

ROUND 1 INTERVIEW
January 24, 2019

JON RAHM (-10)



DOUG MILNE: Jon Rahm, thanks for joining us after a very successful day, 10-under 62 on the North course, obviously a great way to get the week started. A couple eagles on the front nine, a chip-in and a whole list of other things. I'll just let you kind of take it from there and let you talk a little bit about the round.

JON RAHM: I mean, what to say. I don't think you ever tee up on any course at Torrey Pines expecting to shoot 10-under par. That just doesn't happen. But yeah, I mean, you mentioned a couple of key moments. Starting with an eagle, obviously it's a huge thing. You're 2-under par, great momentum, a couple of good holes that if you're in the fairway, you're going to have a chance to make birdie on. Then the chip-in on 14 followed by a couple birdies and an eagle.

But I think the biggest turnaround today was No. 4, my 13th hole. Missed it left, the ball went deep in the rough, not much room to work with. I had about three feet of an upslope to land it on and to really get the par on that hole was what changed things. I made four birdies in a row after that and that was the biggest difference on the round. That kept the round going.

DOUG MILNE: One of the things that a lot of people may not know that I asked you about on the way in, you have a special guest here this week, you have your grandmother out. You said it's the first time she's been in the States and able to follow you around. How special is that?

JON RAHM: She's been in the States before, to New York and San Francisco, but never to watch me play golf, no. Since I've turned professional or since I think since 2014, she might have seen me play, this would be the third event, I think. The last event she watched me play was the Ryder Cup. She did go to Paris because it's a little closer to home. She watched me win in Madrid, the Spanish Open. Nothing like coming all the way to the States. It's a long flight for somebody who's 83 years old. Even though she's in incredible good health, it's a long flight.

Couldn't be happier that she's here. She keeps calling it the trip of her life. And next week we have more family coming over, so definitely looking forward to the next few weeks. She's very excited.

I really highly doubt she has any idea or clue what I did today, to be honest. My grandpa was the one that knew what golf was, he knew what a birdie or a bogey was. For her, she just asked him. I think every single day I played, she would ask my dad or anybody to know what was going on. Walking with my parents, I think she knew it was something good, but I

don't think she really understands what it is.

Q. Your grandmother's name?

JON RAHM: Do you speak Spanish?

Q. I do not.

JON RAHM: I'm just going to say the short version. Miren, M-I-R-E-N, and the last name -- it's a Basque last name so you don't even want to try to spell it.

Q. How much are you starting to fall in love with this place and is it becoming one of your favorite golf course areas that you've ever been to?

JON RAHM: It's a contest between here and Pebble Beach. This is probably my favorite area. If you take into account the town and the vibe around Torrey Pines, this is my favorite golf course and golf tournament pretty much. Golf course, for sure, just because there's a lot of good history for me. I played good here in college, I also loved the city of San Diego.

Now, when it comes to personal, Kelley always loved the city of San Diego. Before we met, her and her parents came here almost monthly to the Hilton right here at Torrey Pines. My first and only Monday qualifier we drove from ASU to here to Torrey Pines, missed it by one, drove back. The next year I end up winning the tournament. We also got engaged here at Torrey Pines, not on the golf course, on the hikes just past it. So there's a lot of good reasons for me to be happy every time I come here no matter how I play. We come here quite a bit just as a day off, so definitely a special place of me and Kelley.

Q. So you're really looking forward to the U.S. Open here?

JON RAHM: I'm looking forward to it, of course. I look forward to coming here honestly whether I'm playing or not, but when you get a place like this, a golf course like this, weather like this and a round like this, it's not going to be much of a better day golf-wise.

Q. Jon, the North course, how it played today, we got a lot of rain last week, the greens have been really bouncy these first two years, kind of the new North. How much effect did that kind of have on your ability to maybe go at pins a little more and be a little more confident that they were going to stay on the green?

JON RAHM: Well, last year playing with Jason Day, he shot an incredible 8-under par and I shot 6 under and it was much more battle because, as you mentioned, the greens were newer and they were definitely a lot firmer. It was hard to keep the long irons close to the pin.

I think the biggest advantage of this year with the greens being a little soft is not only being able to attack the pins off the fairway, is how comfortable you can be with knowing that you

can stop it on the green off the rough. I think that's a bigger deal. When you have even a wedge, you can still be aggressive because the ball's going to stop on the green. Last year you couldn't do that and you really had to think about where you want to leave the ball, so I think that's the biggest difference on why the scores are a lot lower this year.

Q. So talking about how important this course is to you and coming to San Diego, how crucial is it to win this tournament then?

