

Workday Charity Open

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Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

Jon Rahm

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Jon Rahm to the virtual interview room here at the Workday Charity Open. Thanks for joining us for a few minutes. We appreciate the time. Coming off of a week off last week and here at Muirfield this week. Just some thoughts on having had the week off, how you're feeling about the game heading into the week here.

JON RAHM: Well, I was originally going to have two weeks off, but given the situation in Arizona with the cases rising, being in summer it's extremely hot, a lot of courses closed or overseeding or doing changes to the golf course, I felt like being the same golf courses, you could possibly rent the same house, the same hotel for two weeks, I felt like it was going to be less of a risk to be here than to be at home, so I decided to come.

Obviously this golf course has one of the best practice facilities we see all year, and I felt like if there's any time to work on your game, it would be better now than to stay home. So I decided to come.

I'm excited, honestly. I'm really, really excited. I'm really thankful Workday stepped up and took over the event and we have another week. Also thankful for Jack and everybody involved at Muirfield Village to allow two tournaments in a row. I know the members are going to get a golf course that's probably going to be a little bit beat up, but man, this place is in phenomenal shape, so I can't wait to get going.

THE MODERATOR: You're obviously playing so well right now. One of the notes that we came up with that we thought was certainly impressive is of 83 PGA TOUR starts you've finished inside the top 10 36 times, and that percentage leads the number among your TOUR peers under the age of 30. Is that kind of consistency something you set out to make a big part of your game, and is it along the lines of what you were hoping for?

JON RAHM: Yes. I fight for every shot I hit on the golf course every single day. I think that that never-give-up attitude, even if I'm starting in 30th the final round with no

chance of winning, I still want to finish as high as possible. To me there's a big difference between 10th and 11th and an even bigger difference between ninth and tenth or maybe even fourth and sixth. For me, it's important to fight for those shots.

Top 10s are still top 10s, it's a good stat to have in the future, and the better you play, the more you are in that area of the top 10, the more chances you'll have to win. That's the way I see it. I don't want to be a player who maybe gets a couple wins and then everything else is missed cuts or T40s because this is not who I am. Every time I tee it up I fight my hardest on every shot. That's probably why it translates to -- that grind kind of translates to maybe consistent play.

Q. I know it's going to be the same course, but you're going to have two different tests, lower rough, different pin placements. How does that change how you use your practice rounds to get ready for this week and next?

JON RAHM: Well, to be honest, I don't really know. I know from what I've heard, setups are going to be extremely different. Obviously we're already hearing rumors that Jack wants the greens really firm and fast, probably going to grow the rough a little bit more.

I wouldn't say off the tee it will play any different really, it's just your approach to the greens. With the greens a little bit faster and a little bit firmer, you need to be more precise, maybe not take as many risks.

I wouldn't be surprised, if weather holds up and allows for course preparation to resume as normal, I wouldn't be surprised if there's more than a five-shot swing between the winner this week and next week. It could be -- or even more, honestly. It could be a lot more, depending on how the weather holds up.

Obviously we're here for two weeks in a row, but I feel like next week that Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Tuesday and Wednesday, we could use it as kind of a different setup. The way I'm looking at it, I think you're going to have to get used to the pace of the greens, putting, lag putting, and chip shots around the greens. That's where I think will probably be most influenced of all. Obviously off the tee it's not going to change that much, you still want to



hit the fairway and be smart off the tee.

Q. Could you just talk about what are the advantages of staying in the same place two weeks in a row on the road?

JON RAHM: Well, if you're smart about your safety, like in my case, I just go from the course to the house, from the house to the course. I don't deal with anybody else, and the risk of infection or the risk of spreading a possible virus is a lot lower. Living in Arizona in my case, too, with the positive cases rising at the current rate, it just seemed smarter for me to be here for two weeks, so in that sense I feel like it's safer. It's probably one of the safer things to do for all of us. And then when it comes to the preparations -- well, the golf course itself is not going to change to the degree like the visualization of the shots and how you play won't change much. Like I said, all you need to do is possibly just have to get used to touch around the greens, chip shots and putting.

Q. I know you said it's not going to be that much different, but I think the tees -- it is going to play shorter between the two weeks. How do you recalculate off the tee, just go to that visual look? You're used to playing it a certain length and how it's going to look a lot different.

JON RAHM: Well, what I mean the same off the tee, visually it looks -- I know I've heard different rumors, right, obviously I've heard we have a new tee on 15, who knows if we're going to use, but whether you're up tee or back tee, it's just straight up. It's the same target. I've heard some par-3s might be moved around, as well. I've heard this week they're not going to use all those back tees that they have.

It won't change your target line that much. That's kind of what I meant, right. But it will -- it will play different, obviously. If you start playing farther back tees, firmer greens and faster, obviously longer clubs into the green, it's going to be difficult, but the visual into the green doesn't change that much.

