

# Men's Olympic Golf Competition

Tuesday, 30 July 2024

Paris, France

Le Golf National

Spain

Jon Rahm

David Puig

Press Conference

BETH MAJOR: Welcome to Le Golf National for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. It's my pleasure to welcome this morning the two members here from Team Spain, Jon Rahm and David Puig.

Can you share, I know you just arrived late Sunday and had a chance to visit the Olympic Village yesterday. Can you share a little bit about the experience of seeing the Village and being at the Olympics for the first time?

JON RAHM: It's certainly an experience. It's hard know what to expect, right. I think both of us have been a part of at least some type of athlete development program, right. He was in one in Barcelona; I was in one in Madrid. To a small concept, we kind of know what to expect, and then as professionals, as well, a little bit of what we see in professional golf but nothing like seeing the best athletes in the world all together doing what they need it do.

I think to me the most impressive part was seeing the buildings each team has and the flags and the setups and what each team does for the athletes and just the lifestyle in general, how big everything is, how big the actual athlete Village is, which I know there's 10,000 athletes from each federation and country. But it's hard to believe what goes into making the Olympics happen. It's quite an unbelievable experience to see it all.

DAVID PUIG: Same for me. It's unreal, all the work that is behind the scenes to make this event happened. The restaurant itself was probably the biggest restaurant I've ever seen in my entire life, and it took us probably five to ten minutes to walk from one side to the other one, and we were obviously on the farthest side. So it was quite a walk.

But the Village itself, it's great. And lots of athletes, lots of people that have been working their entire lives for a moment like this just like us. So it was very exciting and



PARIS 2024



again, just very exciting to be here.

BETH MAJOR: Could I ask you both, also, to represent Spain in the Olympics game, what it means for you?

DAVID PUIG: For me, it means the world. I started very young and competing for Spain in pretty much all the ages. And.

You know, making the Olympics alongside Jon is a dream come true. It makes me very excited and just very proud of myself and all the hard work that it's behind.

So I'm just going to enjoy this week for sure, but at the same time, I'll try to perform as best as I can so hopefully we can both win a medal.

JON RAHM: Obviously I agree with everything he said. We both have been fortunate to represent Spain in many different levels, especially in the amateur world competing for national teams, and once you turn pro, that kind of goes away a little bit, right. I was able to play for Spain in the World Cup in 2017. Besides that, the Ryder Cup you do represent Spain but not really.

To really get to do it again in the Olympic Games is quite unique, right. Very few people in the history of athletes in the world can say they have been part of the Olympic Games, and for us to be the ones can say we qualified is quite special; and hopefully if we can successfully form this week, as well, and to add to the medal count of Spain, it would be quite unbelievable.

**Q. How much are you thinking about this week during Pinehurst? I know it was down to the wire there.**

DAVID PUIG: Yeah, it was for sure one of the main goals. My professional career has been pretty short obviously because I turned professional a couple years ago but obviously I perform good what I needed it.

I went to Pinehurst, just for me making the cut that wasn't the main goal of the event but the first round was pretty tough.

**ASAP** . . . when all is said, we're done.®  
sports

But my second round, the goal was to make the cut and make the Olympic team for sure. But there were nerves, but they were good nerves and I think they helped me to perform well on Friday.

After the round, obviously very happy with the score I got but at the same time just very proud of making the team.

**Q. Curious about 2021 for you, probably feels like a long time ago but it was a weird year for everybody. How much did that stick with you afterwards not being able to not be there because of what everyone was dealing with and what you were dealing with??**

JON RAHM: Yeah, at that time everything was so ambiguous. The virus; the protocols were changing and new information was coming every day.

It was painful to physically feel good and not be able to go. To take five or six tests and only one of being Olympics and being denied entrance was very heartbreaking, especially I think it was the day before we were supposed to fly. That was hard.

It's not like almost everything else in golf where you have the following week to work. You have to wait three years to hopefully get the opportunity again. It was long.

But a lot has happened since that time, and I'm very happy to be here and very happy to get a chance and get a crack at a golf course that I love and a golf course that I have good memories on.

**Q. Forgive me for not knowing, but have you played this course since the Ryder Cup?**

JON RAHM: I have not, no.