JON RAHM: I wouldn't say it's crucial. Obviously it's as important as any other event, but it means a lot and I think the reason why it plays so good is what I just mentioned before. There's a lot of happiness going on in this area for me, so I just feel I'm going to play good when I tee up. I'm in a very positive state of mind and very confident. Partly also because I was able to win my first Tour event here and knowing how I played then and how I got it done, I know I can win any way that I tee up here. Yeah, definitely winning here is very, very special. Probably if I ever win again, this will be a lot more special since that first time because of all the things that happened since then.

Q. Jon, although the North course has toughened up the past few years, do you still feel under the gun when you play the North course in the first round before you get to the South course?

JON RAHM: Well, I never played it before the remodel. My first year here it was already remodeled. I have heard because Brian was telling me today, like if you ever teed up on the North course and you shot 1 or 2 under par early on, you're like oh, great and you'd have to play a good round to make the cut. I don't think that's the case anymore. It's a little bit harder but it's still accessible. Anything under par on the North course is going to allow you to be a little more relaxed on South. The biggest thing is going to be the weather and how much wind you get because those fairways are so narrow that if you get any wind, it's a lot harder to hit them and I think that could be a one or two shot swing in the average.

Q. I am also recording for Telemundo. Could you in Spanish give the answer to the question of why you really enjoy it here and why the comfort of being here helps you play so well?

JON RAHM: Oh, the whole thing?

Q. Pick whatever parts you want.

JON RAHM: Do you want to caption it? Yeah, if you guys don't mind, I'll say it in Spanish. That's fine with me.

(Speaks Spanish.)

DOUG MILNE: Great answer.

Q. Did you say anything great in there that we missed?

JON RAHM: No, no. I pretty much said everything I said before, just a little faster.

Q. I don't want to get scooped in Spanish.

JON RAHM: Don't worry.

Q. Can we just get the shot-for-shot on the two eagles, and also you chipped in?

JON RAHM: I chipped in on 14. Is it 14? Yeah, 14.

Q. Distance on that?

JON RAHM: Shot for shot? On 10, first shot of the day, hit on the fairway, I had 226 meters to a back left pin, which is a good 5-wood number and went with a fade 5-wood. Might not be the shot that fits best to that hole, but my miss with a 5-wood is short right, so my miss with a 5-wood is going to be pretty much as close as my best 4-iron, so hit a 5-wood. Six feet straight up the hill, made the putt.

The chip-in on 14, I missed the fairway three feet left, got a bad lie, hacked a 9-iron to the front edge of the green and it was about 35 feet away. I just used a 56 to roll it to the hole and pretty much died in the hole, as good as it could be.

Then the next eagle was probably more of a surprise. I hit a good tee shot to the right semi rough. Wasn't the best lie, the ball above my feet a little bit, and I had 191 meters to carry the front bunker. I forgot how far the pin was, maybe about 220 to the pin, more or less, something like that. I was thinking of maybe hitting a 5-iron to the right side and trying to roll it in up on the green. Adam told me that I need to get it back there, so I grabbed a 4-iron, put it a little bit back in my stance, swung as hard as I could, landed about five paces on the green. Thankfully Jason Day hit the same putt right before me and I was able to see the break.

Q. Starting the round with an eagle, do you remember the last time you started a round with an eagle?

JON RAHM: No. I mean how many times do you start a round with a par 5, and to make an eagle, I really don't remember the last time I started with an eagle. I don't know if I've even done it as a pro.

Q. Jon, a lot of changes, a lot of rules regulation changes this year. We saw it on the course, Tiger had a problem with marking a ball. Also the PGA changing its security policy. They love you here, '17, last year. Last year you were in -- at the top of the leaderboard, once again now you're at the top of the leaderboard. You love it here. Any fear factor from the gallery when you're inside the ropes?

JON RAHM: From the what? The gallery?

Q. Yeah, from the fans that are --

JON RAHM: Fear?

Q. Are you fearful at all? The PGA, what they've done, they've really stepped up security this year.

JON RAHM: Oh, have they? I had no idea.

Q. You probably didn't. When people come in --

JON RAHM: I've never been fearful. The only time I've ever felt unsettled on the golf course was at Phoenix last year, because I was playing with Phil on Saturday and we were both on top of the leaderboard and there was way too many people following our group. When we got to 10 where everybody basically hangs out that is trying to drink and trying to get on 16, we both missed the fairway.

Definitely a little unsettling because when you get close to people when they're a little inebriated, they don't respect your bubble, they don't understand how close they can get to you and definitely don't understand how much their breath stinks at that point. So that was the only time I've felt unsettled, but I've never had a problem at a Tour event. I mean, security-wise I don't think I've ever felt it. I'm glad they're stepping it up, but I've never had a problem. I think that's a question more for Tiger or Phil than for me.

DOUG MILNE: Jon, thank you for coming in.