

PGA Championship

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Oak Hill Country Club

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the 105th PGA Championship with the reigning Masters champion and two-time major champion, Jon Rahm joins us. Welcome to Oak Hill where you'll be playing in your seventh PGA Championship. What are your impressions of the East Course so far?

JON RAHM: Well, I hadn't played it before so I didn't know what to expect. Obviously I saw the 2013 PGA, some back highlights, and obviously knew it was a challenging golf course. But you can tell with this redo they wanted to make it a little extra difficult.

Obviously it comes as no surprise, I get a very similar vibe and feel around the golf course that you could get at Bethpage or Winged Foot, since we're so close to both those courses.

Tough course. Whoever is setting up the golf course is going to have a lot of fun, because there's a lot of opportunities on holes with pin locations and tee boxes, so you can make this golf course as difficult as you want or not as accessible as you want, but obviously you can make a big difference in the scoring.

I would say whoever did the redo has done a good job. It's challenging, but it's one of those where if you hit the shots you're supposed to hit, put it in the fairway, go to the center of the green, nothing crazy should be happening. But it's still challenging.

I like it. Fun golf course. Difficult but fun.

Q. Rory was in here a second ago making that Winged Foot comparison, namely because you can kind of run it up to a bunch of the different greens, and he said we know what kind of style of golf won there, we'll see what kind of style of golf wins here. Do you feel like it's going to be a week that plays into kind of who can fly it the furthest and drive it the longest?

JON RAHM: I mean, throughout the history of the game hitting it far has always been an advantage, maybe a little



bit more so nowadays. It's always going to be beneficial to have the swing speed.

If you miss a couple of those fairways, like 1, 10, holes that are not the longest, but if you miss the fairway you can put yourself in a tough situation. People that hit it long might have a short enough club to attempt to hit it to the green.

I don't think it'll be quite like Winged Foot. You have a couple holes where they do give you the opportunity of hitting iron off the tee and a wedge. That wasn't the case there, many of them. I think it was only on 5 or 6.

So there are similarities; not quite the same. The greens are not nearly as severe. They are kind of squarish for the most part. You do have an opening in the middle, but not in all of them. It will give you an opportunity, but man, if you don't hit it through that gap, some of the holes that are quite narrow, those bunkers are no joke.

It's never going to stay on the up slope. It always goes down to the flat, and it's always some severe slopes. You're most like going to be short sided.

It's a tough golf course, but I do agree what he meant in the sense of having a really good short game week, which is the same thing Phil and Bryson did at Winged Foot. It will give you obviously a massive opportunity. Everybody will miss fairways, everybody will miss greens, so if you can get those up-and-downs, obviously it's not only a confidence booster, but it's something that will keep the round going.

Q. Almost seems silly to ask because you're coming off such a strong run of golf, but how do you feel about your game, and where is your confidence level right now?

JON RAHM: I'm confident. I feel good. I feel good. It's been a great year. It's been an amazing year. I'm just hoping to keep adding more to it. It's been a lot of fun, and hopefully I can keep riding that wave.

Q. Anything you've been working on specifically or really just maintenance?



JON RAHM: I mean, middle of the season nothing groundbreaking I would say. There's always little things we all want to improve, but I think at the end of the day it's all what's going on between the ears on the golf course more than technique at this point of the season.

Q. Given this is a game of ups and downs throughout a career, what's the worst down you've ever had? Because it doesn't seem like there's that many.

JON RAHM: I would say somewhere between -- somewhere maybe in 2018, '19 I didn't have my best stuff. Some people might say part of last year, as well. I wouldn't think so.

But yeah, '18, '19 would have been it.

Q. What was going on?

JON RAHM: Nothing special really. I just didn't play as well as I would have liked.

Q. I think there was great curiosity with the press and the public and probably some of the players about how the LIV players coming into a major, how that was going to go. How much do you think looking back the Masters has helped, if it has kind of returned to some normalcy, I guess, of just coexisting?

JON RAHM: I'm the wrong player to ask.

