

LIV Golf Andalucía

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Sotogrande, Spain

Real Club Valderrama

Jon Rahm

Legion XIII

Press Conference

--ENGLISH PORTION--

THE MODERATOR: Let's he welcome the captain of legion 13 and our hometown hero, Jon Rahm, the moment everyone has been waiting for. I just want to start out by asking the obvious question: How does it feel to be back in Spain and competing in your homeland?

JON RAHM: Well, it feels great. It feels great. One of the very exciting, one of the many things about joining live was coming here and playing in front of a Spanish crowd, especially on a level of event and level of competition that I had not really yet enjoyed, right.

I've been able to play events in Spain but you didn't have a world-class stage, I would say. Very fantastic, great players, but it wasn't the same level of accomplishments that we have in LIV Golf.

So to come back and be a part of this is quite emotional. It's very exciting and if there was ever a place to get my first win, anything like that this would be the perfect week, and it is an iconic golf course it. Has a lot of history, and it would be great to enjoy the incredible list of Spanish champions that have performed well and become one of them.

THE MODERATOR: That's a great segue. You are right behind Joaquin Niemann in the points for the standings for LIV, yet you have not been able to take home a trophy yet this year individually. Is this the week to do it?

JON RAHM: I hope so. I mean, if it's the week to do it, the week we are playing would be the best. But the fact that we are in Spain, home crowd, home week, yeah, that makes it that much more meaningful.

THE MODERATOR: Do you have all of your family and friends supporting you here this week?

JON RAHM: Yeah, there's a lot of family and friends. Spanish people can travel in a bunch, especially when it's



in their home country, it's a lot easier. Yeah, there will be a fair amount of people out there.

Q. Can you just take us through your history at this course and you mentioned the word iconic. Why in your view is this course so iconic? Is it the history? Is it other things? Just take us through that Valderrama.

JON RAHM: Yeah, it's a history. I mean, arguably, it's all subjective but it's probably the best golf course we have in Spain. It's something that we all grew up wanting to play. That unfortunately wasn't a possibility for me until I turned pro, right. I'm not from this part of the country and it's a private club, so that makes sense. It wasn't my first showing because I missed my first cut ever.

But the legacy of the 1997 Ryder Cup, the fact that The European Tour championship, the Volvo Championship was hosted here many years and just the tradition of how difficult a test it is is what makes it so unique, right. Very rarely do we see a tournament where if you shoot even par, you're 99.9 percent guaranteed a Top-10 and in many years you win, right. It's very refreshing to see something like that, and I think that all of those things combined make it for what I would say an iconic golf course and an iconic week.

Q. What's the most challenging shot out here?

JON RAHM: It all depends on the wind, right. It can gust here pretty good. It's a big difference depending on the direction. I think when the wind is into on 12 or 15, being able to hit those greens is, you know, 4-iron plus in hand, it's difficult. There's more targets. You can't run it up. You just can't hide and you have to hit a really good shot.

And 12 is very known for playing in off the left, right. I would say probably hitting that shot on the green would be the most difficult hole, shot on the course.

Q. You mentioned '97. You were only about two years of age, so you probably can't remember much of it. But just what that week means in history of Spanish golf and Seve and all of that, and do you get a flavor of that still when you come here? Do you actually think of that?



JON RAHM: Yeah, I do think of it. I think I've told this story many times. Two of my dad's friends were present in the Ryder Cup and none of them have ever seen a golf course in their life. They were just in the area on vacation and heard of the Ryder Cup and came and watched. That's how my dad's friends started playing golf and how they convinced my dad to start playing golf and therefore why I play golf, right. Yeah, there's definitely a relationship and a link to Seve and all the Ryder Cup itself when I think about it, and Valderrama, obviously.

The owner of the golf course did an amazing job at bringing big events here, and even though he's passed away, the legacy is still there, right. So yeah, it's -- all of those things are present in mind when I come here and you know set foot on the range for the first time.

Q. What did you think of the appointment of Keegan as U.S. captain. Were you surprised?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I don't know why. I just, I heard so many people say it was going to be Tiger, Tiger at Bethpage. I'm like, that makes sense, right. He's won the U.S. Open at Bethpage, and it is Tiger Woods. So I felt like that made a lot of sense.

But I understand Keegan, as well, right. His Ryder Cup showings, he was a very enthusiastic player. He made his mark. Him and Phil had a great partnership, and there's some great highlights from him at Medinah.

