

LIV Golf United Kingdom

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Rocester, England, UK

JCB Golf and Country Club

Legion XIII

Jon Rahm

Tom McKibbin

Caleb Surratt

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome to the media centre to JCB Golf and Country Club, from Legion XIII, Jon Rahm, Tom McKibbin and Caleb Surratt. Jon, Legion has won the team title twice here at JCB. You also hoisted the individual trophy in 2024. Legion will be going for an unprecedented third consecutive team win at the same venue for a LIV Golf event.

Is there anything that you can point to, whether it's with this type of course or JCB in particular that lends itself to well to the team's success here?

JON RAHM: Not necessarily. I would say it can be a tricky course off the tee, tee to green. A lot of wind, difficult greens, difficult fairways to hit. I think I've said multiple times, if there is one strength that this team has, it's ball-striking. That's why I think we did well in Valderrama, we did well in Mexico and we've done well here. All of them require solid play tee to degree across the board.

I think that's most likely the biggest reason. But at the end of the day, you still have to come and play well. It also happens that we've played good both years at the same time.

Q. Caleb, you finished third here last year in the individual competition. How does it feel to be back, and is there anything that you pull from from last year's experience as you prep for this week?

CALEB SURRATT: Yeah, I think it was nice to play well here last year. Coming off of a couple good experiences recently. Feel like I'm getting a lot better. The mission doesn't really change. Just trying to do my best, play my hardest, and the course suits me pretty well, so I hope to play well and put myself in contention on Sunday.

Q. Tom, you're coming off your third consecutive

appearance at The Open Championship. What was that experience like, and what are the positives that you take away, as you look towards the remainder of the season this year and your hopes and plans for competing in majors moving forward?

TOM MCKIBBIN: Yeah, as you said, third year in a row playing The Open was pretty cool. Obviously was very disappointed with the two days that I played. But yeah, I think anytime you get to play in another one and gather that experience, it's great.

I always come away learning a lot and sort of knowing what I need to do to get better at them. I think sort of hopefully -- when I leave them, you sort of don't want to miss the next one.

I'll be looking to do a lot of hard work to make sure I play in next year's one as well.

Q. Jon, I was curious where you were at Sunday night and how you celebrated.

JON RAHM: I was watching it in bed, trying to -- my family flew back to the U.S., so there was a lot of packing to do that night and that morning, so there was no celebrating whatsoever. As soon as I game was over, I went to sleep. Happy, but I went to sleep.

Q. You're on the verge of a three-peat for the individual championship, and you could wrap it up this week with a win, depending on how Bryson finishes. Just wanted to get your thoughts on what it means to stack up these season-long titles.

JON RAHM: Well, it means a lot more than the simple fact that you're winning. It means that you're playing good golf consistently, and it means that the process has been working. I've always taken a lot of pride in being consistent and having a lot of top 10s, and I think that reflects on those wins.

But to wrap it up this early, I still need to win and I still need

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to expect a bad week from Bryson, which based on how he's been playing last week most likely won't happen.

I would expect a fight from him and other players, and I still need to perform at my best to finish it off.

Q. Caleb, the last time we saw you was in Spain here in LIV, and you've played two majors since. Just wondering, your first two majors of your career, I wonder what you took from those experiences and how you can build on that going forward.

CALEB SURRATT: Yeah, it's great learning experiences. Played pretty nice at the U.S. Open for a decent amount of the tournament but just kind of learning the value of every shot in those majors.

Like last week, I didn't even play that bad and made two bad swings that got some bad breaks in some bunkers and a couple doubles and a triple later, that's how it goes. Kind of learning the value of every shot. Not that I didn't know that, but even more so in the majors.

I felt comfortable out there, more comfortable than I thought I would for sure. I felt very prepared. I know it's where I want to be, so I'm going to keep working very hard to get back, and I have no doubt that I'll be there in the future and doing well.

Q. Jon, just looking at Sunday, there was a lot of talk after Ryan Fox won about his pace of play and how quick he is. Have you had any experiences playing with Ryan? And what sort of message does that send to players that someone who plays so quickly can win like that?

JON RAHM: I don't know if it sent any sort of message. I think there's always been people that are naturally faster at the game. Sam Burns is another one. You put two of the fastest players in any tour together on a final day, so I can assume they might have waited a little bit.

I think what was surprising was taking 22 seconds from the moment the last putt from Sam goes in until Ryan hits his putt to win the championship. I think it shows more than just a fast routine, how confident and how good he was feeling that day.

I've played a lot with Ryan, and obviously I'm not surprised since I know how fast he is, but I think it's eye-opening to the world when you get to see every single shot he hits that day and how quickly he truly plays. I think it can be a big advantage when you're playing well and you're feeling good, and it showed on those last -- 13 on, how good he plays and how quickly everything turned out. There's no

time to overthink and it flows very easily.

Another player that's incredibly fast is Rory McIlroy. Always has been. Brooks as well. There's a lot of people that have won great events that are super fast. It's just never been talked about because I think it's easier to focus on the other side of the coin, right.

But there's a lot of people out there that have achieved a lot being really fast.

