

The Memorial Tournament Presented By Nationwide

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Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Jon, great victory, amazing finish. What a dominating performance. A lot of things happened for you today: No. 8 in the FedExCup, you moved up to that spot, you win the Memorial Tournament at Jack Nicklaus's home, and you move to No. 1 in the official world golf ranking.

A lot of drama at the end. Talk about how you're feeling now that it's all over and you've clinched this victory.

JON RAHM: I'm a person who I stay on competition mode for longer than I would like sometimes, and I process things so much later, right? I'll probably wake up tomorrow morning and still won't have it processed. I can't really explain it. I've been going through a lot. Quarantine hasn't been easy for any of us.

I did mention on my -- at the end of my interview I have lost two family members to this pandemic, not for the virus, but the toll that it takes mentally for those people to be quarantined and just having to deal with the situation. And one of them was my grandma, the woman who next to my parents helped raise me. And yesterday they took her ashes back to Madrid because my family has to live in Madrid to be with the rest of her family, right?

So it was so easy to get caught up on arbitrary things like the penalty stroke. And all I can say is as minimal as it was, it moved; I accept it. It doesn't change the outcome of the tournament. It just puts a little bit of an asterisk in it in the sense of I wish I could just keep that birdie because it was one of the greatest shots of my life, right?

But it's still easy to think of the tough times a lot of people are having out there and the tough times we've gone through, right? I'm incredibly proud to sit here and be the Memorial Tournament champion, win an event on the PGA TOUR four years in a row, No. 1 in the world. There's a lot of accomplishments today that are hard to believe I've done so early in my career.

You know, first win as a married man, which feels honestly

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really, really cool. I wish the rest of my family could be here with me, but for obvious reasons they can't. And I just hope everybody stays safe and we can get over this as soon as possible and we can enjoy life as it was before.

But still, man, one of the best performances of my life. Yesterday was probably one of the best rounds of my life, and finished today with some clutch up-and-downs. And God, I'm glad it happened that way. As a Spaniard, I'm kind of glad it happened that way.

Q. You had pretty remarkable success right when you turned professional. You finished tied for third in your first event, tied for second in your fourth. How are you different as a player and as a man than you were four years ago?

JON RAHM: More mature. There's no chance I would have won this tournament four years ago, I can tell you that. How many times have you guys seen me dial back and hit so many 3-woods and 5-woods off the tee. I mean, hardly ever, right?

It shows to the little bit of work that I've been doing, or the lot of bit of work that I've been doing, and it's been changing. I'm a person who unfortunately I'm fully aware I learn from mistakes. I act, foolishly or not. I'll do my action, and I'll learn from it, good or bad.

Luckily I've been pretty good at learning from my mistakes and getting a little bit better each time and each time, and today was a clear example of it. I could have completely lost it many times. Maybe in the past I would have, but I didn't. I just kept fighting. I knew it was a complete grind, and it's a true honor to be now the Memorial Tournament champion presented by Nationwide.

You know, everything led to this, to be part of Jack's legacy. He's probably pretty happy that the score was as low as it was. He was probably pretty happy it played so difficult. I've been dreaming of that handshake many times. Well, it was a fist bump because of the situation, but still, how many people can say they got a congratulatory fist bump from Jack Nicklaus?

I'll just say I'm happier and more mature as a person. It's as simple as that. And a lot of it, if not most of it, is credited to my wife. I wouldn't be here without her, so I

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

would say that would probably be the biggest difference.

Q. Jon, when your eight-shot lead got down to three, what are you thinking as you're walking to the 15th tee?

JON RAHM: Well, you know, it's not like I was hitting bad shots. It's just the margins of error are minimal on this golf course, the conditions we were playing, so I just had to stay faithful in that sense. And I still was three up with four holes to go, so I knew if I could finish with four pars it was pretty much over.

So the mission was to put that ball in the fairway and then basically play a match, a four-hole match against Ryan, and that's essentially what I did. I was able to save that par on 15 and take that four-shot lead, right? That was a four-shot lead into 17 after that great chip-in, and after that it was pretty much over.

Just to try finishing making pars. It's no easy feat to just make pars out here today. So that was my ultimate mentality. Forget what it happened before and just focus on what I had to do at the moment. At the moment I had to hit the fairways, hit the greens, and keep going.

Q. Was there any thought that that ball might have been in the water when it was in the air on 16? What were you worried about, and what were you hoping the outcome of the chip was before it went in?

