

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
November 30, 2022



JON RAHM

DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome Jon Rahm to the interview room here.

Jon, you're making your third start in Hero World Challenge and great success with a win and a second place. Just some thoughts on being back here this week.

JON RAHM: Happy to be back. I'm hoping the weather holds up a little bit more the rest of the week, but really delighted to be back.

It's been really fun every time I've come to play the tournament. It's supposed to be a relaxed week and it always is. Maybe that's why I played such good golf the last few times. It's a good golf course, always in good condition. Obviously with how much water we've gotten the last few days it's not going to be as fast and firm as it's been in the past, but still holds up. So looking forward to getting going.

DOUG MILNE: I hope you guys had a good Thanksgiving holiday. You're making -- you've had one start in the '22-'23 season on Tour, a top-5 finish. Just some thoughts on how you're feeling about your game as you're heading into the week here.

JON RAHM: Feeling good. I've played really good golf in the fall. I've said a couple times in interviews leading in that it's almost like in the fall the scores are finally reflecting how I felt I was playing all year long, it just didn't quite happen until pretty much the Playoffs. Yeah, just excited to hopefully end the year on a strong note and get a bit of a break before we go back to Maui.

Q. Jon, there was the news yesterday that you're going to be playing, you and Justin are going to be playing in the Monday night golf league, the tech-infused golf league with Tiger and Rory.

JON RAHM: Yeah.

Q. What appeals to you about that specifically? What kind of -- what was your initial reactions and what are you looking forward to the most about it?

JON RAHM: Well, there's a couple things that caught my attention. The very first one is it's something so out of the box. No other sport has done this and not many sports can have a virtual simulated league or tournament like we're going to have. To have the accessibility and availability to be able to do it, it's incredible. I think if done properly, it could be really a home run for all of us, not only for us as players but for the audience as well.



It's also an opportunity to -- a true opportunity to grow the game and maybe reach to an audience that wasn't interested in golf as well.

And then as a gamer myself, the cyber aspect of things really gets my attention. I'm really excited to get that first match going, see how it's going to be. Being in an arena, not something we do ever. Maybe the 16th hole at Phoenix and that's about it. So to have the spectators there, I can't wait to see what it's going to look like.

The opportunity is there and I think it shows the excitement that a lot of us have with seeing the names of the people that wanted to get involved in it. I think that right there should be a clear tell of the opportunity we have here.

Q. With the PIP standings coming out last week, a part --

JON RAHM: The what?

Q. The Player Impact Standings coming out last week, apart from Tiger, they pretty closely align close enough with the world rankings. Are you satisfied with how it's playing out?

JON RAHM: Yeah. I mean, I don't know what to respond to that. I mean, I'm not surprised I was in fifth place, pretty much to be expected. It's not something I spend much time thinking about, right? I'm not going to change how I operate today to go any higher or lower on the PIP, that's just not who I am. I'm here to win golf tournaments and I'm not going to be doing anything extra to change that. I know in the social media aspect of things I might be a little or quite a bit behind a lot of people, but if you play good golf, things usually take care of themselves.

Q. Seems like the initial messaging sort of is that it was more social media that was going to be more important than it actually is.

JON RAHM: Yeah, it's hard to say because if you talk about impact, it's hard to not have Hideki in the top-5 because he's a massive name in Asia. It's just hard with how the criteria is and how you look at it and how you use it. I'm not nearly smart enough to figure that out, that's why there's people (indiscernible.)

Because of the -- of how hard it can be to understand and to make a proper program, I don't really -- like I said, if you play good golf, it usually takes care of itself. Rory, J.T., myself, Jordan, we've all played good golf this year, right? Plus, if you think about it, the longer career you have, the more likely your name is going to be known. It's almost the more you're on Tour and if you keep playing good golf for a long time, you will be on that list eventually.

Q. Jon, scheduling question for next year. Are you starting at Kapalua?

JON RAHM: Um-hmm.



