

Travelers Championship

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

TPC River Highlands

Cromwell, Connecticut, USA

Courtney Nogas

Andy Bessette

Nathan Grube

Chris Berman

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome Courtney Nogas, corporate communications vice president and head of media relations at of Travelers.

COURTNEY NOGAS: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us, and welcome to TPC River Highlands, home of the 2023 Travelers Championship. It's a tremendous honor for us to partner with the PGA TOUR and serve as this tournament's title sponsor. We truly value and appreciate the work you do to tell the full story of the Travelers Championship, so thank you.

We have a great day in store for you at media day, and right now it looks like the weather may cooperate. In a few minutes we'll be joined by Andy Bessette and Nathan Grube to discuss the Travelers Championship from the perspective of the title sponsor and the tournament staff. We'll then have our reigning champion, Xander Schauffele, join us remotely to discuss last year's win with our good friend Chris Berman.

Please get your questions ready because you'll have a chance to ask them to Andy and Nathan and then Xander. We have microphones set up on both sides of the room, so we want you to step up and speak up. We're looking forward to the conversation today, and I know many of you are looking forward to the golf. So let's get started.

Please welcome to the stage Andy Bessette, the executive vice president and chief administrative officer at Travelers, and Nathan Grube, tournament director of the Travelers Championship.

(Applause)



TRAVELERS
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Like I said, we want it to be free-flowing. So if anybody has any questions, please step right up to the mic. In the meantime, I can get us started.

ANDY BESSETTE: If Nathan and I are bantering, it's not because we don't like each other or get mad at each other, but we do this to each other all the time. 365 days a year we beat the daylights out of each other, and in a very nice way. Right, Nathan?

NATHAN GRUBE: I appreciate you making that sound like it's mutual. Thank you.

ANDY BESSETTE: It is, though. You take advantage of me sometimes.

COURTNEY NOGAS: I thought you guys were the best of friends.

NATHAN GRUBE: Very tight.

COURTNEY NOGAS: Oh, boy. This is going to be a long day.

So I will get us started. This year's championship is a designated event on the tour, which is really exciting and a first for us. Andy, the tournament would not have received the status without Travelers as the title sponsor. How did this come together, and why is it important for the company?

ANDY BESSETTE: You know, Courtney this actually started 17 years ago in 2007 when we took over as title sponsor of the tournament, and Nathan and I every year, every day for the last 17 years we never accepted the status quo. That's been our rallying cry, and we're always trying to get better, and we want to be world class, and we've worked really hard to get here.

So when the calling came last August at the Tour Championship, the Commissioner Jay Monahan announced that they were going to have these designated events, we immediately put our hat into it. Nathan and I started strategizing and talking about how we could be one of the selected events to be designated. So we've been

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negotiating with the PGA TOUR ever since.

It started last August of 2022, so for the last nine months this was all -- it was all in place by November, December at the latest. I was at a tour meeting in late October, early November, and Tiger and Rory were there, and they both came up and said, you guys have earned this. To have Tiger and for Rory say that you have earned this, meant the world to me and to us and to our entire team.

So that's how it evolved. It's negotiation. It's positioning and all the great work that Nathan and his staff do. We have a world class staff and tournament director here that we couldn't have done this without.

COURTNEY NOGAS: Pretty amazing. Nathan, how do you think this designated status is going to affect you and your team during tournament week. What are the biggest benefits to being a designated event?

NATHAN GRUBE: Before I answer that question, Courtney, I have to go back to Andy's point. August of last summer Andy and I are standing in the back of the media center, like many of you back there, and the Commissioner got up and said, we're going to designate four events.

Andy looked at me. He has this grin. When he gets a certain type of grin, you are either in trouble or you're about to go on a great ride. Fortunately it was the latter. We were about to go on a great ride. He goes, we're going to get that.

We didn't know what it meant, but there was obviously a status created for the next level of events. And he said, we're going to do that.

It was truly one of those over the next couple of months until we found out -- I mean, it's one of these seminal moments for our event, right? You go back, and you look at the history. This is not, oh, hey, we're designated. This is when the event got put on to television in the '70s and '80s, that was massive. When the event moved here from Wethersfield, huge deal. When Travelers came on as title sponsor and saved the event in '06, massive. When they had the first ten-year extension of any title on tour, significant.

That's what this is. There was a point in time on the PGA TOUR where it was going in one direction, it was going in another direction, and we felt like at Travelers leadership that we need to be one of those events.

To say it was competitive is the biggest understatement ever. There are markets three to four times our size competing for this event and the designated status, and we

went head-to-head with those. When Andy is on your side, it's a lot easier to go head-to-head with other markets that are bigger than you.

He said, this is why we're going to be a designated event. Everybody on was on board. To Andy's point, we've been auditioning for this for 16 years. When it came time to go, okay, let's put under a microscope from the PGA TOUR standpoint, from the network standpoint, from the players standpoint, which events do we want to highlight what's good about the PGA TOUR, we showed up. That is everybody in this room, and it's the stories you tell that made that possible, but it is not a small moment in our history and our evolution.

Courtney, to your question, let me kind of put some arms and legs on that comment. We are bringing in companies now that we have never brought in before, companies out of Boston, companies out of New York. The media attention that we're getting, the focus that's being put on us, where our ticket sales are coming from. You look at who wants to activate with us. You look at how we're filling up hotel rooms in Hartford, in West Hartford. You have companies saying we have to get hotels in New Haven because the infrastructure is growing so much.