Q. But you're the only one standing there.

JON RAHM: But I didn't really care in that sense. I never got into the feud. I've never had any negative feelings towards any player that went over to LIV.

In fact, I've mentioned many times I still play with many of them and still try to figure out -- try to play practice rounds with Phil, played with Talor Gooch yesterday. Really doesn't make a difference to me.

That's why my point of view, nothing changed. I think I said it at the Masters, where I hadn't realized how long -- I think the first person I saw was Dustin from LIV and I didn't realize how long it had been until I looked down and I saw him wearing FootJoys, and I was like, okay, this doesn't add up. And then I realized I haven't seen you since the Open last year. That was my first moment.

Again, to me, it's like nothing changed.

Q. You stand out because of your play, but also just in terms of you and other players in the field, you're also

physically taller than them, your build, your frame, your stature, all of that. Are there advantages and disadvantages to that?

JON RAHM: Yeah. I think like I mentioned, there's going to be -- if you ever need to tap into a little bit of an extra power, having the size always helps.

But there's plenty of golfers that are not my size who can hit it quite a bit further than me. At the end of the day it's how you can create speed.

The one disadvantage -- not that it necessarily happens on this golf course -- but when you get uneven lies, ball below your feet or funky areas, having longer legs is not always a good thing, but that I would say is a very, very small percentage of the situations that happen in golf.

Q. Another LIV question. We're a couple weeks away from the one-year anniversary of them launching. If you have to look into the future, where do you see professional golf --

JON RAHM: I have no idea. I wouldn't be able to tell you. It all depends who you talk to. If you talk to a LIV player, this is going to be great, it's only going to get better. You talk to people on the other side, in two years they're going to be done. I really couldn't tell you. I have no clue. I really have no clue.

I really don't know what to say. Obviously they're trying their hardest to be a little bit different, and it could pay off or not. I really don't know.

Q. You mentioned how this week will be about the short game. How does Oak Hill test your short game?

JON RAHM: I said it could be. Obviously two guys that went at it until the end last year weren't the longest hitters, so obviously ball-striking could be very much a premium.

It's going to test you in the sense that -- I mean, a couple things happen when you miss the green. Three that stand out, and it's obviously the obvious three, but you have those runoffs everywhere on a lot of the greens where you can hit a really good shot that basically goes 10 feet off the pin, and next thing you know you have 30 yards with big slopes.

Those fairways are very well manicured. They're very fast. It's not the easiest shot to hit.

And then you have the other side of the corner. It's thick rough. Thick rough where you depend a lot on the lie and a little bit of luck sometimes, and then some of those

bunkers.

There truly are bunkers out there that sometimes you can rely on the sand to give you a little bit of advantage, but they're deep and they're tough and they're very well-placed.

A little bit of it is not luck but strategy, knowing where you can miss and where you can't miss, because you can't be hitting great shots all day and land the ball less than 15 feet from the pin and give yourself absolutely no chance to get up-and-down.

So it's a bit of everything that goes combined with it.

Q. When it comes to those runoffs, how do you account for all the different shots you can play from there?

JON RAHM: It all depends on which one and where you are. Some won't even give you a chance to stand in the fairway. If you miss it right of 15, some of the spots we saw yesterday, it just goes all the way into at least that little first cut, which limits your possibilities.

A couple of those, I think 14 and 15, 14 long, 15 right, the steep bank actually had a thicker -- it was basically a semi rough. So they've taken the putter and the bump shot out of your hands for a reason.

A couple others will give you an opportunity. If you miss it left of 1 it's not the first runoff. You can actually putt it. You can actually stay in the fairway unless it's going quite a bit left. There's a couple others like that.

It's all circumstantial. There's so many possibilities. I would say for the most part, later on in the week, if it doesn't rain, most of those balls won't stay in the fairway. It'll just keep going to the rough, and that'll be a really tough spot to be.