Q. Have you figured out kind of how the elevated events and everything, how you're going to set up your schedule?

JON RAHM: I could tell you my whole schedule right now. I'm not going to, but I already know my schedule.

Q. And you're comfortable with how it's --

JON RAHM: Ask him.

Q. Ask Jeff? But you're comfortable with the amount of time that you're going to be spending --

JON RAHM: It doesn't change much of what I do already, it really doesn't. I've said that before, I just need to adjust what tournaments I play, a couple of them. Like I haven't played Hilton Head and Travelers in the past, but because of certain reasons I will play, I'm glad to play. It just changes the schedule a little bit.

But look at my years in the past, it doesn't change how many weeks I play at all. I played 19 tournaments last year from Kapalua to Tournament of Champions and it's going to be the same this year because then I play European Tour in the fall. Again, it won't change.

Q. Jon, since you talked about the World Rankings in Dubai, even Tiger kind of agrees with the whole thing, do you feel vindicated one?

And the second question, you said you're a gamer. What games do you like?

JON RAHM: What was the first question, sorry?

Q. The World Rankings, Tiger's talked about it saying like Jon played in Dubai which was like (inaudible)?

JON RAHM: Yeah, I think I got into the ranking a little bit more and I think the change has accomplished some things and maybe solved a couple problems that some people have with the rankings, but I think they created some new ones with properly and accurately valuing the high-ranked players in the world, right?

I mean, I've already said it a couple times, but having a deeper field doesn't mean, or a larger field doesn't mean it's a better tournament or a harder one to win, right?

Quality over quantity, that's been something that I've heard in life a lot and I think it applies to this situation very, very well. So I think they could fix it, it could be a really good system. Nothing's perfect. It could be a really, really good system once that is fixed.

Yeah, and then game-wise, most of my life I've played Call of Duty, but since Kepa was born, I haven't really played. Lately on the road I do have a Nintendo Switch that I don't always use, but I did play Zelda, Breath of the Wild quite a bit for people that know it. So that's what's been going on lately.

Q. Jon, obviously reached world No. 1, you're the best golfer in the world, this year in particular it's become clear that you're a vocal leader in the professional golf world. I'm wondering if there was a moment where you realized that that was the case where when you talk, people really listen?

JON RAHM: Oh, this is a clear moment, very clear. The second I won the U.S. Open apparently I got all the credibility I needed. Before that, nobody cared. I got COVID, Memorial happened, then I win the U.S. Open and all of a sudden my opinion matters, that's kind of how it went.

Yeah, I don't know if I became a leader then or not. It's just I feel like the public and not necessarily saying you guys, maybe some media outlets listened a little bit more to what I was saying.

Q. Do you like that position?

JON RAHM: I'm going to be me regardless. I don't mind it. If what I say can help people out, great. It doesn't really change. Again, I don't like to deviate, change. I like to stay in my lane and whatever that may be.

Q. There's been a lot of intense talk about money in the world of golf the last year. LIV money, sponsor money, lots of money. When you get into the grind week in and week out and you're playing, how much do you think about money? Is it on your mind at all?

JON RAHM: No.

Q. Is it something you address once a year? How much do you think about it?

JON RAHM: Zero. Listen, I'm in a very, very, very, very privileged position in life. I'm no one to be thinking about money. Luckily, I've played really good golf and I've had the opportunity to earn more money than I need.

And obviously when you start playing this game, you know if you play good you're going to end up making money and be able to take care of yourself. It's not why I started playing, it's not the reason why I play. So when I'm doing my schedule, when I'm practicing and I'm getting my things done, money is not really on my mind. If it was, I probably might have gone to LIV, right? If money is your goal, that's clearly the path to go down.

I don't think, I don't think about it. It's not -- I don't let financial reasons, golf-wise at least, I



don't let it make my decisions. Every decision I make when it comes to golf is to become the best player I can become.

Q. I'm pretty sure you played with Tiger in the last round at the Masters this year.

JON RAHM: Um-hmm.

Q. I'm just curious, looking back on the whole year, as little as he played, as hard as it was, do you remember anything from that day about noticing sort of the determination that he had to be able to even do what he did this year?

