

# Desert Classic

Wednesday, January 16, 2019

## Jon Rahm

Press Conference



JACK RYAN: We would like to welcome Jon Rahm, the defending champion of the Desert Classic, to the interview room at the media center. Jon, when we were here this point last year I was asking you about your first title defense in the PGA TOUR which was going to be the following week and now you're here for your second. How does that feel coming into this week.

JON RAHM: A little different of the I've been able to tee off as defending champion two more times after that in Ireland and Dubai and put some good showings, had my chance to get in the playoff in Ireland and Dubai I ended up finishing in the top-5 as well. So I've been playing good, hopefully this one is the one where I can have another good performance and hopefully repeat the win. It hasn't been done here since 1976, so it doesn't mean -- it means it's not easy, there's a lot of good people wanting to play early, a lot of people coming from the WEB.COM, a lot of players who practiced a lot, especially that come here to Palm Springs to practice in winter. So hopefully I'm the one who gets to run away with it again.

JACK RYAN: And speaking of last year you defeated Andrew Landry in a four-hole playoff. What memories come to mind when you look back to that playoff?

JON RAHM: Well, I think the best thing to remember from that playoff is all the four tee shots in the regular 18 and the three playoff holes we played on 18. I had, as a fader of the ball, it's not the easiest tee shot for me and I was able to hit it really good teeing off first and putting the pressure on Andrew every single time, even though he played wonderfully, having to hit it on the fairway and the green every single time he did it right after me. So I think the besides the putt that won the tournament for me it would be the best thing to remember, right, all those great tee shots I hit with 3-wood.

JACK RYAN: We'll take some questions, please.

**Q. Including the win last year, 12 months now, have you exceeded your expectations for those 12 months or met those, met your expectations? Because three wins worldwide, plus the Ryder Cup, that's a pretty strong season.**

JON RAHM: Yeah, obviously I've definitely at least met them. It's not only three wins, I won in two different

tours and then being able to win in one of the toughest fields which is Tiger's event, it's the 18 best players in the world, which is not an easy task. So it's definitely been a great year. And then to also win the Spanish Open, which apparently compared to the wins might seem easier but as a Spanish native and being the last tournament, the only time the only tournament I could say that's named the Spanish Open that I can win as a pro. So I was lucky and fortunate enough to do it as an amateur and win from different ages, but then to do it as a pro and cap that chapter of my career it was pretty special. It was definitely my hardest win because of being the hometown player, I played on that golf course a lot because my last years of high school I spent in Madrid. Being the highest ranked player in the world there, and in the week, being expected to win as a Spanish player, there was a lot to go with it that I was not ready for. To be able to get it done was definitely the most special thing there.

**Q. How much better can you get as a player?**

JON RAHM: Hopefully a lot.

**Q. Do you feel like you have to get better all the time just to maintain where you are?**

JON RAHM: Well I think everybody here's pursuing getting better a small percentage every single day. I don't feel like I have to get better, I want to get better, just the simple fact that as everybody else is getting better. Nobody -- unless you are winning every single week by 10 strokes everybody's going to try to become a little better to beat the guy next to him. So, yeah, I'm definitely, I want to, it's not that I have to, but that I want to.

**Q. And one other. You're one of obviously one of a pretty big group of young players who are making a huge mark on the TOUR. And yet the No. 1 player in the world right now is Justin Rose, who is 38 and Phil Mickelson won last year and Tiger is now Tiger again. Does that speak just to the depth of the TOUR and the value of experience or how do you view that?**

JON RAHM: I think it speaks that when it comes to golf to a certain extent age is just a number. I think now days with the advances in the physical form of a player I think our generation is going to have a lot more information, a lot more things to work on to be able to make our careers longer. But you see Justin Rose and

Phil, they're both in great shape. Phil is 48 and was able to win last year. I just played with him a couple days ago and he's swinging the club as fast as he's ever swung it so it's not like he's going down on strength. Justin Rose is arguably one of the best ball strikers in the world, if not the best. And again, physically he's in great shape. And even Tiger who has had to deal with all he had as to deal with he still can play great golf. So I just hope that I can be playing golf and feeling as good as they do in my 40s as well.