So when you look at the tangible aspects of what this means for our community, the spotlight is on us. And when the spotlight is on us, people really, really like what they see. They love our volunteer base. They love our corporate support base. They love our fan base. They love our title sponsor commitment. They love our corporate commitment. Sending that message to the world on this stage is unbelievable.

So it's translated into volunteers. It's translated into corporate support. It's translated into we're pacing for a charity number that will be a record year for us. That's probably not the one you asked, but that's the one I really wanted to answer.

ANDY BESSETTE: See, I told you this would happen.

COURTNEY NOGAS: It's already gone off the rails.

ANDY BESSETTE: Once we start talking, you can't shut us up. We're like Energizer Bunnies.

COURTNEY NOGAS: You mentioned the ticket sales, Nathan. Do you think there's a correlation between ticket sales and a loaded player tournament?

NATHAN GRUBE: Yes, let me say this. I moved into this market in 2005, and there's something very unique about Connecticut and New England. You are only as good as

what you have done recently. I say that in an incredibly positive way. It doesn't matter what happened last year. It doesn't.

I mean, literally we will celebrate for 18 to 20 seconds on the 18th green on Sunday and then by 6:30 that night I have a list from him already of, oh, you know what, we should have done this different. We should have done this. You're right, you're right, I got it. Can I celebrate a little longer?

ANDY BESSETTE: Just to be clear, though, because this is like... You make me sound bad. Because what we do Nathan and I look at every tournament. Everybody is out enjoying the tournament; right? That's really important.

We're looking at everything on the course, talking to players, talking to caddies, talking to wives, talking to kids. We talk to everybody to say what could we do better? How can we do this?

Nathan is right. When we're done, we're celebrate for a few seconds and then the list comes out of everything that I've been writing down for the whole week. That's how we keep getting better.

You know, we can't get better -- our opportunity is during tournament week to see how we get better. The other 51 weeks a year, eh, okay, fine, we talk, we meet, we do good stuff, but we have to see it live, see the show live. We talk to Nantz. We talk to Mike Tirico. We talk to everybody. They all give us great thoughts and great feedback.

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do this, but it's the relationships we have; right? The relationships that we've built over 17 years with the very best golfers in the world, the very best. Name one, I can tell you. After Jon won the Masters, Rahm, I texted him and said, hey, man, congrats. This is great. He sent me a little red heart. I think that means thank you.

Those are the relationships we have with these guys and with their wives and with their kids. Believe it or not, I mean, that's how we work this. And with the caddies and with the caddies gifts we give every year and the stuff we do with caddies throughout the year. That's how this works.

If you ask me the magic sauce, the magic sauce is the player field we have, doing the right thing with the players, doing the right thing with their wives, their kids, their caddies, their team, their trainers, everybody.

You know, this year we're adding a really cool thing. Rory said to me last October, he said, Andy, you know, you

should think about putting a coffee bar on the practice range.

Really?

He named three tournaments that put coffee bars on the practice range. So I said, done deal. Called Nathan. Nathan, we have to put a coffee bar on the range.

Ed Howard, who works with me at Travelers, went to work right away. Guess what we're going to have in 2023. A coffee bar on the range called Brew and Moo. Brew, coffee; moo, ice cream. We're going to have Brew and Moo on the practice range.

So we do everything to create a great, great environment here for the players. Sorry. I wanted to make sure to add that in.

NATHAN GRUBE: For somebody who is a coffee addict, Brew and Moo was automatically there.

Courtney, that has translated to -- there's an expectation level of our fans that Connecticut -- we're between Boston and New York, but we don't get a pass. We have to be as good as those two markets when it comes to the event that we put on.

And the customers that we're bringing in, they're used to that type of experience. So we don't get a pass even though we're not in a market that size, and we love it. We love the fact that that's a challenge, and we want to deliver on that.

When these new companies come in, it's so awesome to see a new company come in. They bring in 100 people a day that have never been in this market before that they're entertaining. They're, like, oh, this is Connecticut. This is great. To see that look on these people's face, that's one of the reasons we're here. We're here to showcase what we do.

ANDY BESSETTE: One of the best things I saw this year is we have our companies, these companies, Nathan had to turn people away. People said, oh, I want a celebrity pro-am threesome. You and 40 on the waiting list. So we weren't able to do it. We weren't able to accommodate everybody that wanted to be here because it's gotten that popular.

The job that Nathan and his team do selling this is just phenomenal. With the number of ticket sales that they've had, they had in the first 24 hours was a record. It was unbelievable.

NATHAN GRUBE: Again, to kind of pile on that, just kind of "inside baseball," we're just friends; right? We're just talking.

Over the next couple of days there is a team here that is looking at the infrastructure of the property. How do we grow over the next two, three, four years with more structure?

For those of you that have been here -- Ted, I know you know when the tournament moved here in '84, I think there was 14 corporate partners; right? We're going to have hundreds of corporate partners this year at the event, and 18 will be ringed. I mean, it will almost be wrapped when it comes to how far do you player right it goes, how far down player left it goes. 17 was sold out.

It's awesome. I mean, it is the biggest commercial for our region that we can possibly have, and it has grown. Anyway, I obviously love this event, and I love when new people come in and we get to show off.