JON RAHM: Oh, there was no doubt that ball was over the water. If Ryan hit a normal 9-iron and cleared the way he did, I knew if I just hit it, good contact, I was going to get over. My only concern was maybe going in the bunker or where it was going -- you know, if I get a soft bounce somehow and I'd be at the edge of the green, I know it's a dual up-and-down, but it just kicked left. And with the chip I actually got a decent lie. It was sitting up and I know everybody could see. And honestly, I knew I could get it close. I knew I could get it within 10 feet, and that was my only concern, but that was it.

It was very possible to go underneath that ball, so my only thought was just release the club. If you catch it, good. You'll have something inside 10 feet for par. But still, it landed perfect, came out just on the edge and released to the hole, and well, the reaction says it all.

But really, really cool to see how that would have been with a crowd.

Q. You had that on 14 at Workday last week, too, with no crowd. Real quickly, could you just kind of go over when you learned about the ball moving and what you

saw when you saw it with the officials?

JON RAHM: Well, when Amanda said I had to talk to Slugger I was a little confused. I'm like, What do I need a rules official for right now? And when they said something about the ball, still confused. I didn't see that ball move at all. I just never saw it.

So had I seen it, I would have said something or maybe questioned -- not questioned, asked for a rules official and explained what happened and would have gone from there. But I mean, he had to zoom it in the iPad so much to see what was a very minimal oscillation that could have basically just been me putting the club down and all the grass just simply going down.

It barely moves at all. Everything goes down with it. But the rules of golf are clear, and the ball did move. Unfortunately it's going to have bittersweet feeling to what was possibly one of the greatest shots of my career, the shot that this Sunday gave me the victory, but that goes to show, you know, I accept the penalty. That goes to show that you have to fight until the end.

I could have very easily maybe just given up on the up-and-down on 17 and 18 and finished with two bogeys, and possibly after the penalty strokes given myself a scare and possibly gone to a playoff and still fought hard. Every shot counts, and I tried every shot and got those two last up-and-downs, as a true Spaniard would, and it is what it is.

Then I talked to slugger. I wasn't really happy about it at first just because it doesn't change the outcome of the tournament. And how many times does it happen in other sports where those questionable calls of balls being in bounds, not in bounds, those touchdowns being touchdowns, not touchdowns? Every other sports it's a margin of error, and once the referee makes the decision they move on.

If it doesn't change the outcome of the tournament, does it really matter? Maybe. Again, I accept what it is; it did move. It doesn't take anything from the day, though. It's still probably one of the greatest days of my life.

I know it doesn't sound like it because I'm still processing things and maybe in a week I'll be completely ecstatic about everything, but proud that I did what I did, proud that I chipped that in, and proud that I finished the way I did.

Q. Jon, where does getting to world No. 1 rank given everything you've been able to accomplish in your career, and do you remember a time when you started thinking about getting to that point?

JON RAHM: Yeah, yeah, there was a time. I heard an interview with my golf coach back in Spain when I was younger, Eduardo Celles. He was saying how we were coming back from practice somewhere, we were playing somewhere, and he asked me about my ambitions. I just started with him, I think I was 13, 14, around that age, and I said straight up, I want to be the best player in the world.

I made that deal with myself very young, I believe at 13 or 14 I started working towards that goal, and everything I've done golf-wise has been to become No. 1 in the world and become the best player I can be.

It's pretty surreal to think it's happened this quickly, right, in less than 10 years. I mean, how many people get to achieve a lifelong team, a short lifelong dream, in their mid-20s? It's incredible. To be a Spaniard, the second Spaniard to ever do it, given there's not many Europeans that have gotten to this spot, it's a pretty unique feeling, so I'm going to enjoy it for a while.

Q. Just to kind of build on that question and your comments there, does being No. 1 fundamentally change anything for you? And what do you kind of see happening now?

JON RAHM: Golf is just what I do, it's not who I am. It's the best way I can explain it. It's a goal accomplished, yes. If anything, it fuels me to know that if I keep this trajectory I'll be able to accomplish many more things in the future. It's added motivation that I have the talent that I have, and I need to keep working on it. It's as simple as that.

But it doesn't change the core of who I am, honestly. Like I've been doing all week, I'm going to go home with my wife. We're probably going to watch a kids' movie like How to Train Your Dragon, and go to sleep. The one thing I'll do differently is I will go get a milkshake. I did not do it any of the competition days. I think Wednesday after the charity event is the last one I had, so I'm really looking forward to getting a milkshake.

But, again, it won't change the person that I am, and I hope it never does. Nothing that I've done has changed the core person I am off the golf course. Like I said, golf is just a part of my life. It's what I do. If I ever had to choose, and I've said this before, between being a good husband and a good father and a good golfer, I'd always choose being a good husband and a good father. I'd rather be a good person outside of it, and I take pride in that and hopefully I can keep doing it.