JON RAHM: I think the fact that we got put on the clock on 7 and he was somehow trying to speed up, I was looking at him like -- we all looked at the official, like he can't walk any faster, let's be honest. Like he was already doing an amazing job trying to move up and down those hills. We all joked around with the official and then when he turned around, Tiger takes off and I'm looking at my caddie, like, well, this is incredible.

I'm not going to mention how much we had to wait on the second shot on 8, but I think the fact that he actually still tried to speed up that much even though he couldn't really walk.

Then we see the reality afterwards that the cameras don't see. He puts on a bit of a show for the camera, like he's not going to show how much he's really hurting. When we finished scoring, just seeing him stand up and move around that room when there's nobody watching, there's a difference, especially after playing 18 holes and after sitting down when your legs cool off a little bit, it changes.

It's really inspiring. How many surgeries has he had where he was written off? He was done, he's not playing again, he's not only come back and won tournaments, right? It seems right now that we might be reaching that point, but I don't put anything past him. He surprised me before and he surprised a lot of people before.

I'm hoping that he can keep playing, he can contend again, especially major championships. That Sunday's going to be a fun one to remember. Maybe because of my comments in the past, he was a lot more talkative in that round. I don't know if he was just trying to prove a point to me or not, but he was a little bit more talkative and he shared a lot of great stories, a lot of personal stories. I asked a little bit about golf and parenting and he was very receptive [sic]. What is the word? He was very open about it and very respectful about. It was great, it was great. It will be a round I remember for a long time.

Q. Quick one on the money. I appreciate where you stand on it and everything, but you won \$400,000 your first tournament as a pro. Did that register with you?

JON RAHM: I don't think it did, no. I'm still mad I bogeyed 17 and didn't birdie 18 to not win. Yeah, I was asked when that round finished, like Jon, you could have made par-par and finished second for \$700,000, and my answer was almost I don't frickin' care, right, because

again, I play to win and that was the position I was at.

Q. Was there any -- early on anyway in your career, was there any differentiating between guaranteed money from contracts, what have you and what you actually earned on the golf course?

JON RAHM: What? Sorry? I couldn't quite hear you.

Q. Early on when you were starting did you draw a difference between, at least in your own head, whatever money you had from contracts with whatever money you actually earned on the golf course or was it none of it mattered?

JON RAHM: I didn't really think about it, no. Listen, as an amateur I played good enough to earn the opportunities I had to play in Tour events and I proved myself, right? So when I was turning pro, I had really, really good deals from certain brands to where money wasn't an issue. I know a lot of people turn pro and money is an issue, that wasn't my case. Like I said earlier, I wasn't thinking about it, right?

My goal in those events when I turned pro was to hopefully win one of those six to get into the Playoffs, that's what I was thinking. Worst case scenario if I didn't win, earn my Tour card, which I did. At that point I already earned more money than my college mind could comprehend. I definitely can say it was a difference between -- at that point I knew I could go to Chipotle and order extra guac if I wanted to and not feel guilty about it.

Q. Hey, Jon, with regard to LIV and Phil Mickelson, he obviously took a lot of criticism from a number of the players on the PGA TOUR that stayed for his stance and being the face of LIV and whatnot, but is it inaccurate to say that him shaking the PGA TOUR tree to some degree hasn't made a lot of players on the Tour a lot more money as things are shaking out with the elevated events and et cetera, the more money that's come in?

JON RAHM: I mean, I think on this side of things we should be thankful that LIV happened. I don't know if those changes would have happened if LIV wasn't in the picture. So to an extent, yeah, we should be thankful.

Q. What was your reaction -- I know you have a unique relationship, you've got a very good relationship with him over the years. What was your reaction when you heard a lot of PGA TOUR colleagues last year lashing out at him pretty aggressively?

JON RAHM: Well, listen, you're entitled to your own opinion and it's not my place to judge what you think and where you're coming from. Phil is my friend and I'm going to treat him as such. I understand why people think the way -- why people thought certain things. I may agree with it or not, but it's not my place to tell them what to say or not to say obviously. Some things I agree with, some things I didn't agree with.