ANDY BESSETTE: Nathan does a great job with that. The Golf Channel, we had to move them. I didn't say kick them out. I said move them.

NATHAN GRUBE: It was a mutual arrangement.

ANDY BESSETTE: We moved them from where they used to be right over here to the other side of 18 fairway further down. It's a great viewing angle, don't get me wrong. They like it down there, but this thing is growing like crazy.

COURTNEY NOGAS: Right. It's the little things to take it to the next level and attention to detail.

Nathan and Andy, you both talked a little bit about Moo and Brew, the new coffee bar. Is there anything else, any other enhancements that the fans should expect to see this year?

NATHAN GRUBE: I can touch on that one. I would say that there's part of always trying to get better and never forgetting who you are that run kind of on parallel tracks.

We have made a commitment to our military. Free admission to our military. Kids admission is free. Health care workers and first responders. Making sure that certain groups have access to the tournament.

And then for the general fan as well, we said this the last couple of years. We want it to feel like Disneyland. We want you to buy a ticket for the day and come out and have a great time. Enjoy the rides. Enjoy the experience.

So building out the fan zone this year, it hasn't been this big since '19. It's actually even bigger. There's more stuff for people to do. There's four free venues on property where your general admission ticket can get you into climate-controlled facilities and take a break from the weather, actually enjoy the day.

We've tried to enhance our corporate experience. We've tried to enhance our general fan experience, but also keep the core of who we are and access to the tournament still available.

So kind of running on the 'you have to get better every year' with the parallel path of 'not forgetting who you are and how you got here' has been very, very important to us.

ANDY BESSETTE: I think getting better every year is tied too, Nathan, to getting back to normal after the pandemic; right? That's really, really important.

I'm really excited about two things. Media in the room, you can put your hands up. Mini-golf is back. We're going to have the miniature golf battle of the century. It's going to be phenomenal. It's going to be even better than it's ever been. So mini-golf is back in the fan zone, which is great.

Women's Day is back on the course. That's huge. I mean, we will have over 700 people attending Women's Day. We haven't announced anything, have we?

NATHAN GRUBE: Yeah.

ANDY BESSETTE: Katie Couric.

NATHAN GRUBE: Oh, not that. I'm just kidding.

ANDY BESSETTE: See? Just little torturous things. I got him.

Anyway, but the great part is we have a great, great cast. We have Amanda Renner, who is going to do some interviews of some outstanding young athletes from UConn. It's going to be a really, really good day.

So I'm very excited to have Women's Day back on the course, and everybody can go out and enjoy golf after it's over. And to think that we've got mini-golf back down in the fan zone and a reconceived fan zone. I think this is the most exciting day of the year, I think, because we can start to announce stuff and maybe not announce stuff.

We're going to continue the tradition of young players; right? What about the year -- Colin Morikawa, right, Viktor Hovland, Suh, Justin Suh, and Wolff, Matt Wolff. Those



guys are unbelievable. They've gone on to great careers, and that was one of our classes.

I'll be quiet, but the opportunity... to me what's really important is that we give an opportunity to young golfers. Last year Ben James was here. He might come back this year. Thorbjornsen, Michael Thorbjornsen, he was here last year. He did phenomenally. He might be back this year, wink-wink. We're going to have great, great players. Aberg.

NATHAN GRUBE: May be back this year.

ANDY BESSETTE: Aberg may be back this year, wink-wink. We're going to have great, great young golfers here again this year and have a lot of fun with it, but I think giving those young golfers an opportunity is what we're about. That's what we do.

COURTNEY NOGAS: Awesome. Let's take our first question.

Q. When they announced the designated events, the idea originally was to have it as a rotating thing among very different tournaments. There's been some talk recently that some events could be permanent designated events. What have you heard about that, and how have you positioned yourself to be available for that possibility?

NATHAN GRUBE: Do you want to start that?

ANDY BESSETTE: Is that a loaded question? They're not going to be rotating. I can tell you that.

There will be a small number of designated events going forward, and we're in deep conversation with the tour right now. It will probably come out sometime when they announce the next season, the 2024 season. So that will come out probably in July, but we're not quite done yet.

We're working. It's important to us to be designated beyond '23. Very important. We'll see how that all ends up, but I feel pretty good (laughing).

Q. Money question, gentlemen. So if I understand it right, the purse is going to be \$20 million for a designated event, and I believe that's up from -- I think you were in the range of \$8 million or \$10 million last year purse.

NATHAN GRUBE: 8.6, yes.

Q. Okay, 8.6. Who is coming up with the difference of the \$10 million or so? Is it the corporate sponsors? Is

it the PGA TOUR? Is it a combination? Can you explain how you got to that level of purse?

ANDY BESSETTE: Good question. Generally speaking, the PGA TOUR usually splits purses with title sponsors. So you could assume that that's how this works as well that it's a split between title and PGA TOUR.

NATHAN GRUBE: That's a fair answer. People have asked us, you know, does that come out of the charity proceed? It has nothing to do with that. It's a separate relationship.

The host organization and what we're able to generate from, Tom, an event like that, basically, we are -- all the stuff that I mentioned before about the partners coming in because we're a designated event this year, it's like the host organization gets to take all the benefits from a relationship that the tour and the title do and then we go out and sell that and then our proceeds to charity will increase. I can tell you they're going to increase this year based off of that, but we didn't have to take any charitable dollars to help fund the purse.