**Q. What is the standout memory when you think about that week?**

JON RAHM: First time I went to the first tee in competition. So me and Rosey opened the Ryder Cup playing Brooks and Tony Finau.

Seeing the atmosphere on the first tee is absolutely unmatched. Even the warmup, when you get to the range 30, 40 minutes before, in this setup, it was very close to the first tee compared to the other two that I've been a part of; and you can hear the crowd singing early in the morning in the dark and just the atmosphere. All the 10,000 to 20,000 people around the hole, that was quite special. That hour or so from the time you get to the warmup area the tee, it's hard to put into words how incredible that was.

**Q. Why don't you give him a hard time for asking five questions? Always me.**

JON RAHM: Because you do it all the time, that's why. It's always one question, two parts, three parts.

**Q. Have you been on the course yet?**

JON RAHM: No. Yesterday was a bit of a day off.

**Q. How important do you think it was for you to win coming into this?**

JON RAHM: It was important for many reasons, right. But having done it, when you put yourself in position the next time, you obviously have that covered that you've done that already; I've been there, done it recently. So you have that nice memory of it being done, so it's always a bit of an extra bonus.

**Q. Is there any frustration that was building during the course of the year, including the foot injury and all that stuff?**

JON RAHM: The foot injury was more so of a mental challenge because the Monday of Houston, so the Tuesday of Houston, the practice rounds, I was hitting it so well. And it was the day before, I think it was an Thursday when the pain started to really ramp up.

Before that, I felt like I was peaking at a really nice spot and I was physically feeling great, and my game was feeling really, really good. So it was more of a mental challenge to then not be able to practise, to not getting ready physically, right. To then just kind of trusting the work that I've put in throughout the year and to have faith that it could be done.

I almost kind of surprised myself in Nashville, I didn't really get to do too much. I went to Nashville and played good. The two weeks before Valderrama I wasn't able to do much at all either. To play those weeks great and get a Top-10, playing good golf, not that it's surprising, but it's very reassuring, right, that I've done a lot of things right. But the process is a bit more mental in that sense to get over that.

I don't think I have really time for frustrations when it comes to not winning. It's difficult to win anywhere, right and I was trying to do the right things and improve upon the mistakes I was making.

**Q. Last one. I realize you've said a lot of times you don't have the answers to a lot of things. But as we go forward and the World Ranking being used to determine the field, is there a different way to do it?**

JON RAHM: For the Olympics?

**Q. Golf is so different from other sports.**

JON RAHM: Yeah, but I think you can always do it, like with other sports, and allow the countries to pick themselves. There needs to be some guidelines, but like Team USA Basketball has free come to choose whoever they want.

I understand it's a different circumstance, but I think you need to let each country choose who they want to play, and in the future, I would also like to see some team aspect in the Olympics, as well, right. I mean, we are here representing Spain.

So I would love to actually, as a partner or somehow, whether as a combined sport or us playing together, to be able to represent Spain. That would be extremely nice to share the stage with another player, to do something different, to maybe what we do every other day, right.

**Q. Next Olympics, I think they will do a mixed game.**

JON RAHM: Do they? I have no idea. A mixed? That would be nice.

**Q. So which is more important, winning majors more or getting Gold Medal? Could you share the thought on winning majors and getting a Gold Medal?**

JON RAHM: I've got this question a lot, and I think that's a great question for Xander Schauffele since he's the only man recently to have done both. Rosey has done both, as well, so those are the two people that can tell you exactly what they feel.

It's hard to say. Golf's history with the Olympics is so young right now, that it may not have the magnitude or recognition that it could have in the future, right.

Unfortunately in golf, majors are always going to be -- not unfortunately, it just is what it is. It always going to be the biggest part of the sport. I think to the public, having the major might mean more.

On a personal level, to be able to win a Gold Medal for your country is always going to have much more meaning for yourself than it might to the public, right. It's hard to say. It's hard to say where I would put it.

What I've been saying a little is if I were to win on Sunday, ask me the question again and I can answer. But right now, I really can't give you an answer on that.