Q. You were talking earlier on about riding the wave for the rest of the season, and Rory was in here earlier saying with the major schedule being really compacted potentially a player in good form could win two or three or maybe even four majors. How excited does that make you for the prospect going forward?

JON RAHM: Very. It doesn't happen often that a player wins more than one major in a year, so it would be amazing to be able to join my name to that list. Latest to do it that I can remember was Brooks, was it 2019? Before that, Rory in 2014. It just doesn't happen often. Sorry, Jordan in 2015. So yeah, I would love to.

Q. You're a student of the history of the game, and I'm curious, were you familiar with Walter Hagen, that he was born here and his early contributions to the game of golf?

JON RAHM: Obviously I'm familiar with Walter, but I don't know -- like I usually get into tournaments and what tournaments they won and certain shots, but I think it was a little early for any cameras to be recording a lot of that, so I haven't seen much.

Surprisingly it's not really a name that jumps up to a lot of people when you talk about the history of the game. I'll say a lot of people wouldn't even know if it wasn't for the legend of Bagger Vance.

Probably my fault that I don't know -- I really don't know what he did, so I wish somebody could tell me at some point.

Q. Players often speak about patience during majors. Rory said it was going to take discipline this week. What one word would you say it's going to take?

JON RAHM: I agree with what Rory said. I think discipline is a really good way to describe what one needs this week.

Q. Talking about the history of the game, I'm sure you're pretty familiar with the number of people who have won the Career Grand Slam. How big of a goal is that for you in your career, and now that you're halfway there how much more do you think about it?

JON RAHM: Not that much more. Obviously if I were to win this week or the Open Championship it really becomes a true reality, but winning two majors is not easy, and picking which ones you win is a little ludicrous to think about.

I think obviously winning the Grand Slam would absolutely be amazing, but I think -- without sounding too conceited or arrogant, I'd rather focus on the number of majors you win than having the Grand Slam per se.

Obviously it would be amazing, but the more you put yourself in the position to be able to win majors, the more likely you might be to get it done.

But it's a very small number of players to do it, last one being Tiger.

It's obviously not an easy thing to accomplish.

Q. Every player is different, obviously, but what do you think the keys are for avoiding a major letdown

that's plagued some of the other players over the past decade?

JON RAHM: A major letdown? What do you mean by that?

Q. A hangover, like letting a Masters victory, for instance, carry over.

JON RAHM: I wouldn't know exactly, honestly. Obviously it's a big deal when you get to win one. Try to enjoy it as much as possible, I would say, because it's very easy nowadays, especially with how much golf we've had this season. So once you finish you kind of put your thoughts on pause to keep performing, right?

So I think try to enjoy it and process it as fast as you can might be the best way.

But at the end of the day this is our job. You're here to perform, so trying to focus on that, as well. I wouldn't know exactly what to tell you, honestly. I guess it could be a feeling of content after you win the Masters, but you can't let that become the main thing because you have three more majors during the year and THE PLAYERS and FedExCup and many other things to accomplish afterwards.

A lot of it I would say is how goal-driven are you and how you assess your goals throughout the year. I can tell you of many possible thoughts; I just don't know which one would be best for who.

Q. A few weeks back, Giannis Antetokounmpo had this answer that went viral about not predicating success and failure strictly on the end result. How do you define that dynamic of success and failure, and has that changed given this run that you're on?

JON RAHM: No. I fully agree with what he said. In the world of sports, especially in basketball, you either win the championship or not. You can't define a good year by just, okay, you got bounced in the first round. You're talking about losing four games, right? In the grand scheme of things, it's a small number.

I really fully agree with what he said. Especially in golf, as well, just because you haven't won something doesn't mean it's been a terrible year. That's kind of what I was saying last year.

It would be very similar to what Tiger might have said in '98 in the middle of swing changes. You can't declare your year a success, you can't be improving in many parts of your game -- in certain aspects it might pay dividends

down the future, right?

So just because you haven't accomplished something today doesn't mean it's not going to pay off in the future.