Q. Jon, you've always been very passionate about the game. When you do set down at the end of the season and reflect on this year, is it going to be a good year for the game or a bad year for the game given fractured relationships?

JON RAHM: Oh, for the game of golf?

Q. No, generally.

JON RAHM: I don't usually think about everybody else, but I try to -- I don't think it was a bad year for golf. Yes, there's certain division, but I think we're moving forward. I think the fans are getting, however you want to look at it on one side or the other, you're getting a different product. Change can always be exciting.

Like I said, on this side a lot of the changes we owe to the appearance of LIV. I don't think it's a bad thing. I just hope the negative, let's say, feel that this whole thing has, right, the animosity goes away. I don't think there needs to be a lawsuit, I don't think each side needs to be saying anything negative about each other. If you want to try to co-exist, co-exist. LIV can do their thing and the PGA TOUR can do their thing. You know, I just don't see the whole point of them saying something bad and then the PGA TOUR responding in a way. When I mean them, it can be players, it can be Greg Norman, it can be anybody on that side, right. That to me is just a bit of a waste of time. They're going to do whatever they want and on this side we're going to do whatever we want. At the end of the day, I think the fans are coming out on top.

Q. Circling back to your schedule, are you going to -- you say you know exactly what it's going to be. Are you going to fulfill what the PGA TOUR and Ryder Cup, DP World Tour what you need to do?

JON RAHM: Oh, yeah, yeah, 100 percent. That's why I won't be playing -- as of right now I don't plan to play PGA TOUR events in the fall so I can fulfill my European Tour commitments and play what I need to play over there. Yeah, I plan to stay a member of both tours, for sure.

Q. Not just be a member, but you're going to play all the elevated events that you have to?

JON RAHM: We can opt out of one.

Q. Right.

JON RAHM: And it doesn't always fall well into the schedule. With me winning Mexico last year, at that time of year I'm going to have to rethink things and Wells Fargo is the one that's teetering on the edge for me, I may or may not play that one. That's the only one. Every other one I'll play.



Q. When you say money that doesn't really matter, you would forgo the PIP money that you would earn because you'd rather have the flex ability?

JON RAHM: Sorry, what?

Q. Would you forgo the flexibility -- would you forgo the PIP money to have the flexibility to skip some of those elevated events?

JON RAHM: No. I mean, I want to play against the best players in the world, right?

Listen, I'm saying I'm not playing for money. I'm also not stupid, OK? If I've earned it and all I have to do is play maybe two or three events I haven't played before for \$20 million, yeah, I might make the effort and do it. It's an added motivation, but I'm not going to be giving away millions of dollars just because I don't want to play one or two events. It doesn't really change my schedule that much. If it was a massive change to where I'm -- it would be a big change in my career or my year, yeah, but it really isn't.

But again, it is our choice. You can choose to do it and you can choose not to do it. So if somebody doesn't want to do it, then you just don't play and acknowledge you won't be getting a percentage of it, that's it.

Q. Jon, how do you look at this year, a year where you weren't able to win a major but had certainly a good amount of success, but lost world No. 1.? How do you summarize it?

JON RAHM: Listen, it's not a bad year. I won three times worldwide and my percentage of top-10s has stayed close to 50 percent. I guess compared to my last few years you can categorize it as bad, but it really isn't, right? I would have had to play a heck of a year to maintain No. 1 with the way some of the players have played.

It is what it is. I mean, it's not easy to get there. Is it a bad year? No. Could it have been better? Yes. I think the only thing I would be thinking about to be better is my major championship performances being better. I made the cut, yes, but on three of them I was nonexistent on the weekend and I really don't like that. To be in contention on those Sundays is where you want to be and competing for wins. It's not easy to win them, but kind of like I did last year, right, last year I was up there in all of them. That would be the one thing, the one negative from the year that I'd be thinking of.

DOUG MILNE: Thank you, Jon.