**Q. What was it about this tournament last year that brought out your best game?**

JON RAHM: There's a lot of college memories here. We came and played the Norman Course a couple times as a college event and one year we played on the Nicklaus Course. So I had been on the driving range as college player, so to come back as pro it was definitely a good feeling. I always play good in Palm Springs, it really, really, really similar golf to what I do in Phoenix, so it's a certain home feel to it. And then with the sponsor like Big Horn and being able to stay at Big Horn it's a very enjoyable experience for me, so it's definitely a week that I look forward to every year. The golf courses usually, the two years I played it, are in perfect shape, pristine shape, the greens are some of the best we putt on all year. So it's just so much fun to play. And besides the last few days, weather is usually good as well, so all combined it makes for a pretty special week.

**Q. You brought up your college game. Charlie Reiter is on his second straight sponsor exemption this year. I talked to him yesterday, he said that he knows you well and he looks up to you. What advice would you give him just because you had such a successful career during your younger days?**

JON RAHM: I got to play about 12 holes with him when he was still in high school and it's incredible to see that somebody in high school can get it, hit it as hard as he does because he hits it really hard. I couldn't, I don't know how far he hits it now, I don't know if he's Cameron Champ level or Dustin Johnson level which is still really, really far for somebody who is still in college. So my best advice would be, I think I'm a little different, because I graduated and I spent all four years in college but to enjoy the college experience. You can only go to college once, you can only be part of a team, part of a brotherhood that you create on that team once. So just enjoy it, have fun, get as good as you can get in college and then enjoy the step and enjoy that part of your life before you turn pro.

**Q. Last year when you came here you won at Dubai, finished second at Sentry, you were playing well and obviously won here. Where does your**

**game stand now as compared to coming to this event last year?**

JON RAHM: Well, after Hero I spent about two and a half weeks in Spain and I didn't touch a club more than twice. So that kind of negates a little bit what I did at Hero. But feeling good, played pretty well in Maui, finished in the top-10, feeling really comfortable. Honestly it's not, I haven't changed my swing, my swing hasn't changed in so long, I haven't changed my game plan or anything in my game so it doesn't usually take too long to get back to a good level. But hopefully it's good enough. I feel good, swing feels good, so hopefully I can show it again.

**Q. Justin's playing here after a long absence. What impresses you most about how he goes about things to bring out his best golf at age 38 or what does he do that allows him to do that?**

JON RAHM: Well he's been playing really good golf for a long time and about five and a half years ago he won a Major. So it's not like he hasn't done things. But it's really impressive. I think I spoke to Sean Foley and I was asking him, man, what do you guys do for him to become such a good putter, because I think that was the biggest improvement in his game. And he was quite funny, he was laughing when he told me they just stuck to the same thing for about a year and a half, two years. So proving once again that changing, change is not always good. If you stick to one thing, especially in golf, if you get one idea that works and you stick to it at some point it's probably going to work out.

**Q. Last year you started the tournament at La Quinta and shot 62. This tournament is known for its low scoring. Does that change the way you approach the tournament compared to let's say an Open?**

JON RAHM: Well I mean certainly very different golf courses, it's very different ways to play the golf course. I'm assuming when you say The Open you mean the U.S. Open? Okay. Just for me it's the other Open.

**Q. The United States Open.**

JON RAHM: Okay. Sorry. So it's very different. When you play the U.S. Open you go in knowing that they want the score, the winning score to be even par. That's kind of where they manage it. When you come here I don't think they care so much about what the winning score is, so usually it looks for low scores. The golf course, if you can drive it straight it gives you a lot of opportunities a lot of short clubs to make birdies. So it doesn't really change my mindset because I usually just go to the tee, look at the pin sheet and the weather and then make a strategy on that hole from there. I don't come in with a plan. But you certainly have a different mindset too to a U.S. Open. You don't go out there -- I'm not going to show up at Pebble thinking I'm

going to shoot 62 because that's probably not going to happen. But I know it can happen on any of the courses here.

**Q. Back to the Ryder Cup just for a second. How important was it to have a guy like Justin Rose with his previous experience in that competition on that team and did you take away anything from his experience that helped you or that basically just helped you at all for the first time?**

JON RAHM: Well, I learned a lot of things from a lot of players. There was a lot of experience on that group. Not only from people who were playing but we had Lee Westwood as a vice captain who is played 10 Ryder Cup, we had G-Mac who is played a couple of himself. Luke. So there was so much experience in that group and Jose was also hanging out in the locker room. So there was a lot to learn. I think what I learned about that week I'm going to keep to myself because it was a very, very special and emotional week for me. So I wouldn't like to disclose it. But it was definitely a lot of things to learn from other people.

JACK RYAN: All right, well, we appreciate the time as always and best of luck this week.

JON RAHM: Thank you.