

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**January 25, 2022**

**JON RAHM**



**DOUG MILNE:** We will go ahead and get started. We would like to welcome World No. 1 Jon Rahm to the interview room here at the 2022 Farmers Insurance Open.

Jon, thanks for joining us. I feel like I've been with you a lot lately and it's all been good stuff. Coming off a top-15 finish last week at The American Express, you're making your sixth start here at the Farmers Insurance Open, three of which have resulted in top-5 finishes; of course with the win, your first PGA TOUR win here.

Just some thoughts on being back here this week.

**JON RAHM:** Trying to think of something I haven't said before. You know, it is a golf course that I love, it's a city that I love. Obviously have great memories all throughout my career here, my latest win being here as well. Just very excited to be here. It's one of those weeks that I look forward to every year. Looks like the weather's going to be great as it almost always is in San Diego and hopefully I can put in another strong performance like I have in the past.

**DOUG MILNE:** You're making your fourth start of the season, the second-place finish at Sentry. Just some thoughts on progress with your game and what you're feeling most comfortable with as you're heading into the week.

**JON RAHM:** I think I've said it before, I don't think the Sentry Tournament of Champions is the best indicator of form just because of how different of a golf course it is to what we play the rest of the year, especially this year when we played it without any wind, right? It showed. It was a battle to shoot a very low score to get up there.

But feeling confident, feeling comfortable. Last week was not my best week, didn't feel good swing wise. Nothing really felt good. Putting felt about as bad as it can feel and I somehow still managed to sneak in a top-15, so that gives me a lot of confidence knowing what I'm working on is going on the right track and when I'm having a bad week I can still post a score. Hopefully I can tidy up a couple details in the next few weeks, but hopefully I can start playing good this week.

**Q. Can I get your thoughts on the quick turnaround this week and starting Wednesday?**

**JON RAHM:** To be honest, I feel like I'm so in my routine that it feels like a Wednesday. Just not playing the pro-am, it feels like a Wednesday. I drove over with my caddie Sunday night and we did some practice yesterday. Yeah, it almost feels like a Wednesday.

I can see for some people if you get in Monday, especially if you run into some trouble in the travel, even though for most of us it's probably just a two-hour drive. If you're driving farther, you don't have that extra day to settle down and get going, but I wouldn't say there's much different.

**Q. And you said you were working -- you're happy with some of the things you've been working on. Certain things specific or just everything?**

**JON RAHM:** Just trying to get a bit better, that's about it. Nothing specific. I don't want to talk about -- I probably don't have enough time to talk about everything that I have in my mind, but yeah, just I think it was more a sense of knowing that with what I've been working on when I'm not feeling good, I can still put in a good week.

**Q. Jon, I don't know if you've ever thought about this, but if I made you set-up czar on the PGA TOUR for you and the other best players in the world, what would the ideal set-up of a golf course look like? I'm talking length, rough length, green speeds, everything, what would it look like and why?**

**JON RAHM:** A lot of it depends on the golf course, but I would like a set-up that would challenge us in every aspect of the game. I like fairways to be narrow, I like the rough to be up so you can't just miss the fairway and go for the green with whatever you want. I would like the greens to be firm. They don't need to be ridiculously firm but firm, and the greens at the right speed. That's tough to say because you have greens here, for example, if you had them rolling 13 it would be unplayable because of how sloped they are.

But I think a golf course that would challenge us in every aspect of the game and that's where I believe you would find the best player, somebody whose whole game completely is playing good throughout. And if something is missed, you have to make up with really good stuff on the other parts of your game.

But that question is very much dependent on what golf course you're playing at, weather and where you're at. It's a little bit of that, but I think the general answer would be something that would challenge players in every aspect.

**Q. (No microphone.) How many times (inaudible)?**

**JON RAHM:** What do you mean?

**Q. In terms of a challenging test with all the best players.**

**JON RAHM:** Like I said, a lot of times depends on the golf course. There are golf courses that are going to be challenging regardless, like this one, but it's tough. It all depends on the year because sometimes you're going to have bad weather and that changes aspects of things. There's some weeks every year that are going to be a challenge. Like playing L.A.,

playing Riv, no matter how it is, those greens are always going to be a challenge. Memorial is always going to be a challenge. In my mind Colonial, even though it's not long, it's not crazy rough, it's always a challenge. Majors are always a challenge, THE PLAYERS Championship is always a challenge. I think a lot of those courses the main aspect is the design of the course more than the set-up. You play in different set-ups, you play those greens firm and soft and the score's always around the same, right. And in the years where weather gets crazy, you have crazy high scores.