So he's a man from the northeast. I know Boston and New York, usually not friends, but I think for that week, they will just adopt him for the week. Yeah, I can see it. I can understand why he was picked.

Q. This year, this far, how would you rate your game from 1 to 10?

JON RAHM: Hard to say. There's been weeks where I feel like I scored a lot better than I felt, and there's been a couple weeks where it could have been better. Haven't won yet so that would deduct quite a bit from it.

I would say maybe 6 to a 7 out of 10 if I had to say. But the year is not over. Still a lot to play for. It would not be unheard of to see a player finish strong and change that to maybe a 9 out of 10. So far just because I haven't won, I can't give it more than a 7.

Q. Is it something in the format that is less competitive than before?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. So that's not the thing missing?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. What's missing?

JON RAHM: It's not easy to win golf tournaments. I've been close. I just haven't gotten it done.

--SPANISH PORTION (TRANSLATED)--

Q. In a sport that is complex to win, with only one winner, you've had a challenging year. How do you deal with that, especially mentally given it's a solo game?

JON RAHM: The most important thing to understand is that you can have a good year and not win, and you can also have a bad year and be lucky enough to win one week. In the end, golf is such a complex sport that cannot be summarized as if you win or not. You can have a good year and the times that you have an opportunity to win, there are 2 or 3 players that have a strong week. It has been for Joaquin a couple of times and other players this season.

In any case, I am not that happy with how I started, because I started by playing well enough for me to win and I have not won, but we had last year when started really well and then after the Masters it went terrible until the Ryder Cup. Maybe this year, it will be different. Maybe I am not starting well, although I have been playing well, and I may finish the second half of the year playing better. So, I am confident that it could be like that.

And mentally, there will always been certain challenges. It's clear that there have been changes this year, but there is a point when you have to get used to certain things or to face other things. But I am very comfortable with where I am and so keen to keep competing because I know that in a matter of in one moment, in one swing, or one day that changes it all and you may start a streak of good weeks.

Q. With all the competitors, the technical side of the game is so important but how about the mental one?

JON RAHM: This is something people don't usually talk about. I believe it's important in every sport, but it is as important or more than the rest of the game. And I believe that nobody will speak about an athlete that has no mental strength. The good ones are mentally very strong.

Q. What is your relationship with Valderrama. You have done very well here; you were very close to winning in the past. And you've had some bad weeks

with some misses that are rare for you. From the outside it seems that this course is a real challenge for you. But what is your relationship with this course, what do you feel when you are here?

JON RAHM: It is a challenge for everybody. But if you think about when those tournaments were played, the two times that I did not make the cut were in October, and when I played well was in July. Maybe that is something, but of course the course is played differently - with different wind, different temperature.

The conditions are different, and I believe that we also have to say that when you arrive here in October after playing the Spanish Open, I arrived very tired. So much so that I have found it very difficult to overcome the difficulty of Valderrama when I was physically and mentally tired of the full year. It's also a cheap excuse that I can give you, but it is a reason. I think it is the course that shows it does not matter who you are. You can have three good shots, stay in the fairway then find a tree and it is what it is, so it is a course very difficult for everybody.

But the truth is that this week when I arrived, I felt so much joy. It is a beautiful course which has been incredibly well looked after, and it is in the best condition I have ever seen it. This is the fourth time I've been here and maybe with the change that I've had in my golf career this year, I've arrived here with much more energy... like a kid.

Almost like this is something new that I do for the first time, and feeling just so excited to play and play well in front of the Spanish audience because there is nothing more joyful than when I do a good job at home because the people are incredible and it is so joyful to be able to do it (play) in front of them... especially if I end up winning

Q. Looking at your trajectory since 2017 - your first complete year as a pro – this is the first year that your first victory has yet to arrive by this point. You said that there is still time to turn it around and achieve a 10/10 performance or get closer to 10 in this season. Could your reference be in 2019 when your first win of the season arrived in Ireland at the beginning of June and then you closed a good year with many wins?

JON RAHM: It could be. I think it is almost like 2021 when I played very well and was in the top 10 consistently and I won nothing. Then I got to the US Open and I won, and then I closed out with a good year. It may have been my only victory, but I played really well the full year. It is possible that this is like 2019. Or possibly like in 2012 when Rory didn't play well during the year but then he won The Honda Classic and then the PGA's last tournament of the year to close very well by winning in Dubai.

