

U.S. Open Championship 2024

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 2)

Jon Rahm

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming our 2021 champion, Jon Rahm.

I know you just got here, but you played the course about a week ago. What were your first impressions?

JON RAHM: Man, as a golfer, this is definitely a bucket list golf course to come and play, whether it's a major championship or not. To see images from what it looked like in 2005 and then what Crenshaw and his partners did on the redo in 2014 is quite incredible.

To change it that much and still keep it historically... I don't know if 'relevant' is the word, but still historically competitive and still play like a U.S. Open is quite incredible.

It was a lot of fun to be a part of it. You hear about the greens. You hear all the stories and you see it on TV, but you can't quite understand what it's like until you see them in person.

It was definitely fun to play a few rounds here a couple weeks ago and get to enjoy it and experience it. It's definitely a unique track, but it's a very enjoyable walk. It's a lot of fun to play out here.

Q. How is the foot, and how much of a concern is it this week, and what are you doing to get ready?

JON RAHM: Oh, it's a concern. It's doing better. It's doing better. But definitely still in pain.

Q. I had a question about Scottie. When you joined LIV, you and he were fairly neck and neck at the top of the rankings. What's your impression about what he has done in the last year or so, where he's taken this and separated himself?

JON RAHM: It's quite incredible to see what he's been able to accomplish. Every year or every so years, there's been great ball strikers that come up. But when you start getting compared to Tiger and things that Tiger has done, that's when you know you are in a level that is quite

special.

To win five times in a season... That was his fifth win. And winning the tournaments he's winning. To win Bay Hill, PLAYERS, Masters, RBC and then Memorial, you're basically replicating a Tiger Woods season. It's fantastic to see. He's been playing fantastic golf and doing what he needs to do.

As a competitor, obviously it's an added motivation to see somebody do so well because that's what we all strive for. And as a golf fan, it's just absolutely incredible to watch.

Q. Does it raise the pressure on you at all to feel like you have to shoot a slightly lower score or something, just knowing that Scottie is playing at the level he's playing at right now?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. I know it hasn't been the summer that you'd like golf-wise up to this point, but with the foot and with the form the way it is, do you feel like you have a good chance this week?

JON RAHM: Anytime I tee it up, I feel like I have a good chance.

Q. What's the biggest part of Scottie's game that's making him so good right now?

JON RAHM: I haven't watched every round he's played, obviously. It's hard to do that. I haven't been following the stats, but it just doesn't seem like anything is wrong. Let's just say it that way.

Based on what he's been doing the last few years, if he could just stay around even on strokes gained putting, he could have a season like this. When you've top 5 in pretty much every category, tee to green, if you just putt average, you're going to beat everybody.

He's doing everything well.

But I think when somebody is that good, it gets to a point



where what's in between the ears is the biggest asset.

Q. When you were here a few weeks ago, did you sort out what you're going to use around the greens if you miss a green, and have the greens changed a lot since you were here and now in tournament preparation conditions?

JON RAHM: Well, I haven't set foot on the golf course yet, so I don't know. When I played a few weeks ago, I think the fairways around the greens, they stay a little bit longer so it's healthy. There was some spots where the lob wedge seemed like a good option. That most likely won't be, come tournament time.

It's hard to say. It's definitely a golf course where you need to know where to miss more than most. There's spots to every pin location that are easier than others. I don't think any up-and-down is easy around this golf course, but there's spots where you have a better chance.

For the most part, if you're short of the green, somehow you're going to have at least an uphill shot. Once you get past pin high or past the pin on a lot of holes is where it gets tricky.

It depends on where the player is comfortable. We saw Martin Kaymer use the putter and do really well. With the firmness, I think it was in '99 where Tiger was using 3-woods or 5-woods around the greens. People like Phil still using wedges. But whatever you're comfortable with to try to make those up-and-downs.

Q. About the course setup, do you feel like you have to be less aggressive on this course with the inverted plates as greens?

JON RAHM: I think you need to really pick a target to where you want that ball to end up and be committed and aggressive to that spot. A lot of times that's going to mean playing away from the pin and playing to the center of the green, yeah. So it all depends on what you look at as aggressive.

Q. What exactly happened to your foot or toe, and what is the pain you're experiencing?

JON RAHM: We've been trying to figure it out because I think that the closest term would be a lesion on the skin. If I were to show you, it's a little low in between my pinky toe and the next toe.

I don't know how or what happened, but it got infected. The pain was high. On the Saturday round, Saturday morning, I did get a shot to numb the area. It was

supposed to last the whole round, and by my second hole I was in pain already.

The infection was the worrisome part. The infection is now controlled, but there's still swelling and there's still pain. There's a reason I walked out here in a shoe and a flip-flop, trying to keep the area dry and trying to get that to heal as soon as possible.

But I can only do what I can do. The human body can only work so fast.

Q. Was withdrawing last week precautionary, or is there a good chance you might not be able to play this week?

JON RAHM: Could I have dragged myself out there and posted some kind of a score? Yeah. But it was getting to a point where I wasn't making the swings I wanted to make, and I could have hurt other parts of my swing just because of the pain. As to right now this week, I don't know.

Q. In your walks around here a couple weeks ago, the native areas, do you think balls in there, are they a coin flip? Is it 40-60 getting a decent lie? Do you have any idea what you think it's going to be like?

JON RAHM: So I encourage you guys to go out there because there's some holes in which certain sides of the fairway are more, let's say, flexible than others, and some fairways that missing are less penal than others.

There are some areas of the rough where your odds are quite a bit higher to maybe have a chance to move it forward towards the green, and there's certainly some that are very low, whether you can move it forward, and it's going to be a pitch-out. It all depends what side of the golf course you're on.

Luckily this is the type of golf course on which you might have a chance to go towards the green, but that doesn't mean much. It's certainly circumstantial on the hole.

Q. What are your earliest memories of David and Eugenio, and do you think it's more challenging for them starting out trying to make their way into these major championships?

JON RAHM: Earlier memory of who?

Q. David Puig and Eugenio.

JON RAHM: Well, I didn't meet Chacarra until I was already in LIV Golf. They're both stand-out Spanish

players, played great in college. I think it's really impressive what they both have done to be able to play themselves into tournaments with limited opportunities to earn World Ranking points and qualifiers. It's not an easy road to get into majors that way, but they both have done it.

It's difficult, right? I feel like when you have only certain opportunities, it's easy to put pressure on yourself early on. But they're both more than talented enough to have a chance and have a long career.

A little bit is going to be experience in major championship golf because it's different to anything else we play all year.

Q. What is your level of career happiness right now?

JON RAHM: Career happiness?

Q. Yeah, compared to the rest of your career, are you in a happy place?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I'm in a happy place. It's not like I've been playing bad, even though a lot of you make it sound like I'm playing bad. I had two bad weeks...

Q. That wasn't my implication.

JON RAHM: No, not you. I've been top 10 and had a chance to win in most of the tournaments I've played, and then unfortunately Augusta and PGA wasn't my best showings. But yeah, I'm happy.

I mean, it's been a wonderful career so far. And yeah, it hasn't been the best first half of the year, but there's been many times where I haven't had a great start, but that doesn't mean you can't have a great finish.

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