That's why I was saying you need to get used to -- your touch around the greens probably needs to get a little bit more precise with firm greens and all that, and there's also a strategy. If you miss left on 15 this week, you might have a chance of getting it up-and-down to certain pins. Next week if they do what they want to do with firmer and faster greens, you can kiss that chance goodbye. It's obviously going to play extremely, extremely different. You're going to have to be a lot less aggressive or let's say make aggressive swings to more conservative targets, and that's something -- I'm probably even being conservative saying

the winner's difference is going to be five shots. I mean, it could be a lot more.

The rumors are kind of scaring us. It seems like it's going to play like a U.S. Open next week, which kind of we're kind of excited about. It's great to see all those birdies, but from my perspective it's getting a little tiring. I like to see a challenge, and we're the best players in the world, it is the Memorial Championship, it is Jack's event, and we want it to be a test. I want it to be a test.

Q. 14 they may move the tees up to where you have to make that decision to go for it or not. Have you heard that? What would you do; it depends on conditions?

JON RAHM: I hardly think Jack said that. I would be surprised if Jack said that.

Q. No, this week.

JON RAHM: Well, there's a couple tees, and then it all depends on so many things, how you're feeling, what type of wind you have and where the pin is, right. Still, it's such a narrow target to hit a driver to and so easy to just hit an iron on the fairway and then wedge it on the green. And I can't believe I'm saying that, Mr. Aggressive over here.

But I think they're probably wanting some people to go for it. Just being a lay-up shot two weeks in a row, 150 players each week, or at least this week, there will be so many divots by the end of next week over there, and you don't want to see somebody lose a tournament because they hit in the fairway and they were in a divot, right.

They're probably going to -- if they do that, they'll be hoping that we go a little bit more aggressive just so we don't fill up that 14th fairway with divots. But I would say, honestly, like I said, if there's a right-to-left wind one day, I like to fade the ball, it might be a good option to go for it and have a chance. It's still a red hazard, right, so if you fade it a little bit too much, maybe it will drop by the green and hopefully get up-and-down for par and move on. But who knows.

Q. You are somebody that's on camera a lot. It's a hot topic right now. Do you feel that cameras linger on you too much just to get your reaction, or is that just something you're used to?

JON RAHM: Well, I mean, you're talking to a guy who's easy to get a reaction from. Yeah, I mean, they have followed me to get that reaction. I've spoken to some directors before, and what the answer is is that they want to show the public the frustration we go through, which is true. I don't think they realize how stressful this can be sometimes.

The only time where I have a problem sometimes in PGA TOUR Live is when the camera movement -- so let's say I hit a shot and the camera is on me for a little longer, and let's say next is some other player to go, sometimes they stay on me a little too long and then they rush to the next player and you can see them from your peripheral and you have to stop and restart your routine, right. It's happened multiple times. Or you're hitting a shot and they get your line on the putting or chipping, and that's what I have an issue, right. When you're disrupting play, that just shouldn't happen. You're not going to get cameras -- the above camera on football be in the way when Tom Brady is throwing a pass, possibly hit the ball, interrupt a game or things like that. So I know we're professionals and we should be focused, but when you start seeing people run close and they're trying to set up the cameras, that's the only time I have an issue.

But then them trying to follow, as well, I mean, it's PGA TOUR Live and you've been chosen to be one of the feature groups and people are going to want to see you, right. And I know I'm saying this, and I know why you're asking this question, but you can't control what you feel and your emotions but you can control your actions. If you're going to get made like I get mad, just assume you're going to get a little bit of criticism, and that's it. If not, maybe just not do it. It's the only way I can say.

And I know why you're asking this, and I am one of those who's in that situation, but as an athlete that's all I can say. The only problem, like I've said, that I've had is when the disrupt play a little bit, and that shouldn't happen. In professional golf we shouldn't be waiting for cameras to be in place. But other times if they're not going to have to go to the next player and they want to try to catch me saying something or my face after a three-putt or a bogey or a bad shot, well, I mean, if you've watched golf the last year you know what my reaction is going to be, but yeah, I understand why they do it.

Q. Regarding the course, this is a Jack Nicklaus-designed course. What is it that you like about a Jack Nicklaus course, and what is it that suits you personally as a player?

JON RAHM: I've only played once, 2017, and I missed the cut, so I'm going to have to think long and hard to give you an answer. I mean, it's Jack Nicklaus, right, one of the greatest players in history, if not the greatest champion in history. And he's always going to design a tough test, especially when he was thinking of hosting an event himself. And it is a ball striker's golf course. I would say it's not the most demanding golf course off the tee, but it could be one of the most demanding on approach to the

greens. You have a lot of small targets out there, right. 14 and 3 are two examples of them. Not long holes, but man, he does punish you if you miss a little sliver of a green. I know we have wedges in hand and we're the best players in the world but we don't execute every shot perfectly, and he does put some tests out there for all of us, as well as short game being difficult just because of how undulated the greens are and how many slopes there are. So it's a golf course that makes you think.