So yeah, I agree with that, especially in golf. Jesus, you don't win very often, right, so you've got to focus on what the positive is each week, and you can call a lot of weeks a success that maybe public or media wouldn't think, just because of what's going on internally.

Q. Earlier you spoke about wanting to ride the wave that you're on, and I thought the word "wave" was interesting, because when you look at the best players recently, Rory, Spieth, Koepka, they do seem to have a wave where they crest and then it kind of inevitably comes down. Do you think that pattern is inevitable in golf today, or do you ever think about a way that maybe we can sustain the high watermark?

JON RAHM: It's the best metaphor I could find in the couple seconds after asking the question. I mean, it's sports, right, and the path to success -- I think Arnie said it. The road to success is always under construction. It's not a linear, constant path of improvement. It's ups and downs.

It's not only in golf. That's just life. The next day is not always better than the previous one. It's just impossible to think that way. It's never going to happen. You've just got to deal with it.

Again, it's sports.

I wouldn't know what to say. That's all I can tell you. I think it would be ludicrous to think that you can always keep increasing your level of performance. That's just impossible. There's going to be downs. As I just mentioned, even Tiger had downs. Maybe his downs were shorter, maybe his downs were different in his mind, but everybody had them. It is part of sports.

I'm hoping -- I guess as a player you've got to hope that your low is not as low as others'. That's all I can say.

Q. Do you surf?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. You mentioned looking at tape from 2013. I'm curious, do you find yourself going back to previous majors, whether it's Winged Foot, Kiawah, Southern Hills before a major you hadn't been to to watch video, and what was the one thing that stood out from what you saw of Oak Hill on video?

JON RAHM: I do it pretty much for every major. I just like it. Even if it's not major season I'm doing it at home. I've seen on social media about every Sunday round you can find about Augusta and most majors. For the most part, most majors would do like a one-hour documentary of the entire tournament. You'll see a lot of -- it's not research. I just like it. It's just fun. I'm a golf fans, as well. I'm a fan of all those players out there as well. It's enjoyable.

Now what you've seen in 2013 might not be applicable to right now because it's a different golf course and a different time of year. When they played it it was very soft, and those fairways are not soft. It's playing very differently, right?

The one thing I did see from Dufner is he -- when he needed to, he relied on his wedges quite a bit. I think in the final round, I think it was 9 or 8, hit it in the trees, chipped out, gave himself a 10-footer, made the putt, and kept the round going, right?

As well as maybe not always going for it, I think he laid up on 14 and trusted his wedges. He gave himself numbers, and even on that final round he had about three or four tap-ins for birdie. That usually doesn't happen.

Again, I think that goes with what Rory said, just be determined, have discipline. Albeit what Jack did I think in -- where was it? In Baltusrol, right? How he said every time he went in the rough he was going to lay up, and on 18 he laid up, hit the 1-iron, and then made birdie.

There's many ways to make a 4 or 3 or 5. You don't always have to go at it all the time. I think there's always a lesson to learn on every one.

Q. Do you think staying above the fray, not really getting into the feud, as you mentioned, you don't hold anything against anybody, do you feel like that's helped your golf over the past year?

JON RAHM: I don't know. Like I said, some people are friends, and some of the players that weren't friends, obviously, and it's not my place to judge what they do with their life. I can agree with it or not, but I'm not going to be judgmental in that sense.

Obviously there's some things in life, some values that I believe in that I might judge if you compromise, but that is your choice to do with your career. It's your life, it's your family. You do whatever you want.

From that point of view, I'm nobody to tell them what to do. That's why I would never get emotionally invested in

something like that. It's their life. I don't know what to say. I've never thought about it that way.

Q. I guess the better question would probably be do you feel like if you were more invested in it that it would take something out of you?

JON RAHM: Probably. Probably, yeah. I would say if it was me, I could possibly be invested in a little bit of time and energy on to a feud that's not necessarily player versus player. I don't have a personal issue with them, and there's no reason for me to make it.

But yeah, I think it could take -- it would. Over a year, yeah, I think it could take some energy out of you.

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