**Q. Jon, do you have any routines or superstitions in coming to San Diego as far as anywhere that you go every time you're here or things that you do that just make you feel at home again here?**

**JON RAHM:** I'm not superstitious at all, I'm very minimally superstitious, but there is some places I like to go. I haven't gone yet because I couldn't yesterday, but I'll probably make it a point to go before I leave, I always go to Ken Sushi Workshop. It's always a must-go for me. When it comes to sushi experience, the best I've had in my career. I didn't get to go to Tokyo and experience it there, but I've heard some people say this is up there as well.

And then just a couple places, if I go to Callaway, we always get the sandwiches from Mendocino Farms. I always go to Urban Plates. When it comes to coffee, because I do like my coffee in the morning, I will make a stop. I don't know if I'll do it every morning, but I will make a stop at Bird Rock Coffee.

**Q. Did you come back here at all after The Open? Have you been back?**

**JON RAHM:** Um-hmm, oh, yeah. I come often. I said it many times, it's my family's favorite city. Up until recently my swing coach, Dave Phillips, lived here and he spends a lot of time here, those two things. And the fact that Callaway headquarters is here, I do come here.

A lot of times when I feel like I need a weekend without distractions or I just come and practice, I will come and do that. So I think, I mean, we're probably here once every two months, maybe six times a year is a good estimate as to how much we come. That would be at the very least.

**Q. Walking around here playing practice rounds, now being The Open champion from here, what is that like even relative to walking around here as a Farmers Open champion?**

**JON RAHM:** It doesn't change that much because the golf course is so different, right? Because of the time of year, we rarely see the greens as firm as we did at the Open and we rarely see the rough as high as we saw it at the Open, right? Plus there's a little bit of set-up changes. Fairways were also not running as much as they were at the Open. We do play it different. Six is usually a par-5. No. 15, at least in the past we haven't played it from the back tee. No. 18 we usually go one tee up as well, so it changes.

But the feeling doesn't change. Still a place that I love and still a place that I've done great on. If anything, every time I go by I'll remember the times I had a chance to win and I didn't. That's just me as a competitor always wanting more, more than what I've done, but I'm pretty sure when I play the back nine today I'll be remembering certain moments of that Sunday.

**Q. Jon, as a former Farmers champion, last year Patrick Reed wins going away by five strokes, but really all the discussion was about the embedded ball ruling in the third round. I know you're worrying about your own rounds at that point, but what are your thoughts on how different that discussion was around the winner last year as compared to when you won or anybody wins here?**

**JON RAHM:** In what sense? We're talking about what instance? He did win by five, right? So he played better than everybody else by quite a bit. Talking about an instance where only he knows what happened. I'm in no room to judge. The footage is -- it's not the best in that sense. As far as I'm concerned, he is the 2021 Farmers Insurance Open champion and he did it by five. It was great playing the whole week.

**Q. More about his game than about the other questions around his game, do you think some of that discussion overshadows what he can do on a golf course?**

**JON RAHM:** It could, yeah. It can because for those people that haven't seen it live, Patrick Reed has one of the best short games, if not the best short game on Tour week in and week out. One of those impressive things I remember seeing, I was playing with him at THE PLAYERS last year and on those -- the screens on the golf course, they show a lot of times your stats, right? It was one hole where he had a putt from like six feet and it said inside 10 feet, Patrick Reed, he's top-10 Strokes Gained: Putting. Next one's 10 to 15 feet, he's top-10. Next one's 15 to 20 feet, he's top-10, next one's 20 to 25, he's top-10. I kept looking at it like this is a freaking joke. No wonder anytime his ball-striking is somewhat average, he's up there to win a tournament, but his short game, that's why he's great at match play as well.

So I think it's one of the things a lot of people can learn from is that short game, he has wonderful hands. I know he spends a lot of time on it, but I can see how it gets lost in translation or in the discussion with other things that have happened.

**Q. Curious what memories or feelings or experiences from the U.S. Open in particular come flooding back when you're here, maybe the first time you returned?**

**JON RAHM:** It's hard to say, it's hard to say. So many. It will probably hit me a little bit more when I'm on 18 green remembering me with my dad and my son standing there on father's day, right? I think it will hit me a little bit more. I don't know where the wind locations are, but I'm playing with my friend Jared, who Monday qualified, and I'm sure he's going to want to hear about the putts on 17 and 18. And I don't blame him, I would ask as well.