I think I may have the bad habit of playing very well at the beginning of the year and well, maybe I have to change it now and play better at the end of the year.

Q. In this competitive environment as you seek for the first victory in 2024, if you were given the choice and you can choose only one (victory) within this iconic month which one would you choose - Valderrama, the Open Championship or the Olympic Games?

JON RAHM: With all due respect to Spain and the Olympics, there is a clear one which is the Open. That will always be big, but with some luck there could be one, or two or three. If I could choose, I would choose the three, but winning the cup and becoming - along with Seve (Ballesteros) - the only Spaniard to achieve it and to be the first Spanish player after Seve in winning 3 majors includes much more than the other two. I am very aware of the relevance of a Gold medal in the Olympics or the importance of winning here in Valderrama, but we cannot compare them with a major.

Q. You said that you arrived here in Valderrama feeling like a kid. But I would like to know how you are feeling as we reach this month, if you feel confident in a win here, or at the US Open, or the Games? And how are you facing the second half of the year?

JON RAHM: At this moment, I'm arriving here with so much energy and so much determination. Really. I know we have a long month, but with great tournaments for which you really don't need too much motivation to want to win them, I have a lot of determination to play and play well.

I feel comfortable with how I've played recently and by removing the injury in my foot – that meant I could not finish in Houston and could not play in The Open – based on how I played in Nashville, I really want to continue to compete because I was very comfortable back then. On the Tuesday in Houston as I was playing 9 holes, I was so happy with how well I was feeling with all the parts of the game, and it was a shame that I could not show it. I am so willing to prove it to myself - more than anything - and to have all these options where I could win.

Q. What does it mean to you to play here with all the history that Valderrama has, and if you have time, will we still see you in Sotogrande in October?

JON RAHM: My plan is to, for the first time in my life, be able to play 3 times in Spain as a professional. That is my plan, but it really depends on my wife and my daughter, and if they want to come... and of course when the baby

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

wants to come and how that goes. Right now, we are right in the middle... the due date is exactly around the week of the Spanish Open, or maybe after which can affect one or two of the events. I can't say much but I hope I can play. It really does not depend on me.

Now, as we've said before, I have good personal memories. But the truth is that every time I come here is, I arrive to that first tee and see how beautiful it is, and feel the essence of Valderrama, it makes me emotional every time. This is why I feel ashamed that I haven't been able to play better, and I think this is why I come with this childish enthusiasm, wanting to play well, because I come back feeling rejuvenated to be able to play better.

Q. Back in the day, you said that you were working to ensure that the PGA tour included Valderrama in the American circuit. Now that you are part of LIV, what does LIV bring to Valderrama, and what Valderrama brings to LIV.

JON RAHM: Valderrama brings to LIV a high category golf course, that's clear. It's a world-class course and the level of golf - that to be able to win here - needs to be very high. There are so many tournaments in the year where you enjoy making birdies and pars. This is not one of those, which is a change that I enjoy. It is good to see the professionals suffering every now and then.

LIV brings some fresh air to Valderrama, a change that until now Valderrama did not have. It is a golf course with facilities that make it complicated to host 150 players, but with the atmosphere we have, I believe it gives the people something to enjoy, with a bit more noise and it's a little bit more festive. The Spanish people enjoy having a good time, having a couple of beers and playing golf. It is like if you go to a football match, more like other sports, it is that combination that makes this week so good. Good weather, good food, good people – that's what Spain is all about.

Q. Now... can you imagine if you win here at LIV Golf Andalusia, then Alcaraz wins at Wimbledon and Spain wins the European Championship?

JON RAHM: That's what my Dad said to me this morning. I told a few friends that if I was to win, Alcaraz was to win and Spain was to win, this Sunday we would be on all channels across the world.

I don't know what we are going to do because if I was at home watching – aside from Spain playing late - I would be a bit in trouble as I would not know what to watch between the tennis match and LIV Golf. As a fan of both, it would be difficult. I was thinking I hope Carlos wins, but in 5 long sets so I can watch him! With all due respect, I hope he

wins in quick ones but from a selfish point of view, (I hope it's a long match) I have the opportunity to watch him I would like it to be like that. In any case if I was to win individually on Sunday, I probably would not be able to watch...

So, I have to enjoy it here, and if there is some luck that I finish early, I would like to watch the results after the celebration and then as champions, enjoy a victory of Spain (in the Euros)

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