

# Waste Management Phoenix Open

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Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

## Jon Rahm

### Press Conference



JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Jon Rahm into our virtual interview room. Jon making his sixth start at the Waste Management Phoenix Open, and you've never finished worse than T16 at this event.

Talk about what it is that you love about this tournament.

JON RAHM: Well, first of all, it's a home event. Get to sleep in my own bed, so it's nice. The traveling is not too much, especially coming from San Diego. A lot of good memories. Obviously my first cut made on the PGA TOUR was here. Had a great finish as an amateur, and the whole Sun Devil vibe and just the familiarity with everything, I love the event, love the fans.

I'm glad we can have at least 5,000 a day. Makes a big difference out there. And even today, right, it's just great to see all the smiling faces of the kids, the fans. It was great to be out there.

Looking forward to it. Hopefully -- I've been able to have a lot of good rounds out here. Hopefully I can put a good weekend together and get the first win.

**Q. Speaking of that excitement level, the 16th hole here, everyone talks about the 16th hole. Let's talk about the 17th hole. What a great hole. Talk about your strategy at that hole in terms of the risk-reward part of it.**

JON RAHM: Well, you know, a lot of that hole depends on the ball position and the conditions you have that day. If it's firm, if it's soft, if it's downwind, if it's into the wind.

For the most part, I think in my case at least, and a lot of people try to do it, we try to land it on that flat part between the bunker that's 40 yards away and short of the green. That's where we can usually get the most reliable bounce and get it on to the center of the green.

If you fly it too far and hit the upslope of the green, it won't

really release on, so you've got to be strategic in that sense. And then depends on what pin you have. If the pin is on the right you can't really miss right because it's a tough up-and-down, so you maybe have to push a little bit more on the left half and take on the water.

If the pin is on the left you can blow it right as far as you want and that chip is not going to be hard. And then we have that famous back pin, right, that it just -- you've just got to hope you hit a good shot and hope you hit a good chip, because no matter how you look at that pin it's difficult.

It all depends on the tee position, the wind, and if it's reachable or not. There's been years where you can actually fly it on to the green, so if you can do that, go ahead.

For the most part, I've never laid up. I've never seen anyone lay up short, so you've got to go for it, and hopefully you hit a good drive and give yourself a good look at birdie.

**Q. Let's talk about the state of your game. I don't know if you believe in luck, but you're coming in with three straight seventh place finishes. If we can just get some comments on the state of your game coming in.**

JON RAHM: You know, the game is good. One of those sevenths was with different clubs, so put a little asterisk there. And there's a big difference between the one at Kapalua and the one at Torrey Pines. I had a legit chance of winning at Torrey Pines. Started good on Sunday and just the putter got cold. Didn't make much on the back nine.

But the game is there. I feel like I'm getting used to the clubs, getting used to the ball. Still testing a lot of things to make sure they're set perfectly. You know, when you change clubs, manufacturers, like that, you've got to get used to the tendencies of each one to find the perfect one.

Still trying to get there, but really happy with where I'm at. Like you said, even new clubs, I'm still performing well, getting those top 10s, and putting myself in contention. That's the goal again this week. Hopefully this is the one where things start to click together and I'm standing as the champion on Sunday.

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**Q. I just wanted to kind of get a better understanding of how Dave Phillips from TPI has helped you, what you remember from the first time you went through the physical screening, and how you did versus how you did this Monday.**

JON RAHM: Well, my relationship with Dave started when -- obviously when I went to TPI the first time. But the only reason I went was because the Spanish Golf Federation would get the Spanish players who were playing in college in the U.S., would get us to go once or twice a semester.

In my case, being on the West Coast, I could go a little bit more than some others could. So that's how we started. Obviously kind of began with learning what your physical limitations say about your swing. I always knew I had certain characteristics, and the reason why I bow my wrist and why I have a short swing that works, and they made me understand the reason why and what my body can or can't do and what I should and shouldn't do from there on.

They were the first one to tell me, Dave, that I should play a fade with the swing that I have. Before that I was always focused on hitting a draw. I was never a good ball striker but I had a good short game, and that's how I made my career in Spain for the most part. And once they told me to go to a fade my ball-striking went to a whole different level, and that's when I became a more complete player.

They made me understand, again, what I said, what my body limitations or what my body is basically telling us my swing should look like and what it works with. I did have a swing coach I worked with in Spain growing up, but I think I learned so much and my body started improving, as well, started becoming better fit for my swing that he kind of -- I don't think he understood as much as I would have liked for him to know about the swing.

Started focusing more with Dave because I like the way he explained things to me. He's been around a long time. I love hearing those stories about Seve and the old timers, as well. Great guy and great way to apply what we know about my body to the golf swing. So that's what I do with him a lot.

He'd always tell you, I mean, it's always one of three things with me. He just needs to find a different way to tell me every single time.

**Q. With your wife being pregnant, how much will that impact your playing schedule in the next few months?**

JON RAHM: Well, I'm going to keep the schedule pretty much I've had until the Masters. Obviously we know -- I

think it's second week of March is going to be week 36, and as my mom has told me, because she's a midwife many times, starting that week it can come any day.

