

WGC Dell Technologies Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

Jon Rahm

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Jon Rahm into the interview room. He is making his sixth career appearance at the Dell Technologies match play. If we can get some comments on being here in Austin.

JON RAHM: Hoping for a little better weather the next few days. But besides that, I'm excited. It's too bad that this is the last edition of this tournament.

I obviously love match play, so I'm hoping maybe it's just a one-year deal and we get a match play event back on the schedule.

With regards to the golf course, I think it fits match play very well. It's a golf course that it gives you a lot of opportunities. I think it equalizes play quite a bit, and you see very different people having success out here.

It's a fun one to play and I always look forward to coming.

Q. You have Rickie Fowler, Billy Horschel, and Keith Mitchell in your group, if you can comment on that.

JON RAHM: All great guys, all great players. The one guy that maybe hasn't been playing his best this year is a past champion out here, so you can't overlook that. He's a great match play player, as well.

So looking forward to it. I'm excited, and hopefully I can make it again through the group stage.

Q. How are you feeling since THE PLAYERS Championship?

JON RAHM: I'm good.

Q. Can you elaborate on that?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. Did it impact your preparation for the Masters at



all?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. How is your preparation for the Masters?

JON RAHM: It's been great. It's shorter than you would think. There's a virus going around and a lot of people have told me I've gotten it. Couldn't do anything on Friday after I WD'd. I went straight home. I couldn't even drink water without feeling nauseous.

Our nanny actually was in the same situation the same day, but then by Friday I was feeling a little bit better, and by Monday I was back at it.

Q. Talking about Match Play and how it's not going to be on the schedule next year apparently, do you think the main reason for that is television, just because you have so few golfers in the playoff stages at the end it's not as TV friendly?

JON RAHM: It could be. I've heard multiple reasons. Sponsors have taken over this tournament in the past; that's been a reason.

When you have clients come out here, Dell clients, Sunday afternoon you have the consolation match and the final, so they get all of 15 minutes of golf if you get lucky. I'm being very generous right there, that go through each one of the tents, right?

Unless you're positioned in a spot where you can see more than one hole, like it could be on 13 and 15 on those tents, you're going to have to be moving around.

When it comes to TV as well, yeah, it's a lot more dead time than any other sport in between shots. I'm sure there's a solution to it. I'm sure there's a way around it, because I think we should have a match play event every single season.

I just don't know what that solution is to make it entertaining enough throughout the entire Sunday or the weekend in general.



Q. If it was put to a player vote, do you think it would pass --

JON RAHM: I have no idea. I have no clue.

Q. But do you feel like most of your peers enjoy --

JON RAHM: I would hope it would pass. I honestly can't tell you. I haven't been asking enough players to know if that would.

Q. This is the last year in Austin, too; your experiences, how would you rate them, and how popular do you feel like this has been on the schedule?

JON RAHM: I think it's a great venue. Like I said, the golf course complements match play very, very well, and then the city itself it's a great city to come to. It's easily accessible and it's fun. It's great destination.

Again, I'm hoping we come back. I'm hoping even if maybe it's not at this golf course for match play, I'm hoping it's an area of the country we come back to because I think it deserves it.

Q. It probably wouldn't be a great stroke-play event --

JON RAHM: I don't think this would be the best stroke play course. Too much of it -- I think there would be a big difference between morning scores and afternoon scores when it gets windy. They wouldn't be able to have the greens very fast. You can in match play because it's just about beating the guy in front of you, but in stroke play the times it's gotten firm and fast, some of those holes can play a little bit dicey.

I think you would have to be careful with it.

Yeah, and I don't think it would be a favorite course for stroke play. But, again, for match play it really, really, really works.

Q. You talked about how much you love match play. If you were giving a presentation and had to convince people and say this is why we need a match play event on the calendar every year, what would be the 30-second pitch?

JON RAHM: That's not my job. I could only tell you as a player, right? I wouldn't know how to convince a sponsor. As a player it's just an opportunity to play kind of a different golf, right?

It's really the only time throughout the year besides maybe the Ryder Cup where you're playing truly against the person in front of you, which is much more relatable to every sport we play in the world, which is basically about just playing better than the team in front.

Usually it's very much about you minding your own business and hopefully beating the other 150 players in the field. It's fun. It's a lot more aggressive. You see more birdies. You see a lot of things happen.