I don't know exactly what to tell you because there's so many things that come to mind, right? The first thing is it's an incredible sense of pride just because I remember where I come from and I remember all those times when I was a kid thinking, oh, this is to win a major. And heck, I have the moment right here, right? It's an incredible sense of pride to myself to all those times when I was a kid and said, One day I'll be a major champion, and being able to do it and being able to do it at a place I love so much. So hopefully I can keep adding to it, but that's the first thing that comes to mind.

**Q. You mentioned all the places you like to visit around town. You proposed to Kelly on a trail. Is that part of the checklist as well when you guys are here?**

**JON RAHM:** You know, that was the one and only time I've gone on the trails. She does love them, she does do it and that was one of the reasons. I always told her -- I feel like it's this thing, right, where nowadays you're expected to have this massive movie proposal and you see it on social media and they have this massive production. I told her for years, When we do it, we're going to be in sweatpants. She didn't believe me.

So in fact we were in sweatpants on a hike and it turned out to be great. It turned out to be us, a very intimate moment. I don't know if she's been back since. I think she has. We did step outside the rope line to be able to do what we did where we did it, but can't have the rope in the picture obviously.

I'm sure I'll go back again. I'm sure when Kep and our future kids are old enough we'll probably visit it again. It's a very special place.

But if we or she doesn't go on the hike, she definitely visits the beach because we ended up walking back on the beach. So I know she has gone back. Like I said, we do the little things that remind us of certain things.

**Q. Considering all the time you've spent around here, have you ever considered hopping on one of those paragliders?**

**JON RAHM:** My dad was a paraglider.

**Q. Really?**

**JON RAHM:** Yep. And still I don't know how he had the guts to take off running and jump off a cliff.

**Q. So no temptation to --**

**JON RAHM:** No, I have no interest in even being close to that, no chance.

It's funny, especially at the U.S. Open, my dad kept seeing them and on 4 they were really close to us, he was telling me -- I asked him, "Would you be able to do it?" He hasn't done it

in 20-plus years. I said, "Would you be able to do it?" I'm sure the technology has changed. And obviously, what is he going to say but, "Obviously, no problem." He does get the feeling of wanting to do it and I think me and mom are like, "Yeah, you're not putting the parachute on." I'm pretty sure last time he did it he broke his elbow. He did have a crash landing so I think that's when my dad and my mom said, "We're parents now, you're not doing it again."

But as far as I'm concerned, no, I have no interested in doing it, but it does look really cool. It does look like if you could be under control and know what you're doing, a really exciting experience.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**JON RAHM:** He was, yeah, yeah. And then he found golf and figured this is somewhat safer for my heart.

**Q. Not the greatest way to finish, Jon, I'm sorry, but alluding to an earlier question about course set-up, your reaction to the video that went viral about -- in the second round last week?**

**JON RAHM:** My reaction? I mean, the video's pretty self explanatory. I mean, we're the PGA TOUR, we're the best golfers on the planet and we're playing a golf course where missing the fairway means absolutely nothing. There was times where missing the fairway by an inch was worse than missing the fairway by 20 yards, that to me is a mistake. I don't know what else to say.

I also understand we're in the desert, you can't overseed the entire golf course and things like that can't happen, but yeah, we played a lot of golf with zero rough. It's just, I don't know.

**Q. Would you like to have taken some of the language back?**

**JON RAHM:** I mean, if I knew somebody was recording, I wouldn't say it the way I did, but I was just thinking out loud and letting some frustration out because that's what I felt, right?

No matter where you hit it, you're going to be able to hit it on the green and it becomes a putting contest, who can make the putts. That's about it, there's no premium for anything else.

The perfect example was hole 14. It's a hole that usually hit in the fairway is very, very important because if you miss it and you're in the rough, it's a tough green to hit and make a birdie on. This time we were hitting driver to 20 yards of the green and -- because there was no rough, right? That's the best example I can think of. There's a couple others.

I can tell you right now with the way I struck the ball last week and the way I putted, if it was in, let's say, major championship conditions, I probably wouldn't have made the cut let alone finished 14th, or I shouldn't have, I believe. Maybe, maybe not. But I just think it was a bit too

easy for the best players in the world. That's just my opinion.

**DOUG MILNE:** Okay. Well, Jon, we appreciate your time as always. We certainly wish you the best of luck this week.