

THE PLAYERS Championship

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Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

AMANDA HERRINGTON: We'd like to welcome Jon Rahm to the interview room here at THE PLAYERS Championship. Jon is making his fourth start here at THE PLAYERS. Coming into the week, five top 10s on TOUR this season and world No. 2. We're so excited to have you with us this morning. Just some opening comments on your week ahead here at TPC Sawgrass.

JON RAHM: Man, I've got to say, that first day when I came in and walked through the clubhouse, last thing I remembered from a year ago is walking in and the whole world is basically shut down and it's crazy to think it's been a year. That was the first feeling I had as soon as we went in.

But excited. This is one of the biggest events of the year. Played good two years ago, played really good last year that first round, so hopefully I can keep that good play going, and as far as this year, as well, I've been playing really good. Hopefully I can keep that going and have a good event and good performance.

Q. When you look at all the major team sports and then you look at individual sports or Olympic sports, when athletes reach an elite level, as you have in golf, do you feel golf is the hardest sport in which to sustain excellence, to stay on top?

JON RAHM: That is tough. I can't speak for other sports. I'd say golf being individually, an individual sport, in theory should be easier than a team maintaining the level of excellence. It's harder; the more moving parts you have the harder it's going to be to maintain excellence. With that, I do think golf should be one of the top 3 most intricate and difficult sports there is with some of the most amount of variables when it comes to the golf game.

Like I said, I can't speak for other sports, but I do think it should be up there with maybe the top 3 hardest to maintain and keep that elite level.

Q. Rory compared golf a lot to tennis because of the individual aspect of it, but in tennis you've had three



players that have literally dominated the majors for 15 years. With the exception of Tiger, in golf it just seems like a lot of very excellent players, sometimes things do go sideways and it's not always injury related.

JON RAHM: Yeah, yeah, I mean, it's the closest we're going to have as an individual sport. At the end of the day in tennis, it's one-on-one, so they have eight matches, so they need to beat eight people. In golf you have to beat usually over 100. With that said, as well, sometimes in golf you can afford to have a bad day. You have days to make it up. In tennis, if you have one bad day, you're out. Each one is going to have its challenges.

But I would say tennis is the closest because it's the only other individual sport with similar characteristics, I would say.

Yeah, I mean, it hasn't happened in golf that more than one player dominates in majors. People go on runs. Pdraig Harrington went on a run, Brooks has gone on a run, Rory had those two, three, four years where he did it really well. But for somebody to do it for 10, 15 years it's incredible. In tennis you have people doing it. I would say all of us as tennis fans, we're spoiled. Usually you're lucky if you get one in your lifetime, and we had three, basically the three best tennis players to ever play at the same time and competing against each other and that's what makes it better.

I wish we had that in golf. I wish I was one of those three who was winning 20 Grand Slams in the next 15 years, but it's incredible difficult to do that in golf. That's why only just a few people have been able to do that.

Again, I think we've been spoiled with the level of tennis we've had the last few years to watch. It's very unlikely in any sport for something like that to happen.

Q. Just curious your thoughts on the 17th, the tee shot, if it's intimidating or not, and if the noise and the commotion there adds to that at all, and obviously when it's not, when there's not as many people, if that changes things.

JON RAHM: Simple truth is we have the meat. We have what we need. You've got to go out there and be brave.



Simple as that. There's no other way. On paper it's an easy shot, yes, but you've got to go out there, step up and hit a good shot. That's all you need to do. Noise is secondary. Whether there's people or not, I think the biggest factor is wind, how much wind do you have and where it's coming from. The crowd, the atmosphere usually only helps.

Q. Have you noticed at times that you have a hard time blocking out some of that noise? Sometimes people are literally a couple of feet away from you as you're walking from the green up there. It's a pretty long walk.

JON RAHM: It's part of the game, though. It's part of the atmosphere. You're going to hear it, but I think it's your choice as a player to take into their emotion and take into what they're saying.

When people are trying to talk trash and trying to throw you off your game, that's pretty obvious, so that usually doesn't bother us. And then you also don't want to get too full of yourself, right. You've got to maintain your level of competition.

At the same time you can use it to help. If you're having a bad day and you're just not doing good and you hit a good shot and you get that crowd excited, it's going to help you coming the last hole and a half. You can use it to your advantage.