**Q. For one reason for another, a lot of top players have been missing in Tokyo and Rio, where we probably have the strongest field we've had for an Olympic golf tournament this week. How important do you think that is for golf as a whole moving forward?**

JON RAHM: I mean, the Olympics, yeah, you want the best players to be able to participate. Any tournament, you want the best players possible to be representing their country. That's all I can say. I really don't know how else to frame it.

Obviously the qualifying criteria might need to change but that is a job for the people that are a lot more knowledgeable on things like that because I know there's communities things that need to be in place to make that happen.

**Q. Do you think there's any advantage for Ryder Cup players, European Tour players who played this course regularly compared to the rest of the field, or a completely new event for everybody?**

JON RAHM: Being familiar with a golf course is always going to help. Experience is always going to help. It doesn't mean you're going to win.

I mean, it's -- actually, I wouldn't think so. This golf course is pretty straightforward: Hit the fairway; hit the green. It limits you in so many ways, it almost tells you how it should be played. There's very few holes where you might see a variety of strategies.

For the most part, I think you're going to see all of us hitting it to the same spots off the tee and playing it very, very similarly.

But just having played here often, right, that comfort you might have on the golf course is maybe what can make a difference in certain ways, and more than that seeing the golf course in different weather conditions and knowing how to play it.

But when you're the best players in the world, it really doesn't matter. That's the mentality you have. First-time players on a golf course win it, is not a topic that comes up very often.

If this was the Ryder Cup, yeah, I would say maybe it's an advantage, would be more of an advantage if the entire team plays it. But in this case, not being match play and being stroke play, it's maybe not as big a factor as it maybe sounds like on paper.

**Q. Where were you six years ago during the Ryder Cup? Do you remember watching it or were you hearing watching on site?**

DAVID PUIG: So I actually played the Junior Ryder Cup six years ago here in Paris, as well. We played in Disneyland, I think it was. But we played on once with the European Team here on Le Golf National. So I was actually here on site, and we stayed to watch the Ryder Cup and watch Europe win.

So I was right here with Jon. We both were a little younger. I was still a 16-year-old kid, I think, but I was here.

**Q. I guess in general, I'm kind of curious, the role that the Olympics can play, the Ryder Cup can play for younger kids of Spain. When you are 16 and watching Jon beat Tiger Woods, what does that do for you? What does that make you think you can achieve?**

DAVID PUIG: In my opinion, I think I was doing the right things because I was part of that Junior Ryder Cup team as well. It's a pretty big deal to be part of. But seeing Jon just perform the way that he did against Tiger and throughout the whole week was unbelievable, and especially for me, since from Spain and I kind of look up, and you see Jon right there at the top.

So yeah, I think he was doing the right thing. I was doing the right thing, and thankfully we are both together here.

**Q. Did you ever keep track of how many miles you flew this year to get to where you are now?**

DAVID PUIG: Not really. I'm pretty high on the rankings on American Airlines, that's for sure. But not really. I've travelled a lot this year. Went to a lot of different countries. Tried to gain as many points as I could, and I'm glad it paid off.

**Q. Did you think it was possible? If you went back to January at the start of this year?**

DAVID PUIG: When it was January, I don't know if that was an option to make the team because I was pretty far behind. But playing the first tournament event in Malaysia and winning it, the goal was actually to qualify for The Open in that Malaysian Open and winning that event helped me to get into The Open.

But at the same time I got a lot of points toward the World Ranking and I got closer. After that, I knew it was possible and I kept performing well, and yeah, at the end of the day I made it happen.

**Q. What's your proudest achievement this year?**

DAVID PUIG: Honestly maybe like two. To be able to play three majors, I think it's a big deal, especially because I qualified for two of them and then because of the good performances on The Asian Tour, and I got to play the PGA as well through my World Ranking, that's one for sure.

The other one, making the team here, that makes me very proud.

**Q. This came up at The Open and we know about where golf is with the divide right now, but getting everybody on a big stage, four times a year and now five with the Olympics, does it make these weeks even more meaningful than they were before?**

JON RAHM: I can't say I've looked at it like that. I don't know if it makes it more meaningful. Since I haven't played the Olympics before, it means a lot to be there, it's something special -- you could say it's a little bit more because we only get so many chances to play against each other.

We all know it's a pretty big stage. As a competitor, you want to win the biggest tournaments. It's nice that this year we get an extra week to enjoy that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports