

PGA Championship

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Louisville, Kentucky, USA

Valhalla Golf Club

Jon Rahm

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the 106th PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Club, where Jon Rahm is joining us. Jon, welcome to your eighth PGA Championship. What are your impressions of the golf course so far?

JON RAHM: Gosh, this is my eighth already. I was playing the front nine today when we got called for weather, so I haven't fully seen the front nine. But so far great golf course. You get an idea of how a course may look like on TV, and it's just as good if not better than what I saw on TV. They changed a few tees, changed the grass in the fairway, but it's in incredible shape. Hopefully we don't get too much water today and tomorrow and it can stay like this.

But it obviously presents a challenge. There's been low scores in the past and I can see it because if you drive it well you can give yourself chances, but it's definitely an enjoyable course out there and a test.

THE MODERATOR: That's great. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. New employer; I'm wondering what has changed about coming to the majors now that you have one under your belt.

JON RAHM: Sorry, what?

Q. What has changed about coming to the majors now that you have a major under a new employer under your belt?

JON RAHM: I'm not sure I understand what you're asking me.

Q. I guess I'm curious to ask you, what is different about coming to a major now that you are working for a new employer?

JON RAHM: Oh. Oh, well, it doesn't really feel different. Obviously the schedule's been a little bit different to what

we played in the past, but at the end of the day, it shouldn't really be a difference. It's a lot of what we play for, right, is this tournament and getting it done. So besides the tournaments I've played and the different venues and the different flow to the schedule, there really isn't any other difference in that sense.

Q. Does it mess with your life schedule a little bit that you've just had a very different travel schedule this year than what you're used to?

JON RAHM: I mean, not with my life, no. It changes a little bit. I don't think it was -- it's been, up until this point a little bit less golf than what I've been used to in the past coming to this point in the schedule, but from now on it will be very similar. A couple longer flights, but besides that, it's pretty much the same.

Q. As a golf pro who is a dad, what advice would you give Scottie Scheffler?

JON RAHM: (Laughing). Oh, oh, well I think we're all very different as parents, right. I mean it's so early on that one thing I learned this early on is that parents are very useless when it comes to the survival of the child because they don't depend on us for anything besides maybe rocking them to sleep and changing a diaper. That's about it, because for everything else mom is the one that they need.

But I would just say obviously on the golf course -- the way you need it at home is at this point support your wife as much as possible, right. You obviously have to pick your moments, right, you probably want to get some nights' sleep when you come back home and recover, but she probably needs a lot more rest than you do, so I would say take a few of those sleepless nights for her, and it's also some of the best memories you're going to have, so try to enjoy it as much as possible.

Q. You were a little surprised to see how many PGA Championships it has been for you? Now that you're a veteran here, you've been around the block, curious how your major championship preparation has evolved and changed over the years.



JON RAHM: It's more the fact that I still consider myself quite young, so to think that I've already played eight is crazy. I think the preparation changes obviously quite a bit because early on you don't know quite what to expect. It's brand new. The majors obviously are an upscale to any other event you play, so I think in my case it was controlling how much I wanted to do.

Like I wanted to come out here and spend extra hours practicing, extra hours doing this, and maybe even sometimes changing things I didn't need to change. Took me a little bit to realize that maybe the week before I need to get the work done at home and then this week just enjoy it and feel like I'm prepared to play the tournament.

There's also, I believe, a before and after once you've won a major going to the next major, knowing that you maybe don't have the chip on your shoulder of not having one, right. But I think in my case at least was almost dialing back how much I wanted to do on those weeks.

Q. I was curious, this is the largest corporate build when it comes to all the hospitality suites around the greens. As a golfer, does that affect you like in terms of like ball placement or just seeing things when you have all these white tents everywhere? Do you have to make adjustments on the course when there's all these people hanging out in spots that normally you wouldn't have people on a smaller build of suites?

JON RAHM: I think in some cases it helps if there's a hole where it's a little bit ambiguous what you see off the tee, it can give you some clarity, let's for example, say St. Andrews, all those builds can help you where to hit it off the tee where any other day you just have no idea where you're going. So it can help you focus in on a couple different spots. Then it's also the other way, when the stands are very big and the corporate is very big, it can to an extent affect the wind a little bit so you just have to keep that in mind. I think it was Phil who said, and I'm going to trust him on this, I don't know if it was just what he was saying about it, but it was about his second shot on 18 at Muirfield when he said he hit this perfect shot with the wind left-to-right but the ball didn't move the last few extra yards towards the pin because he forgot to account the grandstands that were there on the fairway, and if you've seen those grandstands they're pretty big, so the ball doesn't get affected by it up until it's past or at least above those grandstands, which can actually be about 50 percent of the flight.

So, it can affect it. We're talking about an extreme case in that sense, but it can definitely affect it a little bit, and sometimes, yeah, I mean if the pin matches the color of the stands, it's hard because you can't see it. It happens on a

couple holes, usually Phoenix Open on 10 it's happened a few times where with all the crowd behind sitting on the hill, the colors of the pin and the colors of the crowd is very difficult to differentiate one another. But it happens so often, not only this week. It happens quite a bit.

Q. You said this is your first time in Louisville?

JON RAHM: First time, yeah.

Q. How would you, what would you say that Valhalla is -- like what course does Valhalla remind you of, first time playing it?

JON RAHM: I haven't thought about that yet. It's hard because it's a difference between the front nine and the back nine. So when I was going down 10, 11, I did get a similar feel to Medinah in some cases. You get the big trees, it's a big property, right. In a little bit, also kind of like last year, right, it's just more because of the size of the property, of the trees and the way the golf course may play. But it's not always an exact comparison. But Medinah is the one that came to mind first.

Q. Just to follow-up on your prep work, did you do anything different coming into this week versus Augusta? Obviously you had a week off coming into this week versus the Masters.

JON RAHM: Well obviously it's different. I wasn't playing -- well, I think the prep always changes based on where you are physically with your swing and the time of season, how you're feeling with your game and how you are physically, right. So prep work can change a little bit. I wouldn't say maybe the drills I do and what I'm focusing on change, but the overall plan doesn't really change. I don't know if that makes any sense.

Q. In line with that, you talk about the physical work. When you're in the middle of a run where you're not getting the results that you want, what kind of mental work do you do?

JON RAHM: Well, it's tough, because it does -- it is a sport where it can happen. I think you need to assess what you've been doing, right, and what stage you're in on the work you're putting in. Like, it could be that you're playing good golf and simply it's just one maybe one shot a round or one certain moment a round whereas maybe it's taking you from having a great result to what you might consider not as great a result. In that sense maybe you just need to trust the process, right. Sometimes you just get a bad bounce and it is what it is and you have to keep fighting through it.

There's also been times in my career where I would say maybe I wasn't hitting it my best but things just seemed to go your way and you carry that confidence on for a few months and got a lot of great results, right. So it's hard to say, it's hard to say. Then if you're not playing good, if you're not swinging it good, then at that point you maybe need to assess do I need to change anything technically, what's going on. It could be so many different ways to feel like you're in a roadblock that it's hard to exactly pinpoint one of them.

Q. As the rain comes down here, I'm curious how much of an advantage do you think longer players like you will have this week at such a big ballpark like this? How much of an advantage will it be for you guys off the tee when it's going to be these wet and softer conditions?

JON RAHM: Well, listen, hitting it further is always an advantage, right. There's a reason why almost generationally the longest or one of the longest players has been the best. Jack was the longest, Tiger was the longest, Greg Norman was the longest, Rory, Dustin, they have been the longest, right, so it's no surprise there. Even Seve at his time was the longest.

I think the one that I can remember maybe that wasn't the -- two that I can remember are Ben Hogan and Nick Faldo that I can remember quickly. I don't mean to insult anybody, right. Maybe David Duval wasn't the longest, but I don't believe he was short either, so it's always going to be an advantage.

It's as simple as that. It requires maybe a little bit less precision in certain moments and just the ability to have a shorter club in anywhere is just -- that's it, I mean it's always going to make it a little easier. I don't think there's any sport in which more power is detrimental. So it's just obviously controlling it and using it properly.

Q. To follow-up on that, I know the weather's been pretty nice for LIV events this year. Have you had much practice in bad weather this year and how do you think your game's going to shape up in conditions like this?

JON RAHM: Well I grew up in northern Spain where I saw more days like this than sun, so I feel like have I plenty of experience in that area.

Q. I think you might have answered this, but talking about trying to pinpoint the issues with your game, fight through it. Have you narrowed down the possibilities of what's going on with your game, like do you feel like you're closer right now?

JON RAHM: I mean, I don't think my game is in any sort of issues. I didn't play good at Augusta, but so far I haven't missed a top 10. I know it's smaller fields, but I've been playing good golf. It's just the one major that I played clearly wasn't great.

Have I played my best golf? No. But I do feel the last few weeks, especially coming off Singapore, I felt, you know, made a couple tweaks that you wouldn't be able to tell. It's just very minor things. Like it could be ball position, small things that have made my game be consistently much better even when I'm home and in general just feel more like the norm, right, a little normal.