ANDY BESSETTE: Or any other dollars. It's being funded from those two sources.

Q. First place check is now going to be about...

ANDY BESSETTE: \$3.6 million. Nathan might even play this year.

NATHAN GRUBE: I am going to try to Monday qualify. I think 84 is going to make the Monday. Super excited. Not? All right.

ANDY BESSETTE: I couldn't do it. That would be a disaster, but...

NATHAN GRUBE: It will be the first and last thing I ever do in my career is give myself an exemption and then look for a job.

ANDY BESSETTE: I'll give it to you. That would be kind of fun. I could go out and poke fun. Never mind (laughing).

COURTNEY NOGAS: Piggybacking on that, we recently signed an extension to 2030, which will make the company the longest-serving title sponsor in the event's history. Why do you think it's been such a good fit?

ANDY BESSETTE: It's good, Courtney, because it's great for the community. It's great for charity. Those are really important elements for Travelers companies.



We work really hard throughout the year. We give over \$24 million to community and charitable efforts throughout the year at Travelers, so it's part of the ethos of who we are. It's really important to us to do that and to give back.

You know, as Nathan said, this past year we gave over \$2.5 million to over 100-plus charities. We're not happy with that number. That number is going to continue to grow this next year and into the future, which is really, really good because the groups of people we help, it reaches all kinds of places; right?

I know it reaches the Hole in the wall Gang Camp with seriously ill children, and they've been our designated charity for a while now, but it's also about the homelessness. It's about the different children organizations that we contribute to that are part of our charitable efforts. It's all of that. That's so important to our community. So charity, community they're really inextricably linked each other and really important to what we do and how we do it.

NATHAN GRUBE: I want to pile on that a little bit too. What's obviously important to Travelers, we try to make sure we're very much in tune with that as far as the delivery of the event. And kind of piggybacking on that question and the responsibility that we feel that from a tournament standpoint that, again, we've been given this incredibly shiny new toy that we as a designated event that our sponsors are excited about, that other markets are excited about, and we feel a massive sense of responsibility to turn that into more people and more lives being impacted from the charitable dollars for this event.

We talk about this every year. Never get tired of hearing that. That we are doing this, and at the end of the day there are real lives being changed from this money. We feel that sense of responsibility that we are going to impact more people given this designated status.

ANDY BESSETTE: The other word too that we talk a lot about is pride. The amount of pride that this event generates throughout society in Connecticut and the Northeast, believe it not, 17 years later I still have people coming up and saying thank you for saving the tournament. I have to think twice about what they're thanking us for.

But the pride and the appreciation of this event in the community is something I've never seen before and is such an important part of what we do here.

To have the support that we've gotten from Chris Berman, who you're going to hear from in a little bit, as soon as we shut up. Chris has been here from day one. Chris has his own fame and such, and he is a phenomenal broadcaster,

but to have Chris Berman behind us from the beginning from day one, and Chris has always said, what can I do to help, what can I do to help? It's phenomenal. That speaks volumes. This is a team effort.

It's the media telling our story. It's having the support of people like Chris Berman. It's having the support of Travelers and having a red umbrella.

Courtney, you asked why we do this? Well, yeah, community charity, but it's also good for our brand; right? This tournament is broadcast over 200 countries around the world during tournament week. That's good.

We're very proud of the red umbrella, and that's why we have the big red floating umbrella out in the pond. We're always looking. John Morris, who does all of our advertising, he is always looking for new ways to bring the umbrella of Travelers to life. Last year we had it out on 14 -- 13, 14 with the brown grass. What do you call it? It was great. It was phenomenal.

There's so many pieces to this thing that work well, but pride in the community to me is the most important thing.

COURTNEY NOGAS: A larger stage. It gives us a better opportunity to tell our story to more people.

ANDY BESSETTE: Yeah.

Q. You've had tremendous fields here for several years here now. What is the elevated status of the tournament -- what is the affect do you think it will be on the fields that you have going forward? Second, golf fans in Connecticut have always wanted to have Tiger come here. If not for his most recent operation, what do you think the chances would have been that he would have come this year?

ANDY BESSETTE: I think really good. For what he said to me last October, that meant the world to me. I think if it wasn't for his physical condition, he would be here at some point.

You know, Nathan and I never give up. I still believe we're going to get him (laughing). You know, he has done so much for the game. He is smart. He and I talked about athletic training for five minutes. It was one of the most interesting conversations I've had in a long time. He really appreciates what we've done here and what we're doing.

Yeah, the answer to your question, I think he would be, but physically for him to come off the U.S. Open and play anywhere for anything would be very difficult.



NATHAN GRUBE: I have to give Travelers -- Andy is not going to go into this. I have to give them props on this.

In the early days there was conversation coming off of Buick, coming off of Tiger's relationship with Buick, there were conversation that Travelers have with Steinberg and that team about what it would take to get Tiger here. Hey, we're asking the question for everybody. I have to say this about Travelers. Some of the comments and ideas and thoughts that came out about what it would take to get Tiger, they were committed to this event, this time of year, charity dollars impacting this region, things like that. There was a focused decision made to say, okay, if that's what it would take, can we play in the fall? Can we shift things around?

