

LIV Golf Jeddah

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Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Royal Greens Golf & Country Club

Jon Rahm

Legion XIII

Joaquín Niemann

Torque GC

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Jon Rahm, captain of Legion XIII, and Joaquín Niemann, captain of Torque GC. Jon, 8-under 62 to start the week, round 1, tied for first. Tell us about your round today.

JON RAHM: Really, really good day. Drove it great. Drove it really good, besides maybe one tee shot, and even then I ended up in a good spot on 12. Anytime you shoot a bogey-free 62, there's not much that goes wrong. Put it in the right spots and gave myself the opportunities.

The key for that low of a score was three lengthy putts that I made. A long one on 6, a long one on 16, and maybe mid-range to long on that last one, on the 2nd, to finish the day. That obviously improved the score a little bit, but overall it was really good.

Inside 10 feet, made pretty much every putt I looked at, so that's always going to be good. Hopefully I can just keep playing as good as I have and keep rolling it in.

Q. Most of the guys talk about how many times they've played this course. I think it's your first competitive round here. How did you find it out there?

JON RAHM: Like everything, there's going to be a few spots where when you've played a couple more times, a couple breaks or situations, wind differences, you're going to have more experience on, but it's not a golf course that is very tricky tee to green. Like it's very much in front of you. You know where you have to go. You just have to hit good shots.

I feel like my record when I'm playing tournaments for the first time has been pretty good for some reason. Sometimes not knowing is a blessing.

Q. Joaco, another great round, 63, 7-under par, tied at third. Tell us about your round today.



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JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, it was a good day. Since the start, I hit the ball great, gave myself a lot of chances, made a few good putts, too, and I think I could have made probably two shots less on the last two holes, but still a really good round. I had a lot of fun playing with Jon and Phil.

This course is always fun to play. This is probably my fifth time here. I always have a good time playing with this weather -- well, when it's not too hot. With this wind, it's fun to play. It's a good setup, it's a good course, and you've got to hit good shots. It's a lot of fun to play here.

Q. Joaco, obviously the last month has been pretty good for you. You won, you got the Masters invite. What's it been like the last month for you? How would you sum it up, keeping up the good form, that type of thing, obviously in a very good frame of mind?

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, I think it's been good, but I just need to focus on what I have to do better. I think if I just keep doing that, then good things are going to come from that.

I think I'm a believer that if you do things right, good things are coming your way. I just want to keep doing the same. This is what I love to do, come here, play tournaments, have a chance to win. It's always fun. I've just been enjoying this moment, and it's been great to get into the Masters. I'm just super excited for that.

Q. Jon, talk about the group that you guys had. Did you feel like you fed off each other? Obviously you and Phil are close. Just the overall vibe today with the group.

JON RAHM: Yeah, I think, what were we, 19-under as a group? When you see your playing competitors, playing partners hit good shots after good shots, even on par-3s or on holes where you're in a similar situation, you see them go first and hit good shots, it's always going to feed into the rest of the group. You keep seeing the ball go in. I feel like it's such a positive vibe that it shows. It makes you play a little bit better.

Plus Joaquín is great to play with, and Phil and I have



played so many golf rounds together, and being with him again on the golf course was a lot of fun. I could say there was a lot going for me today to possibly have a good round.

Q. Joaco, it's a great set of stats, you're first in greens in regulation and second in driving. How are you approaching the course knowing you're driving so well and your iron play is so good? Is it something you can automatically just get into the round?

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Yeah, I think I've been really good lately with my driver, and I think it's just building confidence from it. I like being aggressive off the tee, and I think there is a lot of holes here where you hit the fairway and you're down there, you're going to have a better chance to make birdie. I'm kind of going that way, taking advantage of that a little bit, and yeah, this is one of the courses that I've played it a few times. I know the lines. I know where the good misses are. I feel pretty good off the tee on most of the holes here.

Q. Joaco, all week on the range it's been wind off the left, and it changed a little bit earlier on and started to swirl around. How difficult is it when the wind moves a little bit here because it's so traditionally off the west, off the sea. How do you approach that?

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Normally it's coming from the north, north-northwest, and yeah, we started with the opposite wind almost today, and probably for four or five holes, it was the opposite, and then it went back to normal.

I've never seen it like that. I think it's always really consistent, in the same direction. You can adjust a little bit, but the course is still there. You've still got to hit the shots, and it doesn't change much.

Q. Jon, who was happier on 16, you or Phil, because the way you celebrated together, it was amazing. It looked like you were playing a team event together?

JON RAHM: I felt horrible on the tee because obviously he was happy to make a 3, and he hit such a good quality shot in there. I think all of us were surprised that it didn't turn in a couple more yards. We saw it land, I gave it the courtesy second or two, and then I said, "Good shot, Phil," and then the next time I look up, the ball is going down off the green.