But, again, still doesn't take from the amount of pride I feel with myself about doing it. But, no, it doesn't change who I

am.

Q. Real quick, do you anticipate more coming at you because you're now the No. 1 player in the world?

JON RAHM: What do you mean more coming at me?

Q. Whether it's -- not pressure, but sponsorships, responsibilities, interview requests, all these things that kind of -- outside noise type stuff.

JON RAHM: Possibly, yeah, but that's a good thing. You know, it's something we can learn from Arnold Palmer is part of the job. The attention is part of the job. I don't think any of us are out here looking for just fame or for the fame. We're out here to just play the best golf we can. But it is part of -- it's a part of the life that we're choosing to live.

I welcome it. You know, I'll say at this point, it's well deserved. If I have to do a couple more interviews, I'll do more interviews. Again, it's not going to change my happiness at the end of the day.

Q. Going back to 16, what does that shot do for you?

JON RAHM: What does that shot do to me as a player? Well, you know, my short game has been unbelievable all week. It's been so good, and I've gotten close to chipping in a couple times.

Again, I'm not going to say I was thinking of chipping that one in, but it's just -- it gives me a lot of confidence, man. It's something that things were struggling, and you always hear about people saying champions make it happen, and at that point I made it happen.

Who knows what would have happened if I just put it in the center of the green and two-putt, Ryan makes par; now it's a two-shot lead playing two holes instead of a four-shot lead, right?

Well, it still was a two-shot lead, but for once I made it happen. In Dubai when I needed it I made that birdie on 18. So I know coming down the stretch whenever I need to, I have the ability to do it. But what I have to work on now is how to navigate to that point on 16 when I have such a big lead, right?

So I think that's what I'll be focusing on for a while, but, again, that shot just gives me the confidence that I know in the future if I need to I can rely on it to possibly get it done again. Seve was looking out for me on that one.

Q. Did Tiger's chip-in on 16 cross your mind at all?

JON RAHM: Yes. I've been lucky enough to make a putt on the 18th at Torrey Pines and have a pretty good reaction where he had an incredible reaction, and to chip in on a hole where he chipped in, as well. I think, no, his was a lot harder than mine, honestly. From where he was water was in play; in my case water wasn't in play. In very different situation, right?

But still, it did cross my mind. Any time you can just see yourself in certain highlights, it's pretty incredible.

Now, I'm pretty confident in the future when they start saying top X amount of shots at Memorial Tournament, I hope that one is in there.

Q. Jon, you were very emotional when you defeated Tiger Woods at the Ryder Cup in Paris a couple years ago, now another iconic figure is part of your life in Jack Nicklaus. I'm wondering what that name means to you? When did you become aware of him?

JON RAHM: Well, you just mentioned the two greatest golfers this game has ever seen. It's pretty incredible. To survive the Golden Bear's test this week, it's pretty surreal. This golf course was playing very, very difficult. It was tough. And to get it done and to get that moment with Jack on the 18th is pretty incredible.

Four years ago I was here as the Jack Nicklaus Award recipient spending some time with him, asking him questions about Oakmont and how to play it, and just trying to pick his brain a little bit. You know, as luck would have it, four years later I'm here. Last year Patrick Cantlay did it. I believe he was the Jack Nicklaus Award recipient, as well.

It's a winning tradition, and any time you can put your name on that list of players that have won here and put your name on the history and the legacy of Jack and this event and what they've done with the children's hospital, it's unique. So hopefully I can just do my part to just grow the game like he did and just make it better for the future generations.

Q. Did you cite the names of the relatives? Have you lost relatives to COVID, and have you cited those names?

JON RAHM: They did not die because of COVID, but I think they did pass away because of the mental effects of the quarantine. Both of them were in nursing homes. One of them was my mom's mom, and I'm not going to say names. I don't think my family wants the attention in that sense.

But it just came out earlier for me, and it was my mom's mom is the person that when I was growing up spent the most amount of time with me outside my parents. She taught me so many things and I have so many memories with her. She passed away actually Wednesday of Travelers, and then yesterday is when they took her ashes to her family rest spot in Madrid. So emotional, you know.

The other person was my mom's aunt. Still somebody we were all close with. Still, you know, it's -- again, it goes to show there's more important things in life than me accomplishing what I accomplished today. We're going through a pandemic. People are dying for whatever reason it is, and whether you believe it or not, it's going to happen physically or mentally -- it could happen to me, and still does sometimes.

I hope we can get through this. I hope we can all be as safe as possible and get to life as normal as possible as soon as possible. But through what we've gone, my brother had his first daughter, so new life in the family. Now I've accomplished this. I think we have a lot of reasons to enjoy the next few days.

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