

The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Jon Rahm the FedExCup leader and 2020 tournament winner to the interview room here at the 2023 Memorial presented by Workday. Just to get started, how does it feel to be back here at Muirfield Village, a place where you've had a lot of success obviously, in your career.

JON RAHM: It feels good. It feels good. It's obviously a date I look forward to. A great golf course. It presents a great challenge. So it's something I enjoy. So I'm looking forward to the week. Like you just said, a lot of good memories on this golf course. So hopefully I can keep adding to it.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take some questions, please.

Q. What else makes this tournament special besides just a really good test of golf?

JON RAHM: Well, the tournament host and the history and legacy you have over here, right. Any time Jack puts his name into something it's going to have certain significance. When you're paired with a challenging golf course, it makes it even better. I think there's something special around here. Obviously the course has changed a little bit and recently it's changed quite a bit. But it still has the same essence, right, that to call yourself a Memorial champion and have that handshake with Jack on 18 is pretty unique. Just little things that make some tournaments better than others. Those little traditions, like that one on 18 is one of those things. It's very special.

Q. Speaking of Jack, and the pecking order of guys you came up following, Seve, he was a little, he was out of your era, Jack was, but what are your first memories and what did you think about Jack Nicklaus, when did you become aware of him and what were your thoughts coming up?

JON RAHM: God, I mean, I think golf and Jack Nicklaus go together hand in hand. So when you're learning about



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the game you're always going to learn about who has the most amount of majors. So the name I've known obviously since I was pretty young. The significance of what he did, not until later in my career. Obviously I focused more on the players that were active at the time and Seve, right. It was later on where I learned a lot more about what Jack did.

But my first memories -- I would say it's obviously related to Seve, right, but I think one of the first images I remember seeing is that '86 Masters. Which, listen, it is what it is, right. It wasn't the best memory for Spain, but Jack did something amazing then. That shot on 16 and the putt on 17 are two things that those images you remember.

Q. Who is the Jack Nicklaus you know as you've gotten to know him a little bit, how would you describe him beyond just great golfer?

JON RAHM: I mean, I never got to know him as a golfer or watch him play live when he was active, so I can't really tell you that side of him. I know Jack the, let's say, more entrepreneur side of Jack and the golf course designer and the host of this event. He's somebody who cares passionately about golf. I think a lot of players from that era were extremely passionate and still are and you can see it. He still obviously has his opinions about the game nowadays and the rules that we have nowadays, which is perfectly fine and that somebody of his caliber, he can voice 'em. I think it's good for the game. So it's somebody who truly loves and respects the game and something I respect about him because I resonate myself in that.

Q. Won here in 2020, should have won in 2021. You have played this golf course at a level that even among the best players in the world they would envy the way that you've played it. And I'm wondering why? Why do you think you are such a fit for this specific golf course?

JON RAHM: I don't know. It's funny, first time I played here I played bad, I missed the cut. I think I told Adam, Man, I don't know if I'm ever going back to that golf course. And he was telling me, You're going to go back and you're going to love it. You are tailor made for that golf course. And, funny enough, the next time we came was 2020. It



was when we had two weeks in a row here. So the Workday event I didn't play my best, but I finished Sunday with a 64 and that kind of got me going towards the following week and won.

So I really don't know. I think it's a golf course you kind of need to learn to play a little bit. It gives you a lot of options off the tee on a couple of holes. Getting a couple reps helps. But it's mainly, it's a little different to what we play throughout the year. It's target golf. You put it on the fairway, put it on the proper side of the fairway to give you the best angle to the green. Par-3s are all difficult. You have to be really accurate with your iron play. No surprise Tiger has such a success here, right. You just need to come out and be the best. While you're doing that it actually makes you think a little bit more than some of the golf courses we go to. So like I said, it's a fun test and I think that's why I've played well.

Q. Tiger at Augusta said talking about scheduling, he would like his event in L.A. to have a cut and he also said Jack would like for his event to have a cut. What's your position on at least those legacy events -- and you can throw Mr. Palmer's event in there as well -- what's your position on having a cut for those events?

JON RAHM: You're talking about just those two or all designated?

Q. No, just the --

THE MODERATOR: The player-hosted invitationals. So Bay Hill.

JON RAHM: So just those?

THE MODERATOR: Riviera and here.