There was a dedication here where it said, look, we're going to focus and build an event here. We're not going to build it around one player. We still love Tiger. We are still going to talk to him every year, and Phil and everybody, but we are going to build this event not around one player, but about what's good for the community.

Fast forward, and he is talking to Andy in the fall about trying to play. Is he going to come? I don't know. I will say, that was a focused effort that we were going to build this event around what is the right thing and not one player.

ANDY BESSETTE: In the second half of your question about the player thing, I think the third place finish will earn more than our champion did last year. So, I mean, it's serious money. But the thing that's driving the players is they all want to compete against the best, right? We've already announced, what, seven of the top ten in the world.

NATHAN GRUBE: Six or seven, yeah.

ANDY BESSETTE: It's just going to keep growing. Nathan and I are headed to Wells Fargo after this to talk to a lot of the guys that are undecided at this point to make sure we're in front of them too. So we're relentless. We never stop. Here we are 40 --

NATHAN GRUBE: 47.

ANDY BESSETTE: Thank you. Nathan is like a metronome. Click, click, click, click, 47. So we're 47 days out here, and we're still out there trying to bring in the best in the world.

So it's going to be a great tournament this year. We're going to have many, many, many of the top 150 in the world here, so it's going to be really cool.

NATHAN GRUBE: I think Pat asked the question. The

USGA complained that they have to play the week before us, so... (laughing). Come on, that was a good one. They didn't. That's all right.

COURTNEY NOGAS: Let's take one last question before we hear from our champion.

Q. I actually wanted to ask two quick ones. There was a little talk of designated events being limited field with no cut. Is there any update on that? How would you feel about that if that was the case? Also, how do you feel about being the only tournament in New England? What does that mean to you?

ANDY BESSETTE: I love it. It's great. I think that being the only PGA TOUR event in New England this year is going to really, really be helpful to us, but it's timing too I think between our first year as being designated and being the only event in the Northeast. I think it could be the perfect storm in some ways.

At the end of the day it will allow us to give record numbers to charity, which is really, really important to us. So I think that's good.

As far as the limited player field, I think that's how the tour is trying to structure this so that it's -- I shouldn't say because I'm not that familiar with the WGC events, the World Golf Championship events, but I think they're a limited player field too --

NATHAN GRUBE: Yes.

ANDY BESSETTE: -- and no cut and that type of thing. The details will come out here in the next I bet you 30 days or so. I think directionally that's kind of where it's headed.

NATHAN GRUBE: I think it's going to be great for the fans and to be able to see. I think Rory and Tiger had said it. The more you can get the top players together competing at the highest level, and if it does become a no cut, I think that would be amazing too. You could have four days where you know you're going to see the top players in the world. We'll see where it nets out.

I think we've got Xander, right?

COURTNEY NOGAS: Thank you, gentlemen. Now I would like to bring up Chris Berman, and we'll add our champion via Zoom for our champion interview.

You know Chris is the long-time voice of ESPN. We know him as a long-time friend of the Travelers Championship. As Chris makes his way up, we will start by playing a short highlight video from last year's Travelers Championship.



(Video)

CHRIS BERMAN: That was pretty impressive right here. When you call movers, they come about two months later, but this was very impressive.

Andy and Nathan, thank you. You guys, a night at The Improv or Laurel and Hardy. You should go on the road.

Good morning. Pretty exciting. Elevated on top of everything the Travelers have done and with apologies to UConn basketball and Quinnipiac hockey, this is our annual week. We can count on this every year in the big-time in sports in Connecticut. We as Connecticutians or Nutmeggers or Constitution Staters or the Land of Steady Habits, we're pretty proud of that. What Travelers has done and is doing, you know how good they are? The rain hasn't come yet. That's how special this is.

In a moment we're going to have Xander come up. I think he is hooked up, but when I see him, I'll know for sure. Crowds speak for themselves. Who knows? The sky may be the limit this year. Not today with the weather, but I'm talking about the crowds in late June. I'm vamping.

And there he is, our defending champion, our champion from last year, Xander Schauffele. Good morning, partner.

(Applause)

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Good morning.

CHRIS BERMAN: Welcome back to Hartford 21st century style by Zoom. Xander is in Charlotte, of course, for that elevated event this week at the Wells Fargo.

Great to be with you. Saw you a week or two ago. You have so many memories of last year. And, of course, it wasn't your first time here, but let's just do 18 for a minute. You knew what you had to do. It kind of changed as you were on the tee; right?

There's all the people. Not that you haven't played in front of big galleries before, but -- there's the smile. So take me back to playing 18 knowing what was looming ahead of you hopefully.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I've watched coverage of people coming down 18 at TPC River Highlands before. I've never really been in that moment there in that sort of stadium-like feel with that hill with all the people sitting on it around that 18th green, so it was cool to be in the hunt. That's all we try to do out here on tour.

Yeah, what a weird spot, to be honest, just sitting on the tee kind of waiting watching stuff unfold in front of me. Usually you're looking at leader boards. I got sort of a live look and sort of an educated guess on what I needed to do once I saw what was happening in front of me.

It's a cool part of our sport where we can kind of watch it unfold. Definitely added a little bit of pressure. So I was happy that I was able to step up for the big moment.