Again, one of the things you mentioned, when you have a lot of matches out there you see a ton of highlights and a ton of great things happening. When you only have one or two on the course, I can understand why it can be a little bit hard to -- as a product, I wouldn't know how to sell it. I honestly can't tell you.

I can tell you why I love it so much.

Q. Is it more exhilarating to beat another person in a match play event? Let's say tomorrow you go out and win. Is that better than going out on a Thursday and shooting a 64 or something like that?

JON RAHM: Yeah.

Q. You like when it's personal, huh?

JON RAHM: No, it's not the personal. I mean, when you do it on Thursday, you can shoot 64 on Thursday but you still have three rounds to compete and somebody can come out and do it three times in a row as opposed to your one, right, so it's tough to say.

But it doesn't beat going out there on a Sunday and posting a 64 and going away with a win. It obviously doesn't beat that. But when you have some good matches out here and you go out and play and both players shoot low and you end up finishing, it's really fun.

It's just a different way of enjoying the sport that we all love.

Q. There's obviously been a lot of talk about 13 at Augusta National; players have been visiting. Have you visited yet?

JON RAHM: No, not yet.

Q. You've talked in the past about hitting 3-wood off that tee, leaving it short of the trees. How do the changes that you've probably seen, does that affect the way you're going to play that?

JON RAHM: From what I've talked to people, you can't go through hitting driver unless you're downwind. I think my line won't really change. The club selection might change.

What you won't see is people possibly being able to turn the corner and having 8- or 9-iron in or maybe even 7-iron. Now it will play a little bit more out to the right to hopefully give yourself a better line.

But I can anticipate a lot of people hitting a good tee shot and still having to curve it around the trees a little bit, and obviously we're going to see a lot of lay-ups. I.

I think it plays in my favor. It's going to play obviously in the longer hitters' favor as well just because I may be comfortable enough from 220 to go at the green, but somebody that might have a 2-iron plus or a long iron with that lie might not feel as comfortable.

So I think it plays to my advantage.

Q. You think still 3-wood for you?

JON RAHM: I can't tell you. It all depends. There's been times we get there and it's straight downwind and I've hit 3-wood through in the past. It still might be 3-wood, it might be driver, it depends on the situation.

If it's soft and it doesn't bounce up you can still get away with driver, right? If you can't go through, I don't see why not.

At the end of the day, it's what you feel more comfortable with.

Q. Getting back to match play and especially pool play in match play, you can play pretty well and not advance out of your group. What's the best you've played where you just had to shake your head and go, that's bizarre that I didn't make it out of the group?

JON RAHM: I forget the year. Forget the year. It's a year where I played Matt Kuchar on Friday, but I don't know who else was in the group that year. I think it might have been --

Q. 2019, I think, Si Woo Kim, J.B. Holmes.

JON RAHM: So that year I remember beating Si Woo, lost to J.B., and then had I won against Kuchar, which I went 1-up on 18, we would have gone into a playoff.

I remember playing great against Kuchar. We had an amazing back nine, and I ended up losing on 18. It was another year where I had I think Chez Reavie, Keegan

Bradley, and I forget who else in the group. I remember playing pretty good those days and lost.

I think I lost every match. I didn't play bad at all. It is what it is. There's been years where maybe I didn't have my absolute best but it was enough to beat the people in front of me. That's the beauty of match play.

Q. As a result, is this one of those tournaments that you just have to forget a little more quickly than the other ones?

JON RAHM: I mean, it can happen. As many times where you get into the locker room you have somebody who shot 7-under and lost against a guy who maybe shot 70 won and won on 15 because somebody had a horrible day. That's just things that happen. That's match play.

I guess it is what it is. That was the case also with the old format. You could go in the first round and have a great day and lose against somebody who didn't have a good day and they're continuing on. But that's the luck of the draw or the luck of the day.

Q. It's been a week since the announcement by the USGA and the R&A --

JON RAHM: God, I thought I was going to avoid this question.

Q. Sorry for that. What's your thoughts on that, and how much is it a topic between you and the other players and the whole crew out there?

JON RAHM: I mean, it's discussed. I think people want to know where everybody is at. I truly -- I haven't talked to anybody in the USGA to understand why they're so focused on testing all our equipment, whether it's the driver, the ball, whatever it is.

