell you the story, you would have thought we were on skid row. We were not. It was a little bit of a fun night early on in the year.

Q. Just for the record, did you actually sing? Did you sing yourself?

JON RAHM: Yeah. I'm a terrible singer. I've said many times if I could trade a lot of my golfing talent for singing, I would, but not everybody has the bravery, I guess, to stand

up and sing. But most of us did. I guess after a while you get comfortable enough. But not in public. We had our own little room. There's no way without going in a room like this and sing. No chance.

Q. Do you have a go-to karaoke song?

JON RAHM: No, that was the first time I ever went to one. I figured China was as good a place as any other to go to.

Q. You mentioned the format change helping all scores count. Did you campaign for that when you arrived?

JON RAHM: No, I did not. Whenever it was brought up, I thought it was a good idea. I thought it would be better for everybody and for the strength of competition as a league.

I think on Friday and Saturday if somebody was way out of position not playing great, you could have the excuse of, well, my score doesn't count either way and be able to give up. That's something that I personally can't stand.

I've told everybody on my team, even if it doesn't count on Friday - that was before they changed it - I'd rather you shoot 8-over than 9-over. Compete until the end because that kind of sets an ideology that we're always going to keep fighting no matter what.

That's always been my philosophy at least. If you can finish 33rd instead of 34th, go ahead because it's better. You have to do your duty as a competitor to do that until the end, and I think changing that rule was great for everybody to actually try.

Again, I thought it was to my benefit as a team. It was better for us.

Q. On the idea of format changes, with LIV's ability to do that pretty nimbly as the league looks to pursue world ranking points, have you been in the discussions of what changes you think would get that done or should be made on that front?

JON RAHM: Yes and no. I think the way I see it, at least right now, there's a process to hopefully enter those world ranking points and at least get our foot in the door, and then once we're allowed, we can see what changes can be made to earn as many as possible, keeping the integrity of what LIV Golf is about.

Examples of that would be, let's say with whatever we're doing currently we get 20 points. If you add a fourth round, you go to 25. Is that worth it, is that not worth it. If you add a cut, things like that. Right now with as little players as we

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have, I don't see a cut working very well, and with the teams I think it would be a little odd.

But if the league were to expand and let's say you go to 15 teams, you have 60 players, now you can actually possibly make something work.

There's many possibilities that I can think of. By the way, this is completely hypothetical because I haven't spoken to anybody about it, but there's things we could do I think to add more world rankings points if we need it, and I'm sure there's more that I can't think of that the folks at OWGR and maybe Scott or the front of the LIV office can probably tell us about to give us a little bit more of strength of field.

Q. What do you like about this golf course and how does it suit your game?

JON RAHM: All I know about it, obviously, it's based on last year, and it was so firm and fast and windy that it was pretty clearly a ball striker's golf course. Greens, small and very undulated. You had to be very precise going into the greens.

There's some of them, like 3 and 12, that you're playing with such small margins that you're almost thinking, well, I'm going to have to get it up-and-down most likely two out of three days because it's so hard to hit those greens in two.

I must also say, the fairways are already firm, greens are still a little soft, but they're probably trying to keep them, save them.

We're going to have the complete opposite wind in theory than we had last year, so the golf course is going to play vastly different.

We also have a brand new tee, which seems like 150 yards further back, on 12. Went from being a short par-4 last year, at least playing short, to a very long par-5 because it might play into the wind, and then the 8th hole, which we didn't use the back tee last time because it played into the wind, now it may be playing downwind, and it's a tee box that's 95 yards further back.

We are going to see some changes on the course, and especially the way you play it.

I still think it's a ball striker's course. Fairways are wide but they don't play as wide because of how much they bounce and roll out, so if you have a crosswind and you have that ball going with the wind, it can easily bounce and keep on going.

An example I can give is 11 yesterday in the practice round, Caleb and I overfaded our tee shot a little bit and it landed not dead center but not too far right of center, and both balls missed the fairway right because it took a big bounce and kept on going.

There's many examples of that, and once the greens get firm, it's a bit of everything needs to be good. I was hitting it so good last year at this point that it felt like it really, really suited my game at that point as well.

Q. With that in mind, what do you need to work on the next couple of days before Friday gets here?

JON RAHM: Same as any other week really. We'll see how the golf course develops, but there's no rain forecasted but there's wind forecasted. I'm sure the superintendents are going to do a great job of making sure the golf course is as challenging as possible.

The main thing I would say, just trying to control our ball in the wind, trajectory control, ball flight, make sure spin control is good just in case the greens are still soft enough early in the week. They're so sloped that you need to make sure you have enough control coming into the greens so you don't roll off or get into the habit of missing too many greens because it's not easy up-and-downs. The rough is quite thick and you're most likely going to have to deal with quite a bit of slope into those shots.

Q. On the Ryder Cup front, I think there's a lot of assumptions that are fair that you'll just be involved. Have you been in conversations with Luke to confirm things? Does your late September look pretty solid at this point?

JON RAHM: There's nothing I can confirm nor deny. But I think he has been texting me like he has been texting quite a few other players that are on that list of the possibility of getting picked. Luke is extremely dedicated and very well-organized as a captain, so I think there's probably -- six automatic and then six picks, right, so there's probably about at least 10 names on top of those guys who are qualified that he's probably constantly texting.

He might have told some people that they're -- I don't think he's actually told anybody they're in yet because it's too early. He's probably waiting until the end of August through the playoffs and our events to maybe start making statements like that. In my case, I think I'm just one more of those many names.

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