Now again, if those people that are talking trash, it happens. I'm pretty sure every time I've stepped on that tee I've had something said to me and it's your choice whether to react to it or not. It's part of sports atmosphere nowadays, so it is what it is. It's not like we don't know it's coming.

Q. This week the TOUR is returning with the Every Shot Live technology, where every shot from every player is going to be available for consumption. A big driver in that seems to be the increased prominence of betting within the sport. That's something that the TOUR has embraced. I want to get your thoughts on the increased prominence of betting in golf where it's potentially influencing how fans are consuming the sport.

JON RAHM: Well, listen, there's been a lot of people live always betting. You can hear it. They bet for anything. And you can hear it. Some people are looking for you missing that putt and some people are looking for you making the putt. It goes on. We hear it a lot less than what it actually goes on. It hasn't really changed the golf crowd I would say as much, I'm not really particularly

paying attention to what the crowd is doing all day, but yeah, I do believe that the live betting is -- it's just another way of keeping people engaged. I understand not everybody watching golf is a fan of every single player out there, right, and if you're watching a sport and you want to somehow stay engaged, betting is a great way to do it.

It's something that's unavoidable. It's been going on worldwide with every single sport, so why not. It's another element that makes it more exciting, and when it comes down to a Sunday afternoon, the last few holes, everybody is investing in who's going to win, at that point there's a lot of people out there that have bets already. It's only going to help make it more exciting on those Thursday, Friday, maybe morning rounds, where the views are not as high as they could be.

Q. There's going to be a limited number of fans this week, but maybe as many as 9,000 or 10,000 in attendance, and on Sunday all those fans might be following the final group, especially on 16, 17 or 18.

If you're in the final group Sunday, would that raise any safety concerns for you?

JON RAHM: Well, it shouldn't, as long as you keep it in the fairway, when it comes to me personally.

Now, we all know how fast this virus can spread, right, so I hope not. That's all I can say. I hope it doesn't lead to anything bad.

I feel like after a year or over a year of this virus circulating the world, it's already gone through a lot of people, so I hope it doesn't -- I know the second time infected people, as well. I really don't know how to answer that because I want the fans out there. They're part of the sport and they're part of the atmosphere, and I'm glad they're out there this week, and they're going to be out there because we've missed them. But at the same time I want everybody to be safe.

I've known of too many people personally that have been affected by the virus, and I wouldn't want anybody to go through that and lose loved ones because of it, right.

I really don't know how to answer it. I hope that not all 10,000 get on one hole, on one group. I think they're all going to be separated. Some people are going to be in the grandstands on 18, on 17 and other holes, and there has been fans in some events in the past, and there has been no repercussions as far as I know. So I hope that this is a stepping-stone to hopefully introducing fans again and hopefully having no problems. There was 25,000 fans at the Super Bowl and no spikes, and it was a pretty big party

in Tampa after the win and no spikes going on, so hopefully it stays the same as it is and it keeps getting better and better.

Q. It seems like a really long time ago that you were the 54-hole leader here in 2019. What did you learn from that experience on Sunday?

JON RAHM: Oh, man, it was, yeah, quite a bit a long time ago.

You know, I don't usually disclose the stuff that makes me a better player. There was a lot to learn that day. The obvious thing everybody will talk about is the 11th hole. Yes, I could have laid up. I think next time I'm in a situation like that I'm just going to go with my gut, whatever I feel like I can do. At the same time on the 15th tee I was tied for the lead and I still didn't finish it as well as I could have. I feel like there was a lot of tee shots especially I was erratic off the tee and I wasn't fully focusing on what I had to do, I was just kind of stepping up and hitting it without really being in the moment. I was a bit all over the place.

I think I've stated before, I've changed that since then, but I think I arrived to the practice facility a little bit too early and I had some few extra minutes on the putting green before going to the tee and kind of made me that much more aware of the situation, if that makes any sense. Usually when I get to the practice tee I have my routine and it's go mode from there. I felt like I had five minutes to waste and it kind of took me out of that zone and just started the round poorly. I was 3-, 4-over through four holes, just not what it should have been.

A lot of things to take home from that, but that would be the gist of it.

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