

# Hero Dubai Desert Classic

Tuesday, 14 January, 2025

Dubai, UAE

Majlis Course at Emirates Golf Club

## Jon Rahm

### Press Conference



BRIONY CARLYON: We'd like to welcome Jon Rahm to the Hero Dubai Desert Classic.

Jon, making your debut here at Emirates Golf Club. You've obviously been a winner in Dubai on three occasions down the road. How much are you looking forward to this week, and what have you made so far of the golf course and your experience to start the year here in Dubai?

JON RAHM: I've only played the front nine. So I'm going to get to see the back nine today. So I can't make a full assessment. But fantastic golf course. Obviously I've seen this event on TV many, many times. And, you know, the past schedule, didn't -- or I chose not to come for some of the events in California, right, because some events I played really good at and I really liked.

You know, the way things have evolved in the last few years, I'm glad that I have this open to come and enjoy this great event. Hopefully do as well as I have so far in Dubai. It's a city that I love. It's a city that is worth coming to, and it's probably -- the great vibe that I have when I come here, the reason I didn't played so well.

So I hope I can keep playing really well and win in Dubai.

**Q. When you come to a new golf course like this one, how do you assess the golf course, and how do you make sure that you are at your best come Thursday?**

JON RAHM: Well, it's two different things. Trying to be at my best come Thursday, doesn't really change in any other week, right. The process is usually the same no matter the golf course.

Now assessing the golf course, I think is just playing it, right. I played nine yesterday and play nine today, and I have an 18-hole Pro-Am. That should be plenty of time to play all the holes and get familiar with it. A lot of it is getting comfortable with some of the lines off the tee; comfortable with some of the shots into the green, and just quickly seeing where I think I would be best off if I were to

make a mistake, right.

But I think usually that's pretty self-explanatory based on the pin and the conditions. I think any golfer would be able to tell you, this is the go spot, this is a bad spot, etc.

What I usually focus on in practise rounds is try to get that feeling and that touch around the greens. So short game, putting in general. Because as much as you do on the practise rounds, it's never the same as the course.

So yeah, I don't necessarily care how I hit it to the green. I feel like striping it on every hole in the practice round doesn't really do you any good. Doesn't matter. There's no score that counts. You do what you can on the range if you have to fix, my main focus is usually try to get that feeling of the greens.

**Q. And for someone of your calibre, is there any golf course which still puzzles you, even after playing eight or ten times?**

JON RAHM: Not yet. I think -- not that many times. Not that many times, right.

I would say a good example would be Quail, Quail Hollow. It's a course that on paper I should do really good at, and the two times I've played, I just haven't played great, right. But it's also because I just wasn't hitting it great.

It's such a demanding golf course that if you're not hitting it well, especially off the tee, you're going to have a long week and that's what happened to me both times.

But there's certainly courses that you learn to play, and there's a course like Muirfield Village, you have to play a few times and learn how to play, and first time I went, I played terrible after that. Played a little better.

But I wouldn't say the same; that I can't understand what to do here. I think a lot of times as a player, it's your job to adjust and adapt to the golf course. Every year, the course plays a little bit different. There's some different strategies. It's hard to say. I don't think yet I've been in I place where I still get to the first tee and feel clueless about what to do.



**Q. With the Team Cup last week, could I get your position? Obviously we know you've got the appeal against the fines. If that is heard before the Ryder Cup, would you settle the account and still make yourself available?**

JON RAHM: I don't know what's going to happen in the future but I can tell you my plan is to be on that team at Bethpage.

**Q. So that would be regardless of the outcome of the appeal, you would make yourself available?**

JON RAHM: I don't know what's going to happen, and I'm hoping they don't try to settle the appeal before The Ryder Cup. I don't think that would be good for anybody.

But my plan is to be at Bethpage.

**Q. And can I ask if you watched any of last week and whether you were excited by the sort of emerging talent you've got in Europe?**

JON RAHM: Well, I was already aware of the talent. I wasn't able to watch a lot live just because of the time difference, and with me practicing, mainly what I watched was highlights of matches.

I think the one that impressed me the most was Tyrrell in his match versus Thorbjørn, and it was Norgaard, right. I mean, shooting 7-under without dropping a shot in foursomes and tying the match is quite hard to do, right.

So I think seeing something like that is a lot of fun as a golf fan, as somebody who has played foursomes quite a bit it's very impressive on both sides for them to do that.

But I didn't get to see singles that often or that many. I couldn't give you an assessment of every Cink player, right. It wouldn't be fair. Unfortunately the leaderboard was heavily one-sided this year.

I'm just glad that a lot of these younger players that maybe haven't had a chance to play Ryder Cup yet get to experience a little bit of what the Ryder Cup would be like. From what I hear they did an incredible job off the golf course of giving them the experience of that team feeling as close as we can to the Ryder Cup.