There's a reason why Tiger Woods has been so successful here. He's one of those players who can out-think almost everybody on the golf course and execute his strategy and just shoot low scores. Well, amongst many other reasons why he's won here five times. But it's somewhere you can't hide any part of the game. Every single part of your game needs to be on. There's some weeks where you can maybe spray it off the tee a little bit, there's some weeks where maybe there's no rough so chipping is not as big of an issue, maybe some weeks where greens are slow so pace of play is not that big of a problem, right.

It's one of those where you can't hide. You need to play really good golf tee to green on every single aspect of it, and besides all that, it's just a beautiful golf course. I mean, it suits my eye. There's not one shot out here I would say I don't like. It's a beautiful golf course, and hopefully I can play tee to green a little bit better than I have been playing to give myself a chance one of those two weeks, or both of them.

Q. John, as you seek your first major title, have you developed a philosophy as to whether you like to play the week before or major or take it off?

JON RAHM: So far it's to not play the week before. So far. That is kind of going out the window this year because we're playing Memphis before the PGA, so that's not always possible. But yeah, so far that's kind of been it.

Who knows, though. It has mainly been just because the events before the majors haven't been that -- let's say all that appealing to me in the sense of going to play, right. I've watched San Antonio on TV and it's not one of those events I'm like, man, I really want to go play because it plays nothing like Augusta National, right, so it's not like I feel like I want to go. The Open Championship I've tried to go to Europe early to kind of get used to the time zone and British golf, but I still don't have an idea and a philosophy. Different things work for different people. Some play the week before. Tiger didn't. Who knows. It's something you define. I'll let you know if I ever get on a streak of winning multiple majors. That will mean I've found the secret.

Q. And what is it you like about Memphis ahead of the



PGA?

JON RAHM: Well, not necessarily that I like it. It's just that there's no other choice, right, unless you give up a WGC and a great event. Now, what I like is it's a test of a golf course. You have to be really, really, really good tee to green. Like most TPC courses, it's a demanding test. You need to play good golf, and if you play good golf you'll be able to shoot low scores, but anything in between is just probably not going to happen. I think it's a really, really good test before a major championship.

I've never played Harding Park. I don't know the golf course. They probably don't play similar. I'm guessing one of them is bentgrass, the other one is Bermuda. But having a tough test before a major probably gets you mentally ready and really nicely warmed up for what's to come. And so in that aspect, I think it's an advantage.

Q. It's been reported that the Ryder Cup will be postponed. That's going to be announced within the hour. How do you feel about that?

JON RAHM: I mean, I'm not shocked. I know a lot of people probably wanted to watch the Ryder Cup, but Ryder Cup is not the Ryder Cup without spectators. Right now it doesn't seem like there's a legitimate way to make it safe for everybody, so I think it's the smart choice. At the end of the day, Ryder Cup is one of the most viewed events, sporting events in the world, so it's something that brings a lot of attention for the game of golf. It's something that grows the game of golf throughout the world. I think it's important that it's done and it's performed and we play the way the Ryder Cup is supposed to be.

You know, kind of bittersweet, right. I'm sad we're not playing this year because I really wanted to play and I think it would have been cool to go from a U.S. Open to a Ryder Cup, but at the same time, it needs to be run the way it's supposed to be run. So I think it's a good decision to change it to next year.

Q. What did the experience of winning your singles match on Sunday do for you as a player?

JON RAHM: I mean, God, it's hard to explain. My first point in the Ryder Cup Sunday against Tiger, and I believe it was the first full point the Europeans had, and kind of stopped that momentum the U.S. had that morning. There's a lot of things in there in between. To make a bogey on 16 like I did and then come back and play the 17th hole the way I did, which is not an easy hole, and make a birdie the way I did to beat Tiger Woods, it's a pretty special moment. I mean, that reaction I had is because the crowd, the atmosphere and what it meant,

right. I've dreamed so many times of possibly being on that stage against Tiger Woods, and I had the honor and the luck, the good fortune of being gifted that opportunity. I'm glad I took advantage of it and I could make a dream come true. I don't know if -- I've said this before: I don't know if any individual achievement I have from now on will have the same effect or the same feeling I had on that 17th green, right. I mean, unless I make a bomb on the last hole to win a major or an Open Championship, a Masters, whatever major it is, even then I still don't think I'll have the same reaction I had in pairs because when you have 20,000 fans on one hole rooting for you, it was pretty special.

I don't know if something will come close, but I hope I get to experience something like that again.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, we always appreciate your time, so thank you for joining us and have a great week.

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