So I never, never felt like I was far off, and when I say I'm not playing my best, just hadn't had my A game for a week yet, but I still I've been close to my A game and B+ multiple times, so yeah, I'm comfortable how I played this year.

Q. A Ryder Cup question, the DP World Tour recently clarified that any suspension you serve you get, you can serve while playing still playing on LIV, so it sort of clears the way to play as long as you pay any fines, pay and play four events. Just want to clarify, were you always aware of this, and have you plotted a way the tournaments you can play, the four tournaments so you can be eligible?

JON RAHM: So, yeah, I just need to look into it. Obviously I've wanted to play in Spain. I'll need to talk to them about how we can figure it out so I can play some events. Obviously Kelley's due date what effect what tournaments I can and cannot play, so I think I'm kind of waiting on that a little bit to then be able to form a schedule.

It does come to a point where I might need to play four events late in the year, but you know, can't really get in the way of life in that sense, right, literally. I mean, it's our third child so I wouldn't miss that for the world, and if I have to play a little bit more in the fall, I will. But based on that, I can't really tell you yet what I'll be playing.

I don't know. There's certain tournaments I would like to play but I will see if I can or not.

Q. But you will do whatever anything and everything you can to to get into that Ryder Cup team?

JON RAHM: I said I would do whatever I can to get into that Ryder Cup team, and I made that commitment to Luke, and I want to be able to be a part of it. So again the schedule's going to be the hardest thing in that regard.



Q. Just a little bit about your character and your personality. I remember at the DP World Tour Championship you waited for Nicolai to have -- like figure out whether he won or not to congratulate him. Why was that important for you to wait in the scorer's tent to congratulate him?

JON RAHM: Well, I was going to wait until later on. It was actually, I believe it was Thomas Bjorn who told me that I could go out there to him, because he was there with his brother and I didn't want to get in the way of that.

But I have huge respect for Nicolai. Hadn't spent a lot of time with him until the weeks going up to the Ryder Cup, and we have certain things in common. When you share the stage with somebody, you create a bond that is going to last a lifetime, right.

He's an incredible young man with such discipline and talent. He definitely made an impression on me. It was a very enjoyable round of golf, and on that 18th hole before I luckily made that putt to tie the match, he just gave me a little nugget, a little sentence that's almost giving me chills thinking about it. Like we're walking up and he has a birdie putt, and we know we're going to probably need an eagle, and he looks at me and he's like, you know, do what Seve would do, right. And I don't know if it's what Seve would have done or not, but the putt goes in and afterwards when we were celebrating, he says, I told you, I told you.

We had such a moment and we spent quite a bit of time in the Ryder Cup that it felt like a certain connection with him in that sense, so when he did what he did, playing the back nine he did, I was like, man, since I haven't left, I want to stay and be able to go. I certainly appreciate it when there's people that went out of their way to wait for me to maybe win and congratulate me, like has happened in many tournaments, and I wanted to be able to be there for him in that regard.

Q. Did you do any YouTube deep dives on past tournaments here?

JON RAHM: (Laughing). You know I did. But the thing is, even before this tournament was announced, I've seen a lot of obviously that back nine. I watched live what was going on in this tournament.

They have changed a little bit, right. The fairways are different. I think the greens for the most part are the same but they have changed a few tees. Obviously 18 quite different. 14 very different. 12 being a little longer. Front nine a couple changes as well. So, 1 has been quite different. You can't always drive from it. I know they had rain in the practice rounds a year and it was soft, but it's

not quite the same golf course, right, it's not really the same.

Q. What did you think of the finish in 2014?

JON RAHM: What, in the --

Q. Rory kind of playing up the last hole with Phil and Rickie and that whole thing. Did you see that one?

JON RAHM: No, I was watching live. Well, it's funny, I think watching it we were all a little bit like, yeah, we want to get it done. Nobody wants to wait to the next day for maybe one hole, and I don't blame Rory for wanting to do it, right. Also don't blame Phil and I don't know if Rickie wanted to or not for saying no, right. But at the end of the day, if the PGA of America is making that decision, you kind of have to go with it.

I can say if that was me in that scenario I would have tried to have Rory not tee off because if somehow I can get a birdie in there, he needs to sleep knowing that he needs to par a relatively short par-5, but he still needs to put that tee shot in play, right.

I still think it was brave of Rory, because he puts it in that bunker and hits it in not the easiest 2-putt, and hitting that 2-putt in the dark, I know he was feeling good, but that's quite a risky decision because the camera always makes it look brighter than it really is. I can imagine it was quite dark.