Spent the entire hole walking up to the green next to him thinking, do I say anything, what do I say now, so when he chipped in, I told him, "Man, thank God," and I told him exactly what happened, and that's why we were laughing. I just felt bad. It's one of those things that happen in golf.

It was such a beautiful shot. He deserved that 3.

Q. Obviously with the team event, it's new for you in many ways. Starting the third event here, do you feel much pressure as the team captain to lead from the front?

JON RAHM: Saying that I don't have much experience in team sports is not --

Q. In the golf world?

JON RAHM: That's not really true. I've been part of teams my entire life. Growing up, the way you basically get into golf in Spain, it's always through teams. You first are maybe -- would be my province team, and then you become your state team and then national team and then college. I've been part of a team my entire life. It's some of the most fond memories I have on the golf course. That's why I don't think it was that hard of a transition in that sense because I've been a part of -- plus four years of college golf.

I think when I turned pro, it was the first time I wasn't part of a team. It's just something that I enjoy. I don't feel the pressure to go out there and lead, but if I'm not having my best day and I see my teammates doing well, it definitely helps you in a different way to play a little bit better if needed.

Q. Jon, the 18th hole today, the way you played it, and then you made that birdie over there, is that kind of what makes you the best player in the world? You looked like in trouble throughout that hole and then you make a birdie over there.

JON RAHM: It is funny because after the tee shot I told Adam, we can just make 4 the traditional way, and when I made it, he told me, that was not the traditional way. I said, if anything it's the Spanish way. From trouble to trouble, good shot, make the putt.

I just hit it left. I thought about going for the green, just not a good enough lie, and I caught a massive flier on the -- I was 220 yards from that bunker, trying to just chip an 8-iron, and it never came down.

Then from the bunker, luckily I drew a good lie. It wasn't the hardest shot in the world. I certainly didn't expect it to go left of the pin. But distance-wise it was a good number and a good lie. It wasn't the hardest with the conditions we had today, but obviously you still have to hit the shot.

It's just you've got to fight for the score every shot, every situation you're in. Certainly I didn't shy away from trying to

make a birdie, that's for sure.

Q. Jon, you spoke about going and playing new courses and feeling comfortable. Being from Arizona and playing in desert courses, does that in any way help when you come to a desert course like this?

JON RAHM: It's not quite the same. Most of the courses we play over there, once you're off grass, you're in rocks. So the ball is not really playable a lot of times. It's a little bit different, and it's different type of grass, as well.

Do I feel comfortable with maybe a little dustier look and the heat? Yeah. It's not too far from what Arizona is like. But the golf course itself is very different to what we would see. But it's like what Joaco said; it's a fantastic golf course where you need to hit quality shots, and if you're aggressive and pull it off, you can pull off a score, and that's what we did today.

Q. Joaco, this absolutely red hot form that you are showing over the past three months now, do you know what changed at the beginning? Is it just the driver, or was there one moment that you thought that, okay, I think I am on to it now?

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: I think it was a little bit of everything. When I look back now from last season, I wasn't playing my best golf, and I think everything was a little bit weaker. Off the tee, iron shots, putting, my routines off the golf course, I think the way I worked on my game and the way I did my preparation before the tournaments, I think it's a little bit of everything. I'm trying to improve right now on everything as much as I can.

Obviously I had a few changes in my swing in the technique that I was struggling with a little bit, and now it's been feeling a little bit better. I've been getting more confident in my swing, too, being able to see those shots and just commit to them and go hit them.

I think it's just building confidence during the last couple months, it just shows whenever anything is going in the right direction, it's a little bit easier.

Q. Is there one thing you can put your finger on that you think you have improved the most?

JOAQUIN NIEMANN: Me. Everything.

Q. What's the strategy to maintain the same position individually and as a team?

JON RAHM: Strategy, keep executing the shots the way you see it. There's no elaborate answer to that. It's just

keep playing good golf. You have to stay aggressive and give yourself plenty of chances. It's a golf course that allows you to be aggressive, and I think if you try to dial it back a little bit, it's hard to score on.

I think you can see with both of us, every single chance we could, driver was in our hands, hit it up as close to the green as possible and give yourself a wedge because that's how you can attack this golf course.

If the wind comes up, scores are going to be a little bit lower, but it doesn't really change in that sense.

Q. Jon, in order for you guys to maintain that first place as a team, what were your words of encouragement to the team? What would you say to your team members in order to maintain the same position?

JON RAHM: We're all grown men. They can take care of themselves. When they're playing this good, there's nothing I have to say. Everybody on the team is very competitive. If there's anything I have to say, it's keep fighting. Every shot counts. No matter what, keep trying to post a score, especially Sunday when every score actually does count.

Never give up and stay strong because we've all been playing well, and Kieran is playing really good golf, it's just not there yet, and I think at one point it's going to click and he's going to put in a low one.

When things are going this well, there's not much I should be saying, I think. Just let them do what they have to do.

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