CHRIS BERMAN: Do you hear the crowd? When you win, yes, and you hug Austin, your caddie, et cetera. I know we're supposed to be quiet when you are over the ball, but do you hear, or is it really quiet in those moments for an athlete in the arena?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: There's always sort of white noise going on. Having these big events, it's always a production. Fans are really respectful almost always. You may hear a baby here or there, which is just the inevitable, but yeah, I think for me personally I don't really hear anything. It's sort of just feeling like I'm out there by myself with Austin just trying to get the job done.

CHRIS BERMAN: Well, look, you had won before. Xander, I'm going to talk about a couple of those. Last year you won in New Orleans with your friend Patrick. You won right after, your next start, the Scottish Open. Part of the Presidents Cup team. And, of course, the win here at Travelers. That would be in my book, in everybody's book, a pretty darn good season.

You said afterwards that you maybe learned something last year that you thought you knew before. It was not so much slowing it down. It was that you hurried a little bit on some Sundays. What clicked here and all year for you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just an extra dose of patience, I would say. I mean, you don't want to slow down too much, but at the same time I think you just really want to be aware of the moment and to sort of let yourself soak it in and then attack your shots.

I mean, I think in the past I sort of was looking at boards, felt like I was falling behind, and then didn't really -- it started to become me versus whoever is leading, which can always change as we saw on Sunday.

Rory was up there early and then hit a bad tee shot there. I did the same thing and got lucky and hit the OB fence and stayed in. So obviously it was meant to be for me that week. Yeah, I really was sort of aware of the moment and tried to be bigger than it and not let it sort of engulf me. So just really stayed patient.

River Highlands gives you opportunities to make birdies. So all these guys ahead of me are getting it done, birdieing the holes they're supposed to, the par-5, the drivable par-4, and then parring the harder holes. 17, 18 for the most part.

When you are sort of at the back of the pack looking up, people are flying up the leader board, and you are supposed to do the same. It adds a little bit of anxiety, but if you can kind of be aware in the moment, you just sort of --

CHRIS BERMAN: Is that what stands out most to you and your fellow golfers about this course and about this event that there are, dare I say for you, eagle opportunities, but it's troubling lurking? Is that what the big picture is for you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's why the Travelers is so exciting. It's so great to watch for people on TV or in person because you can have a five-shot lead entering the back nine, but for me to feel comfortable I would want a nine-shot lead on that property because you're supposed to birdie par-5. You can hit in the water, and all of a sudden you're scrambling for bogey. You're supposed to hit it on the green on 16 there, and you can hit it in the water.

There's just so many opportunities there, but also danger looming around the corner that it's a really exciting finish.

CHRIS BERMAN: You had a five-shot lead, which with 36 holes to go, you know better than us, it's nice, but it may not...

Did that change your mindset at all? Then we'll move forward here a little bit, but one last thought on having a big lead. There was a 62 on the first day; right? So you weren't wire-to-wire, but you were pretty close. How does that change for four days being on the top or just about?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, adds to the confidence. It's nice. Obviously going wire-to-wire is the most impressive thing we can do in our sport, but I almost did it. Shooting a 62 the first day and then going all the way would have been really difficult. Yeah, it definitely adds to the confidence and definitely something I'll always feed off of in my career.

CHRIS BERMAN: You are at an elevated event this week, which of course you played, which is where the Presidents Cup is. That should be a big classic Xander smile knowing that you are playing there and the success that you and Patrick had and singles.

Elevated events because there's more excitement up here, more than usual for that reason. What's the feeling on tour

among you players about having these additional elevated events? Yes, it's a ton of money. I get it.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Sure.

CHRIS BERMAN: What else about it is the most appealing?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's the best part of sports for me. It almost feels like we're at the playoffs every time we're at these elevated events.

I've been really enjoying watching playoff sports right now, and for us it's not our playoffs quite yet, but, man, it kind of feels like it. Everyone is showing up ready to go. You have the best players in the world showing up every week at these elevated or designated events. The competition is just thriving in these spots. I mean, everyone wants to play really well, which is sort of how we want to compete out here.

CHRIS BERMAN: As an aside, we won't see them here, but for the first time in a while at the Masters, you saw many of your friends, many of your Ryder Cup teammates from a year and a half before. How was that? How did all that go? Oh, everyone was, oh, there's going to be a showdown, and of course there was not; right? Tell us about it.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: The interaction was fine. It was nice. A lot of smiles. It was nice to see some familiar faces, guys I missed seeing out here on the normal circuit.

Just catching up, asking how they're doing and congratulating whoever won, whichever event it was and saying hi to all the caddies and the players. It was cool. Everyone seemed in good spirits. I didn't feel that there was any sort of animosity amongst anyone.

CHRIS BERMAN: You've represented our country with the Ryder Cup, the Presidents Cup. You have won them, but there's another one that is unique. See? You know where I'm going. The Olympics in Japan in 2021.

As time moves on, people forget that. I mean, you have a gold medal. That's a list you never thought you would be on. Tell us about that whole experience and having a gold medal from the Olympics.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I definitely haven't forgotten it.

CHRIS BERMAN: I know that.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's awesome. It almost sort of marines. It gets better as time goes on. After the first

year or so it was fresh, and I didn't really know what it felt like, but it's nice when these starters announce. They'll announce someone's name and then they'll announce my name as a current Olympic gold medalist. That usually puts -- I have a lot of reasons to smile, but they definitely give me another one on the first tee at events.