Q. It's going to be almost a year now since the PGA TOUR and LIV came together or PIF came together with a framework agreement that is still sitting there on the sidelines. Obviously when you went over you had certain thoughts about why you went. You see now what seems to be somewhat disarray going on in the PGA TOUR, Rory wanting to get back on the board, not getting back on the board, Jimmy Dunn leaving yesterday off the board saying that his voice is no longer valuable to the board. When you're looking from the other side, which is where you are now, what are your thoughts?

JON RAHM: See you guys keep saying "the other side" but I'm still a PGA TOUR member, whether suspended or not. I still want to support the PGA TOUR. And I think that's an important distinction to make.

I don't feel like I'm on the other side. I'm just not playing there. That's at least personally.

I wouldn't know what to say because it would just be not hearsay, but hypothetical, because I don't know what's

going on, right. I haven't really spoken enough to know about what's going on on the board, and obviously people are not going to be willing to be sharing that information with me since I'm no longer a part of those discussions, so I couldn't really tell you.

I'm going to say what I've said all along, I hope we reach a resolution and a resolution that's beneficial for everyone. But I couldn't really tell you much about what's happening.

Q. There was questions asked of him what a good resolution would be, what would you want to see. What would you want to see?

JON RAHM: Well, I think at this point, PIF, PGA TOUR, DP World Tour, maybe even some of the other governing bodies need to get together and see what that looks like. Because everybody is going to have a different idea, and I think everybody's going to have to give something back or have some compromises to make that work, right.

We've hear Rory mention that world tour are the best players in the world playing together. Yeah, I would agree I would love to be able to see that. Like I said many times, we have the opportunity to put golf on a different level of the map and make it more global than ever, and I fully support that idea.

Q. Following on from that question, how impatient are you to see some kind of resolution? Do you feel like damage is being done, Jon?

JON RAHM: Damage to what?

Q. To golf overall in terms of the viewing public and the standing of the sport compared with other sports?

JON RAHM: I think this is -- this would be some decisions and negotiations that can't be taken lightly, so it should take quite a bit of time to get it done properly. I wouldn't want to see something rushed just to get a resolution and not be comfortable for everybody of having just pushing the issues down the road, right.

So since I don't know what's going on behind closed doors I really can't tell you, but I think they should take their time to make this work properly. I don't know if that takes one, two, three, five, six years. I don't know what that might be like. But I don't feel like I'm on any rush to make something happen today, right.

I think we have a position to set up golf in a very positive way for decades to come, and you need the people that do this for a living that are far smarter than I am to get together to come together to be able to make it work.

Q. What were your initial reactions when Jimmy Dunn resigned, and then why is it so important to you to distinguish that you're still a PGA TOUR member but suspended?

JON RAHM: Well, I did not know until I was having breakfast this morning and I saw it on TV. I had no idea. And Jimmy's been great to me and my family, so just wish him nothing but the best. I haven't really spoken to him so I don't know what's going on.

I think it's important because I'm a PGA TOUR member. Again, like I still -- I've said however I can, I would like to support it, right. So even though I'm playing full-time on LIV Golf, like I've said many times, had I been allowed, I would have played some events earlier in the year, and if allowed in the future and not conflicting with my schedule, I would play in the future. That's why I think it's important.

The PGA TOUR has given me so much and has given me this platform and the opportunity that I'm not really going to turn to the side and go against it, because I'm not going against it.

Q. You were asked earlier about whether your memories of previous events here and one thing you maybe didn't mention was the Ryder Cup and I assume you probably watched that live. What were your memories of that, and not trying to stick it to you as you being part of Team Europe, I'm just curious what you kind of thought about that?

JON RAHM: Well, playing with Anthony Kim that I did mention, I'm like, Hey, man, it's great to play with you and I know we're going to Valhalla, but I told him, because that was 16 years ago now, wow, so I was 13. As a 13-year-old I was very upset when he walked off the green on 14 after beating Sergio. I was like, Man, that's not fair, he's such a you-know-what. And we laughed about it.

I made him feel pretty old, but it was pretty to talk about it and talk about the Ryder Cup in that sense. I think that the very next thing that I think about there is Boo Weekley walking off the tee just doing his thing. (Laughing). Maybe not the two best memories, but having a few Spanish guys, I know Miguel Angel was there, you think of Hunter Mahan's putt on 17. There's just a few moments.

The U.S. team played great that weak and they got it done, but there's just a few things where that I can remember that just highlights in that sense, right, and yeah, Anthony Kim walking off the tee is the first thing that comes to mind as a Spaniard, obviously.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time, John, we appreciate it.

JON RAHM: Thank you.

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