Q. On the other side of the coin, on Thursday and Friday, rounds were 5:40, some of the rounds. Is that frustrating being in a group like that, and is there more that needs to be done to speed things up or punish guys who are taking too long?

JON RAHM: I've talked about it with a lot of players. When you go to a major Thursday, Friday, you know it's going to be five and a half hours. It's just what it is. I don't think it's necessarily pace of play from players. You have 156 people trying to compete in two of them. A U.S. Open being the hardest of them all, it's always going to take a long time. The Open, depending on weather conditions and setup, it's always going to take a little bit as well, just because it's that many players. There's nothing you can do when you have that many people playing at once.

That aspect is never going to change. Augusta you have less players, so it's less of an issue. But it comes down to how difficult the setups are and how many people you have in the field. You rarely have an issue with pace of play on the weekend. We were playing four hours, fast.

When you play smaller events with smaller fields like here in LIV, we don't have a pace-of-play issue. It's four and a half hours on average when we're playing threesomes in shotgun. When you're playing in the playoffs and you have 70 players or less, pace of play is never an issue.

It gets to a point where you can only do so much, but when you have -- like last week, for example, a hole like 14 where it's reachable but the green is really hard to hit as a par-5, very few people are going to hit the green, now your ball is running off the green. It's a difficult chip. It's just going to take time. As people hit the fairway, slowly it will delay and delay and delay, and by the end of the day it's going to be quite a wait. It is the nature of the game.

I think the pace of play has been blown out of proportion a little bit as of late, and I think most people only fall back to playing slower simply because the group in front is slow, and you only see a small part of the whole narrative, when the truth is I think when you have a smaller field, it rarely, rarely becomes an issue.



Q. How do you reflect on your week at Birkdale and more widely your major season as a whole?

JON RAHM: Well, first day at Birkdale was one of the most comfortable rounds I've had in a long time tee to green, and Friday as well. I played really good golf. I just couldn't hole the putts but still in good position. On the weekend starting the way I did both days, it's just a glass of cold water to the face, and having to play catch-up the rest of the day on a golf course that was playing trickier and trickier every day, it's not easy at all.

If there was an overall topic for the week, it was just I simply couldn't hole enough putts. I think I did a lot of good things, and just not seeing the ball go in did get a little frustrating, as it would for anybody, and then on Sunday starting with a double and finishing with a double, it's just killer. Having three doubles on the weekend is going to kill you.

Bogeys are okay, and if I had made bogeys instead of triples, it would have been an all-right finish, but it ended up costing me too much.

Overall, well, each week was a very different experience. I wouldn't call it a successful major season whatsoever. Had a great week at Aronimink but just couldn't get it done. I played too bad on Sunday.

Q. There was a code of conduct policy for the majors this year. As players, do you have enough clarity on what constitutes a warning and what would constitute a two-shot penalty, whether it's a club throw or sort of a show of frustration?

JON RAHM: I personally have no idea what the line is. No clue.

Q. Is that frustrating as a player, that you don't --

JON RAHM: No, I think you can all kind of understand what it may or may not be. I completely forgot about it until it happened. I know they issued multiple warnings over the course of the week. Yeah, it would be nice to have some clarity.

Now that you bring up pace of play, I can give you an idea. If you get a warning for code of conduct on Thursday, that warning stays for the whole week and it doesn't reset. You can be slow on Thursday; your group gets warned; you have time to catch up. Then you get put on the clock, and once you're on the clock you get one more warning before you get penalized. So you get three possible bad times amongst many others, and then when you tee off on

Friday, you start from zero again. That doesn't seem very fair to me.

How come one which is a present issue in the game that can cause slow play and affect other people, you get so many breaks, and it's completely looked over, and then in code of conduct, you don't know where the line is. You have no definition of what you can or cannot do, even though we understand where the limit may be, and that warning stays with you for the whole week.

I know the different things and why they're doing it, but either make one of them a lot more stricter or the other one a lot looser. Whatever you choose. But it would be nice to see them on the same line. Don't care.

I think make pace of play stricter.

Q. A couple of weeks ago I interviewed Pablo Larrazábal, and he said he believes the European Tour is in a worse position than it's ever been with all the changes coming to the PGA TOUR. What are your thoughts on that?

JON RAHM: I'm not fully aware of all the changes, so I don't think I can give you a very well-thought-out answer, and especially don't know where -- I'm assuming as the PGA TOUR changes the DP World Tour may do some changes, as well. I don't know where they fall in that category. I couldn't tell you.

I don't think it's great for the tour. I would say as great as it is for the players, to lose your 10 best players of the year that weren't already PGA TOUR members to the PGA TOUR can be a little challenging, but it's a great pathway for players to get to the tour they desire to play in.

But as far as what Pablo said, I don't know enough to give you an answer.

Q. Do you think there's any position of strength that they can use going into the future?

JON RAHM: I mean, there always is. I just don't know -- I don't know what's going on. I don't know enough of the changes maybe for them.

But I think while the DP World Tour has the figure of somebody like Rory where he's devoting so much of his time to play the DP World Tour, and right now he is undoubtedly the most famous golfer on the planet and the most influential, I think they're always going to be in good position by somebody like him supporting the tour. There's always things they can do.