They're hyper focused on making professional golf a little bit more difficult than it already is. I don't know why. Do I think it's the right choice? As it comes to me, I don't think it's going to matter that much. I think if you were to roll the ball back, you're going to -- it's going to be more damaging to the shorter hitters on TOUR than it is for people that have distance, because if you're giving me a 7-iron as opposed to a 9- or an 8-iron, that means you're giving somebody a 4- or 5- as opposed to a 7- or a 6. I'm still going to be able to stop it in most places with a 7-iron when some people might not. Especially we're talking about missing fairways right now. You're putting those players in a tougher situation.

With that said, all this 520-yard par-4 tee boxes they love

to do nowadays are not going to be able to be used. So at the end of the day they're still going to be playing the same game.

My biggest question for them to be we're in a golden era of golf where it's exploded since COVID, a lot of people are watching, you have a completely different tour, all these things are happening for the game and it's growing. Why change what's working?

Try to make it better by making it better, not -- there's plenty of things you can do to make it more difficult for us, golf course design, course setup, all these great things. Courses like last week at Innisbrook, it's not long, and the score still held up. Colonial for the most part, unless it's a very benign week with the wind, scores are always higher than the average. Hilton Head, same thing. Valderrama, same thing. You can neglect a lot of nowadays' distance with different golf course design.

If they keep making -- I think you can go with, as it comes to the USGA, Oakmont, Erin Hills, Shinnecock, Winged Foot, and Torrey Pines, probably the five longest U.S. Opens you've seen. Who do you think is going to win? And all of them were under par.

You think about Merion, which is one of the shortest, and it was won with 1-over par.

I think there's other things that can be done than changing the technology of the game to make it more challenging for us. That would be my suggestion to them.

But we'll see, I guess, in three years what happens. I don't think we're going to get to a point to where we only play both Opens with a different golf ball. That would be a little bit silly. It's going to be an all-out change or no change at all.

That would be my guess, but who knows.

Q. Are you going to play the Italian Open this year? Is that something that is on your schedule?

JON RAHM: No, no, because it's the same week as Wells Fargo and I'm defending in Mexico, and Wells Fargo and AT&T would be the first two-week break I would get all year.

It seems silly to go from Mexico to Italy, then come back and have one week off before a major, so I won't be going, no. I wanted to. I wanted to. I will go to the golf course at some point and see it before the Ryder Cup. I will try to do that.

Q. If a couple years from now Match Play was brought back as a non-elevated regular, let's say \$8 or \$9 million, purse, how many guys do you think would play?

JON RAHM: No idea. I have no idea.

Q. Can you work with me a little bit here?

JON RAHM: I have no idea.

Q. Would you?

JON RAHM: I most likely would, yeah. I love match play. Why not? It's a really fun format, so I probably would, yes.

Q. What do you think would be the appeal, and what would be a reason for guys to say no, I'm not doing this?

JON RAHM: I think a little bit of this week is again, luck of the draw. There's a lot of things that happen that are very unlucky golf. You can go, earn two points out of three and have to go into a playoff against somebody you've already beaten.

That seems very odd. It seems very anti-sports. The whole thing of somebody with one and a half points can make it through in a playoff and play against somebody that was 3-0 and beat them on the round of 16 -- there's just a lot of things that make it very odd in that sense.

A lot of times you can lose your first two matches playing good golf, you have no way of qualifying and you still have to show up Friday and play because otherwise it might affect the group, when you're maybe thinking, I'm going home because you're done.

There's many reasons as to, again, what I mentioned, you can come out and play great matches and lose all of them. I understand why people don't like that, and it's very unlikely for someone to not have their best and end up making it through the group, right?

There's so many reasons why somebody might not like it. I just enjoy match play. Win or lose, it's a different way of doing things, and I think it's really fun. Every time I've come, make it through the group stage or not, win or not, it's something that I enjoy.

I would say for someone actually -- now that I think about it, for someone that might actually be thinking of working something new on their swing in competition, this would be a perfect format to where if you miss a shot, you just lose a hole, you don't make an 8 or 9.

If you're working on something new that you really want to try, it wouldn't be the worst time to do it. So that could be a good excuse to come out here and you get three guaranteed days of competition. It's hard to simulate that at home as much as possible.

To get out here and try to work on something that you want to be working on, I mean, it's an excuse. It could be an expensive excuse if you don't make it through, but it's also an opportunity if you want to look at it that way.

THE MODERATOR: Jon, we appreciate your time. Best of luck this week.

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