CHRIS BERMAN: We're all very proud of you, and you get to be defending champ for several years before you actually have to defend. That's actually pretty nice as well.

You know, you've had a lot of great wins, the Tour Championship, WGC. We mentioned Presidents Cup, Ryder Cup Tour of Champions. I think there's one that we're omitting maybe. The 2020 Kapalua Pro-am Title. You want to explain your team there and your teammates giving you advice in that one?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: (Laughing) Yeah, we had Parns sitting up here emceeing. It was a really fun experience, and I had a lot of extra pressure there to get the job done, unfortunately. A lot more pressure that I wanted on a Wednesday, but it definitely primed me for the event, to say the least.

CHRIS BERMAN: Well, you remembered everything we taught you. So you have gone on and done great things. I have a few other questions, but let's open it up to the media here. Thank you, partner, for remembering.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Of course.

Q. Hi, Xander. How has your scheduling changed knowing you have to play in all these designated events and maybe not play in some of the non ones, and how do you think the tour should try to adapt and change it for next year to make it easier for you guys to schedule and not have so many back-to-back-to-back?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, we've been made aware that this year will sort of be the year to grind and kind of work through the change. Next year the schedule will be announced, and it should be a little bit more fluid, I would say, allowing us to play in sort of the events we want to play away from these elevated events.

I would say just sort of stacking them correctly where the travel isn't so cross-country all the time and then allowing us to play our hometown events or the events we really like enjoying to play at year in, year out. Yeah, this year is a bit of a grind, but for the most part it should get better.

Q. You brought up the term "be in the hunt." Can you just talk a bit about what it means to be in the hunt,

what you do a little differently over the ball, if you are watching the scoreboard, and other little things that go on when you are in the hunt?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, being in the hunt is just trying to -- you're either in the lead or you're close to the lead with a few holes to play. You know, things change. You sort of play relatively free Thursday, Friday. No one ever wants to think about the cut, but you sort of play a little bit more calculated.

As soon as you're in the hunt, you are almost more aware. Not that you're not aware early on, but more aware of the risk you're taking in that moment that's either going to put you ahead or leave you further behind. Everything just feels amplified in those moments. That's why I was referring to sort of slowing down almost or just -- even when I say slow down, it's more of a mental thing. When you are walking, just really being aware of what's happening around you versus sort of just kind of rolling with the shots because it can go either way.

Q. I just wanted to ask you, what's the general feeling on the tour about the elevated tournaments and the various changes that have been made? Do players and do you feel that it's enough, or do you feel that there are more changes coming, more changes needed to stave off the threat posed by obviously LIV Golf?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's a mixed feeling, to be completely transparent. Some guys are very happy with it. Some guys are not as happy with it, feeling like there's less opportunity.

If anything holds true, I would say the PGA TOUR has done a good job of, one, being transparent with us about the changes. The guys I've talked to that don't seem to be super happy, I sort of let them know that, one, we are trying to create the best package possible moving forward to sort of hold the tour together.

Then, two, if things aren't right or don't feel right or competition isn't right moving forward, the tour is willing to change and make it better. That's sort of where I feel the most comfortable is that the tour is ever-evolving trying to make sure everyone is taken care of, and we are putting the best package forward, yet taking care of our membership.

I think up to this point they've done a really good job. Next year will be sort of a new look. We'll have to see how it goes. If adjustments need to be made, they'll be made.

CHRIS BERMAN: Don't be bashful here. I have a couple more, but we have microphones both sides of the room.



Go for it.

Q. You said you watched the playoffs. Who are your teams? What are you watching? What else do you do besides golf?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Well, unfortunately, in order to be good at something, you have to do it a lot, so I golf a lot.

I've been watching the NBA playoffs, NHL. I've been in Vegas for a couple of years now, so I've gotten to know a couple of players on the Knights team. Just wherever I'm at -- I must be honest. Watching sports on the East Coast, you are hard-core fans because it is so hard to stay up until midnight or 1:00 a.m. watching these guys. Especially for, like, a 7:00 a.m. tee time. I think some guys do it, but they're hard-core. Yeah, when I can catch a game at night or while I'm watching dinner, that's definitely what I'll do.

Q. Is the reason you're here remotely because you didn't want to drive by the UConn five-time national championship sign?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: (Laughing) You know, I don't even know how -- you can't even make fun of the situation. We're just massive underdogs in the spot.

CHRIS BERMAN: Right.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm very proud of how the Aztecs held together. True college basketball, sort of smaller school. It's think it's what the tournament is all about. Obviously, it would have been way cooler if they were able to knock you guys off. They put up a good fight, made it exciting for a little bit. They were dogs for the whole time, but they got it to within five with a little bit left. That got my juices flowing for a time. You guys were by far the better team. The boys gave it an awesome run. I think it's a really big deal for the school.

Q. Last question, is there any added pressure trying to repeat in a tournament you've already won?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Always. I think it gives me some comfort watching a lot of boys this year. They've gone out and repeated. You know what I mean? The likes of Scottie. I can't right now think off the top of my head who else has repeated. I am sure Jon has repeated. He has won so much this year. Guys who have shown up to the same place where they've won in previous years. Sam Burns has done it. Max has done it. Scottie, Jon. There's more. Rory probably.