Obviously it's not the same thing, but seeing what the locker room would look like and many other things, and the atmosphere in the week in general, I think is very, very beneficial.

I wish I would have had that because when I went to Paris, I was a fish out of water. I was very out of my comfort zone, and I think it showed a little bit on the golf course as well.

**Q. You're you didn't play this event because usually you're committed to California, and as you said, you've done well. Apart from Ryder Cup, are there any other reasons why you decided to play and add in the Desert Classic in your schedule?**

JON RAHM: Yeah, again, it's a tournament I've wanted to play. There's a lot of history in this event. There's a lot of great champions in this event. It's very, very quality championship. Again, I love the city. I love coming here. Any chance I get to come to a tournament and play this event and come to the city, to me, it's a good opportunity.

But then it's a good way to start the year, right. We don't have our first LIV event until the first week of February. That's quite a bit of time off, right. So being able to play an event before is nice to kind of get the competition feeling going.

And then it just helps for throughout the year. It's going to be quite tricky for me to play more DP World Tour events until after August. It's quite a busy schedule. So it's nice to play one early on and not have to play too many after the Ryder Cup. Towards the end is always difficult. I never want to fall short and possibly lose my membership. So there's many reasons why this week was a really great choice for me in my schedule.

**Q. A couple years ago, you were fulsome in your praise on Sergio in terms of what he could offer with his experience. After a year on LIV and having seen him play, do you think he's still one of the Top-12 European players?**

JON RAHM: Yeah. I mean, for people that see him any given day, Sergio Garcia can a can hit it tee-to-green better than anybody on the planet. It's that simple. He's still that good and he's still very valuable.

Right, I understand the change in circumstances. I get it. But at the end of the day, being Spanish and a friend and a mentor, I'm obviously going to be biased towards him. And I would love to see him in that team room but who knows what's going to happen.

I also understand we did an incredible job in that last Ryder Cup having a newer team and coming together and performing the way we did. So I hope, I believe that there's a place for Sergio in there. I think there will be a place for Sergio on the Ryder Cup any given time. It's just a matter

of time now is letting the clubs do the talking.

**Q. As we start 2025, what is your assessment of where professional golf is, and is it where you expected it would be at this point?**

JON RAHM: It's hard to tell at this point. I think a lot of us would say that when that framework agreement was done over a year and a half ago, things would be further along at this point.

And it's real hard to know what goes on behind closed doors, right. It's up to people much higher up than me. I don't know what their vision is or what they are expecting out of it, right. I think so many of us want some kind of resolution to come together and get the best product possible for the consumer, which is what I think we're still in a position to do.

But I think we're living in a golden era right now for golf where the possibilities are endless. A big tour in Europe and worldwide and a massive tour, the PGA TOUR, and you have another big product with live and now you're even adding the TGL. When it comes to golf, the possibilities are there right now.

I think with the right minds put together, you can end up with a product, and I've been saying this all along, that could put golf at a different level in the world of sport. I'm still hopeful that that can happen and whatever it looks like, it will look like whatever it looks like.

But we are in that position nowadays to put golf in a higher level and I hope that happens.

**Q. Heading into your second season on LIV, did you really think a year ago that there would be no World Ranking points available yet a year on from when you joined, and how frustrating has that been for you going forward?**

JON RAHM: I think I've expressed my opinions on the World Ranking system before I joined LIV. But they told us -- they told me early on, I think even before I signed in the early conversations, that they were not going to pursue those discussions to the same level because they knew where it was directed.

I think at this point to not give LIV World Ranking points and the credibility it deserves, I think is wrong.

Listen, I understand we've all made a decision and it's not as easy as it sounds but to say that LIV players don't deserve some spots in major championships I think is wrong and I hope that evolves into what it should be, right.

I think Joaquin Niemann has done a good enough job for him to earn his way into major championships without invites. Talor Gooch played good enough a few years ago to earn his way into majors without invites. There should be a way for us to qualify. And the World Ranking points, need to figure something out because it's not fair for anybody in that sense.

**Q. There's been some reports about Tom McKibbin transferring over. Wonder what you make of him as a player, and do you think LIV is a good environment for a young player like that to progress?**

JON RAHM: I can't tell you what a good and bad environment is for Tom. I think that's an answer for him. I think it is a good environment as any, really. It's just as competitive as pretty much any other tour. You have to go out there and play against some of the best players in the world, so yeah, it's an environment in which you can grow very rapidly, as well.

He's a fantastic player, and the possibilities for him are endless whenever he decides to do.

BRIONY CARLYON: Thank you for your time, and all best this week.

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