Q. Obviously we've had a long break. Have you had any clarity about the future of LIV Golf at this stage?

JON RAHM: Yes. Well, we're in contact with them. We know a lot of what's going on, yeah. Not that I can share with you guys right now.

Q. You seem optimistic.

JON RAHM: I'm always optimistic. I play a game for a living. I can't really be too upset about how things are going in life. Even though I'm very frustrated on the course very often, off the course I'm very different to what a lot of people think.

Q. Would you expect to be playing LIV Golf in 2027?

JON RAHM: I'm not going to share anything that I can't share with you guys right now.

Q. I don't know if you guys have had a chance to have a practice round out here yet, but they've changed the 6th hole to a par-5. It's been the hardest hole out here the first two years. Just curious, any of you guys want to weigh in on changing that par to par-5?

CALEB SURRATT: Yeah, I mean, it's certainly better. I mean, but it's still the same hole, and now at the end of the day the scorecard is one higher. In theory, the only thing that's really changed is your mentality leaving the hole most likely. You're still signing the same score.

But it is a better hole. It's much better. It's more fun knowing that you can lay up and not be that behind the 8-ball.

But I also think there's other changes that are very good, like the tee further back on 5 is a great hole, tough hole. The tee further back on 7 is a tougher hole.

JON RAHM: Is it the same 5th hole?

CALEB SURRATT: They have the tee back, par-3.

JON RAHM: Yeah, we're going to hit 3-wood into that hole into the wind.

CALEB SURRATT: 5-iron.

JON RAHM: And 5-iron from the up tee; what do you mean?

CALEB SURRATT: It's a good hole.

JON RAHM: It blows 30 into every time we play that hole.

CALEB SURRATT: The thing with 6, though, is the fairways are so much firmer this year, so it's really hard to hit the fairway. I can only imagine how hard it would be as a par-4 if you couldn't hit the fairway.

JON RAHM: To be fair, two years ago in '24, 6 was playing more down. Last year it played more into, so there was a big discrepancy.

CALEB SURRATT: The tee is also 30 yards back. I still hit a wood in yesterday on my second shot. It's a rightful par-5. It's not an easy par-5 or like a pitch-and-putt.

Q. Tom, do you want to weigh in?

TOM McKIBBIN: I just feel like it makes the tee shot a little less stressful. You can miss the fairway and not be too stressed out. I remember last year I think I started on the 6th hole one day, and I thought, probably just going to be 1-over after one. Yeah, happy it's a par-5.

JON RAHM: As he was saying, I think two years we did play it a bit more downwind, so if you're a long enough hitter you could cover the left bunkers and you could cover enough to have a short iron in. Last year it played a bit more into, and if you hit a good tee shot 7-iron if you were a long tricky to hit it's a big difference especially if you miss the fairway.

We've always thought about why not just -- they could even take the tee across the river further back and make it a par-5 if they wanted to. That actually would play nice. The shorter side of the fairway, it seems like that's where they want you to hit the ball. The further up you go, the more sideways and side-sloped it is with the wind being left to right.

I would say just because of the green complex and knowing how firm it's going to be this year, it's a good change. It would be a hard green to hit if you were to miss the fairway in general. Even if you're in the fairway, it would be hard to hit.

Q. Question for Tom and Caleb: What's the pressure like? Obviously learning from Jon and learning from Tyrrell is amazing. I know people have spoken about how it's great to learn from Phil and DJ and Cam and all those things. But is there pressure to perform for Jon, your captain, as some people you call it, your big brother? Do you feel pressure outside of your own game to also deliver for Jon?

JON RAHM: Be careful what you say.



TOM McKIBBIN: I don't know, I've never really thought about it. I think for me anyway, like definitely in anything, any tournament, major, whatever, I think you have sort of your own built-up pressure or nerves or whatever.

But I think once you go out and start playing, sort of going through each shot and obviously just trying to hit the best shot you can, I think you start to forget about that. I've never stood on the middle of the 5th fairway and thought, geez, I need to -- I'm nervous because I don't want to embarrass myself or upset Jon.

But yeah, I think we always just try and play the best we can, and obviously the team element that you want to try and help the team, yeah, can definitely be frustrating if you don't play well, and sort of maybe let the team down a little bit or whatever.

I think there's always a bit of overhang, but it's definitely nice on Sundays if the team is in for a chance of winning and maybe you're not playing the best individually, there's always something to play for. Yeah, it's great that way.

CALEB SURRATT: Yeah, I think kind of what Tom said about the team, certainly towards the end of an event you look up at the leaderboard and see that the team is tied or whatever it is, you don't want to let anyone down. But I know that's not the way Jon or Tyrrell or whoever is leading on the team that week thinks about it that way. That's part of the reason why we're a really good team.

I look at it more from a competitive state because if you -- odds are if you're playing well enough to be around Jon or beat him, you're probably playing well enough to beat anyone in the world.

We're very fortunate to have him as our captain, and the last couple years I know Tom and I both learned a lot and have gotten better from it.

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