Q. Or any of them. Should there be cuts on designated events?

JON RAHM: I've gone back and forth on this issue. I had first was an advocate for no cut and the more time has gone by I've become an advocate for a cut. So I think it's a part of the game and I think it's an important part of the game, as harsh as it may be to cut out maybe only 20 players. At the flip side, you know, it's only 20 players that you have to beat to make the cut. So I think it's a part of it. You earn your way into the weekend and then you earn that win. It's a part I enjoy and I experienced recently at the PGA. I mean, that Friday had a different feel when I was fighting to make the cut. It's a different type of pressure and you never know what playing good on a Friday to make the cut might ignite towards the weekend.

So I think it's a part of it. It's a part of the history. If that went away, Tiger making 140-something cuts in a row wouldn't have the same significance because that would never be broken again. So like I said, I pushed for the no cut and then as time has gone by I actually, I think we should have a cut.

Q. Is there something that influenced that shift in your position?

JON RAHM: Not a moment or a person or a conversation, per se. It was just thinking about it and thinking about what making or missing the cut feels like. I take pride on being a consistent player and making a lot of cuts and giving myself chances to win. I think that's important. I wouldn't know how else to say. I based a lot of my reason before in what I did last year in the playoffs. I think it was at the BMW where through basically a round and a little bit I was basically going to miss the cut. Played nine good holes and played an amazing weekend and finished in the top 10, right. But who says you always deserve a chance to make the cut and be on the weekend. I don't know. It was just a feeling I had. I wouldn't know how to explain it, right.

The Masters being a major is, usually is going to be a field that looks like a lot of the designated events will look like next year. 80-some players. And there's a cut and no one says anything about it. Tiger tying that record of 23 cuts in a row means something. So I think the historian and the person who is in love with the game kind of went back and realized that it's something that I actually enjoy a lot.

Q. Had a lot of changes over the last year on TOUR. And in your, in the way things have been shaped and the input that players have, do you feel like you have a strong influence on those decisions?

JON RAHM: Just me?

Q. Yeah.

JON RAHM: I think it's a group effort.

Q. I know it's a group effort, but you as a person, do you feel like your voice is heard strongly and do you feel whatever influence you have has increased as you've had more success?

JON RAHM: I don't know if it's increased or not. It would be hard to say because most of what I think for the majority of the time has been supported by quite a good number of players. So it's not like I felt alone on an island. Whenever I had a belief and I voiced it a lot of people thought the same way. So it's hard to say if I had that influence or I just thought the same way they did. I don't know if it's

increased or not. I can't really tell you. I don't think any more of myself because I've accomplished what I've accomplished this year, so I don't know.

Q. Are you tired?

JON RAHM: Am I tired? I've been tired. I'm good now.

Q. Reason I asked is you guys have had this schedule of a lot of designated events that you needed to play in and so forth. Wondering how it's wearing on you. And Phil Mickelson proffered the notion that LIV Golf benefits from not playing as much and there for maybe fresher for majors, what have you.

JON RAHM: Well, listen, Phil is a friend of mine, but what else is he going to say? Right? He's obviously going to advocate for his side and that's perfectly fine. I mean, listen, there's many ways to prepare for a tournament. And my schedule has not changed really. Like, I played 19 events last year from TOUR Championship to, sorry, Tournament of Champions to TOUR Championship and it will be the same this year. It's been the same pretty much every year. So it doesn't change my schedule, it's just what tournaments I have played. That's it. I don't really feel any different about it. I have heard those comments and, well, if he believes it to be true it's good for him. I don't know, it's hard to say. There's been so many different ways of tackling major tournament golf. Phil himself used to always play the week before. Tiger and Jack didn't play the week before. So who says one way is better than the other.

Q. Last week Sergio said that he clearly will not be on the Ryder Cup team. Luke had told him he wouldn't be. He specifically mentioned the fact that he would be missing playing with you and just was disappointed by that. What's your thoughts about Sergio not being on the team?

JON RAHM: I'm going to miss him. We had a great partnership at Whistling Straights. I'm going to mention history again one more time. A Spanish duo in the Ryder Cup I think to me is embedded into the roots of the Ryder Cup. Look with Seve and Ollie were able to do throughout their partnership, right. So it's a little sad to me that politics have gotten in the way of such a beautiful event. Again, it's the best Europeans against the best American, period. And whatever is going on, who is playing LIV and who is not playing LIV to me shouldn't matter. It's whoever is best suited to represent the European side. And I have a hard time to believe that the best player Europe has ever had, the most successful player Europe has had on the Ryder Cup isn't fit to be on the team. So, it's unfortunate. I will miss him. But with that said I want to be hopeful, there's a

couple of Spanish guys playing really good right now, so hopefully they can join me on the team.