It's obviously more added pressure. You feel you have a higher expectation just because you've played well on site,

so I'm looking forward to the challenge.

CHRIS BERMAN: Phil is the only one that's done it, even though you saw on the trophy all those names. Arnold and Sam Snead. We could go on and on and on and more recent.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It will be a challenge.

CHRIS BERMAN: You're going to try. Listen, I want Andy and Nathan to put it down on their list. Look, I get it. Can we have a San Diego State banner somewhere? I don't think that's too much to ask; right? Right, Xander? I mean, he is our champ. Nothing about forgiven. You're both champs. We're putting that on the list, all right?

For both you and your caddie, Austin, real quick, you have been with him forever. Since college. That's a long-time relationship. Of course, you guys watched the game together, I assume; right?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes, we did.

CHRIS BERMAN: Tell us, ten years, you've known him a long time. That's a real team out there.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's basically family at this point. There's nothing we wouldn't do for one another, but we started off college teammates. We both transferred into San Diego State at the same time.

We've been at it through Q School to Korn Ferry, or Web.com at the time and Korn Ferry now, rookie year. Austin has been on the back end of all the struggles and on the front end of all the success.

I'm trying to make sure he stays humble. I don't want him to get too big of a head here, Chris. He is something else these days.

CHRIS BERMAN: You ever go out there had and play, and does he give you strokes?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, we gave him two aside the other day. We played back at home. That's the only time he will play is with me, and he played miserably, as I'm sure he'll tell you when you see him. He is a really good player. His body just doesn't hold well after carrying the bag for three weeks straight.

CHRIS BERMAN: Listen, we appreciate your time. Everybody up here is -- and we're going to get that sign up there. I'm telling you. I have pull here. You know that.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: We will see. I just don't think it's

going to happen.

CHRIS BERMAN: We'll see. We'll talk about it. At any rate, good luck down there at Wells Fargo. Like I said, that's a course where you guys won the Presidents Cup, so should be good vibes for a lot of you guys.

I know you've got some events before you get here, but it's getting close, and we're looking forward to seeing you, and as always, you're gracious with your time.

Go win a couple and then go win this one, all right?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes, sir. Good to see you, partner.

CHRIS BERMAN: Okay, partner. See you later, Xander. Thank you.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you.

CHRIS BERMAN: Our defending champion, Xander Schauffele. What a great young man and from a great family. Andy, I know you want to sit in the big chair here.

ANDY BESSETTE: I'm not sitting down.

CHRIS BERMAN: You might not get up from this thing.

ANDY BESSETTE: Can I stand here? Is this okay? Xander, can you see me?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, I can't. I'm kidding. I can (laughing).

ANDY BESSETTE: You know, one of the first times I saw Xander, he was on the range. I said, hey, brother, how are you doing?

He turned around and looked at me like, what are you talking about?

I said, one Olympian to another, right, Xander? I said, I never forget that because that's a really important brotherhood.

So I had to do this, though. Can you see me? Is this good? Is this good, Chris? Go, Aztecs.

CHRIS BERMAN: It's all right.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: (Laughing).

CHRIS BERMAN: We have pens here.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That is some genuine support there, guys (laughing).

ANDY BESSETTE: Go, Aztecs.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I can't even see it.

ANDY BESSETTE: That was painful too, Xander, just so you know.

Last question, I think one of the coolest things we do for our champions is to put your face on M&Ms. We couldn't do the Wheaties box, but we can do M&Ms. Every time I eat an M&M, I think of you. I'll leave it at that.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's a little concerning (laughing).

ANDY BESSETTE: Seriously, Xander, we do this every year. Nathan and I take a great amount of pride in this in giving a gift to our depending champion. We've done all kinds of weird stuff. Not weird. It was appropriate for the champion.

Custom-made fishing rods; right? Gosh, that was a pain. Trying to get those things done was tough. We've done cornhole boards. We've done that. We did ping pong mallets, whatever you call it. Cricket bats and stuff. We've done all kinds of stuff.

But for you we have something very, very special. It's under the black tablecloth there somewhere by where you are sitting.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Oh, wow.

ANDY BESSETTE: What we've had made for you, if you can see it there.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You hid this well.

ANDY BESSETTE: It's a Travelers Championship humidor with your very favorite cigars in the middle. You should have seen this.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Wow.

ANDY BESSETTE: Are those your favorite cigars?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Nice work, wow.

ANDY BESSETTE: Right?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Wow, thank you.

ANDY BESSETTE: The humidor was hilarious because the first time it just said, "Champion." I said you have to put his name on it. Now it says Xander Schauffele. Now it's appropriate.

Hey, congratulations. Enjoy the cigars. Enjoy the humidor are. We appreciate having you as our champion.

(Applause)

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's very nice. Thank you. I'm going to have to hide this from my dad.

ANDY BESSETTE: We know your dad, and we know your uncle, so you better hide them really well.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm going to have to.

ANDY BESSETTE: Congrats, Xander.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you, guys. Appreciate it.

CHRIS BERMAN: Thanks, Xander.

NATHAN GRUBE: We're going to let you go. We know you have a busy week ahead. Thank you for the time spending with us this morning. Enjoy one of those, and keep the count on your dad because he will walk with those.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us this morning. Obviously, we have golf later. Really appreciate your support. 47 days. It's going to be epic. We will see you soon. Thanks for being here.

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