So that's what I'll be doing. I've talked about it before and we've talked about it with her. No matter where I am and what I'm doing, if the phone rings I'm flying back, and I'm going back home to be there for the birth of my son.

Before anybody asks, yes, if I'm at Augusta and I'm playing well and she starts getting -- you know, starts, I'm flying back. I would never miss the birth of my firstborn in a million years, or any born for that matter.

Yeah, that last month I'm going to be really focused on what's going on. I don't know how we're going to do it at Augusta because we can't have our phones in. I might need to ask for an exception in that sense. But, yeah, that's what my March-April is going to be like.

**Q. Sports betting is becoming more and more common in this country. More states are legalizing sports betting. How do you see the pros and cons of more and more sports betting affecting what you do and affecting the PGA TOUR?**

JON RAHM: I honestly have no idea. I've never put a bet on a sports game in my life, so I have no clue about this. Like none whatsoever.

**Q. No discussions in the locker room about how fans betting on you guys on the course, how that might affect you, how it might affect what you're doing?**

JON RAHM: I mean, somebody having \$20 on me making or missing the putt is not going to affect what I do. I can tell you that. I'm pretty sure most of us players have a lot more on the line by making or missing a putt.

It's not what I'm thinking about. It's something that's been going on since I was a pro. It's been going on for a long time. A lot of times you hear fans and they'll bet between each other.

I mean, it's part of the culture, I would say everywhere. I'm a person that didn't grow up betting on sports, but it's becoming bigger and Spain, bigger in Europe. It's already big here. It's part of the entertainment, as well.

Again, I don't know much about it, but, I mean, I don't have a problem with it. Fans got to do what they've got to do to enjoy the day.

**Q. I know it was just a pro-am day, but did you get a sense of how things will be a little bit different this**



**year at this tournament? Obviously a lot fewer people.**

JON RAHM: Well, you get a sense, but after having nobody for so long on the golf course, 5,000 feels like a lot. I'm going to tell you that right now. And they're being -- you can feel their presence. They're making themselves felt. They're a little bit more active. They want to be part of it because they've missed it, as well, not being able to be a part of anything for so long.

It's nice to see the enthusiasm that everybody has. It is, it's different, right, especially when you're on the last few holes. Like even 10 usually is a complete amphitheater. 16 obviously is different. 17 and 18 are different. And sometimes the look.

One of the things I've talked with a lot of pros, when you don't have all those grandstands around the greens and all the people, sometimes the greens look smaller or you see things you couldn't see before. Just the overall look of the golf course is different.

But heck, on 18, I didn't know there was grass left of the bunker because usually there's stands and people. So the look is different; the feel is the same. Again, we're lucky enough that we have fans this week. So the atmosphere, even though much more smaller, is still going to be pretty fun.

**Q. Jon, do you plan to sport the Arizona State jersey at 16 as you have in the past this year?**

JON RAHM: I haven't thought about it. I wasn't sure what we were going to have on 16, what type of amphitheater we were going to have. At one point it did look like maybe we were going to have no fans at all. I haven't thought about anything. I don't have anything in mind right now.

But I think at this point a lot of them know that I'm an ASU player and I still get that support. But I'll bring it back. I haven't thought about anything this year. I can tell you that.

**Q. What's the most memorable thing that you've heard on that hole?**

JON RAHM: Oh, a lot of things I can't mention. But I must say, the crowd we miss -- usually about 50 or so off the tee to the left, in that area. I think it's people from Minnesota. They're always dressed in Viking gear, and they do their research on players because they have chants about me, my caddie, friends, things we've done in the past, college teammates. Just fun things from your life that they know. They start chanting things about my hometown, soccer team in the past.

That group of individuals, whoever they are, they'll be missed. That's probably one of the most memorable things. It's pretty cool.

But for me, the reaction I got the year I played as an amateur on Sunday when I hit it to 10 feet to the back left pin, I don't really remember because I kind of blacked out a little bit. But it's just that moment, that reaction, that embracement from the fans is one of the coolest things I've ever experienced.

**Q. Talking about the numbers and the smaller numbers this year, do you think it'll make it -- I don't know if I want to say more enjoyable or less enjoyable than like when it's so many people here? Do you think in some ways it could be a positive to have a smaller number here? Or are you just happy there are fans at all?**

JON RAHM: I'm just happy that there's fans, yeah. I mean, listen, one of the reasons why you play here is the atmosphere. That's one of the reasons why I play here. I love it. I wish every single week was like that. It's the closest thing we're going to feel to be playing basically on a football stadium, right, on Saturday when you have 100,000 people here just having fun.

Those last few holes are unique, and as golfers, you don't get that that often, and it's really fun. I'm not saying it's better or worse. To me it just makes you wish we were going to have them as soon as possible.

But like I said, right now after having nobody, 5,000 sounds like 100,000. We should just be thankful that we're having fans and it's a little step in the right direction or to the future of maybe hopefully putting this whole COVID thing behind us and moving to a better tomorrow.

That's my hope. Hopefully next year we have the fans basically at full capacity.

JOHN BUSH: All right, Mr. Rahm. Thank you for your time, and best of luck this week.

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