Q. Circling back to the question about influence and your voice, have you chimed in on the slow play issue? Do you think it's over blown? Do you have an opinion on it and what would you do about it, if anything, including rangefinders.

JON RAHM: Okay. Okay. So I think what happened at Augusta was a little bit taken out of context. Because Patrick and Viktor waited until the 16th hole as well. And then on 16, when you see us waiting, Viktor went long left of the green and Patrick hit it just over the bunker on right, which is a 90-foot putt which has 45 foot of break. It's going to take awhile to hit those shots. And me and Brooks were playing pretty fast. So I understand how it looked, but we didn't see 'em on 17 and 18.

A lot of that was because of being on split tees and twosomes. We got to the 2nd hole and Patrick and Viktor were still on the tee. So there was a lot of waiting for everybody, not just them. It's a tough subject because for the most part when you have a field or, you know, when you have too many players on the field it's going to be slower. It's just kind of how it is. So a lot of times I think field sizes make more of a difference. We rarely hear about it in the playoffs when it's 50 guys on the weekend playing twosomes, right. So it's about how many groups you have out there. It's just going to happen. Par-5s are going to get backed up, difficult par-3s are going to get backed up and you're just going to have to deal with it. Short of putting a shot clock next to each other, and I don't even think that's going to help because you have one wayward tee shot and then you're looking for the ball for a few minutes and then the group behind you is already caught up and you're waiting. So I think it's about how many people are on the golf course at the time.

With that said as well I think rangefinders would help. Again, an issue I used to advocate against and now I'm for. And my mind changed at Kiawah when, with those heavy winds, you could go sideways into those sand dunes and a caddie could take quite awhile to get a number when they could just shoot it and be done in three seconds. So I think when we're in the fairway it won't make much of a difference, but those situations where you're a bit off line it might save quite a bit of time.

Q. Would it kill you if I had three questions?

JON RAHM: Go ahead.

Q. All right. Quickly, have you been on the course yet?

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

JON RAHM: No.

Q. That's one. So that's out of the way.

JON RAHM: I've heard about it, but I haven't played it.

Q. I wanted to go back to the rivalry for a second and one aspect. Instead of looking forward, if you went back a year and a half ago and I think there was a lot of voices saying competition will make us better and you might have been of that same thought. A year later is this about what you thought it would be?

JON RAHM: You mean with LIV and all that? Sorry, I missed that part. I think we're in the stages of making it better. They obviously, I think it was easier for them. You're coming out with a new product and it's exciting and it's a little bit easier to feel good about it early on than for the PGA TOUR to change their product that's been on the market for 60 years. So it's easier for them to get those changes going and to adapt than it is for a TOUR that has 40-some events. So we're slowly making that transition into what we think is going to be a better TOUR. I don't think we have seen the final product yet and it might be a few years until we see. I don't think it will ever be a final product, actually, there's always adjustments. When the FedExCup first came the playoffs had certain points, it was four events. Quickly they reduced the amount of points and then we went to three events. So it's always, it's an ongoing change to make it better.

Q. Do you think where we are right now, and it was brought up already, we got a 20-million event, we got another one at Travelers and is this what you would have expected, let's say January of 2022, a year ago?

JON RAHM: I don't know if it's exactly what I would have expected. I wouldn't have been able to tell you what I thought was best for the TOUR. Mainly because I'm not knowledgeable enough of what goes on, on every aspect of the PGA TOUR. But I think it's better, yes.

Q. Last question. Of the U.S. Opens you've played, great courses, kind of out in the suburbs, whether it's Oakmont or Shinnecock or what have you, you're going to Beverly Hills this year. Is that weird at all to you?

JON RAHM: (Laughing.) It's odd because I've been to L.A. Country Club and I remember when we were there, I think it had already been announced that the U.S. Open would be there, and my first thought was, how the heck are they going to fit anything around here, and second of all, how are we going to get around the traffic in this place.

Those are the two he questions. Golf course-wise, yeah, the golf course is very high quality. The golf course could host any event you want. But it's just logistically, to me, it was the hardest part to understand. Especially after playing U.S. Opens and seeing everything that comes to it. But they do have a second 18, so I'm guessing they're going to take a lot of that room. Is it weird? No. Is it exciting? Yes.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Jon, thank you very much for your time.

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