

U.S. Open Championship 2021

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

San Diego, California, USA

Torrey Pines Golf Course

Xander Schauffele

Flash Interview



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Xander Schauffele, who is currently ranked No. 6 in the world and a San Diego native. Talk a little bit, I know you have already, about what it means to play a U.S. Open here at home.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's really cool. To sum it up, I was walking down the first fairway today with my dad and we were joking about how six or seven years ago, when they announced this site here on TV, my dad and I were sitting on the couch, and we were like, hey, we need to do whatever we can to get into this tournament. Here we are sitting here trying to win the thing.

Maybe I didn't set lofty enough goals seven years ago, but they're definitely lofty enough now.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the state of your game and your preparation this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Since I am local, I did spend the week here prior. I've played the course a lot. Obviously it's changing each and every night. Much firmer and faster greens today. Rough is getting longer each and every day, as well. With the heat wave coming through, I'm assuming the greens will get really firm, and just been preparing all last week and first couple days here.

THE MODERATOR: When Golf Channel and USGA approached you about doing the "From Many, One" show, talk about your decision to say yes and what the experience has been like.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's been fun. I did grow up here so it was a bit of a no-brainer, and it was cool to sort of share my hometown with everyone and kind of see what I did growing up.

Q. In terms of just the setup, layout, how is it stacking up based on maybe your expectations and thoughts on what the USGA might do to the property?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, there's no sort of system in place to sort of change the greens too much in terms of like SubAir or anything. This is a municipal golf

course, which is a cool part about all of this. I think they're going to use the heat wave to their advantage. They can lightly water, kind of feel it out from that perspective. Overall if you look at the rough, it's sort of spotty. You can get either get a really, really bad lie or not that bad of a lie, almost a flier, which is kind of tricky to judge as well.

I'm no agronomist, but there's probably anywhere from three to six different kinds of grass on property, and depending on where you miss it, you can either get really lucky or really unlucky.

Q. Does the local knowledge play into that at all, knowing what you can get out of some of those roughs?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I played 64 holes last week starting on Wednesday. I played 18 Wednesday, 18 Thursday, 10 holes Friday, 18 Saturday. I'm trying to make this more of a local place for me. It's a really busy place during the year, which I'm not sure if everyone is aware of. It's hard to just come out here and play golf just for fun.

It was nice that it was shut down. I tried to take advantage of that. I'm trying to get as much local knowledge as I can just by playing a lot.

Q. Tee times came out today. Have you taken a peek at them yet?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I saw Max Homa and Phil Mickelson.

Q. Obviously a Southern California pairing. Will that be extra comfortable for you? And talk about playing with Phil.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, for some reason I figured I'd be playing with Phil. Random or not, it's a really good pairing. Max and Joe are great, Phil and Tim, obviously with the recent success, it's going to be nice to play with a recent major champ. I know I played with Phil at the Farmers already. We've had our fair share of goes around this property together.



Q. You mentioned that with your dad seven years ago when the tournament was announced, at that point what would you have thought your career would look like in 2021?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I dreamed my career would look like this. To actually do it is something else.

Yeah, I just -- I was on my couch. I was an amateur. I was trying to be a pro, and you just never really know. The transition from amateur golf to professional golf is tricky and difficult for some, and it's definitely a change, but yeah, this is what I've dreamed of doing, and it's pretty cool to sit here and do it.

Q. Talk a little bit about the decision to change the putting stroke, purely the timing of it. Was there any trepidation about you're getting close to this really big tournament for you in your hometown and maybe it's not a good idea?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Sure, the change was quick. It's still fresh in my bag. I just felt like it's such a big advantage that I could utilize, especially on poa annua. They're tricky greens to putt on. The longer the day goes on, the bumpier they get with people walking on them. Launch conditions are very important out here, and I feel like my launch is even more consistent with this arm-lock style putter.

I did switch earlier, I just kind of threw it in the bag at Memorial. Not that it's not an important tournament, but because I knew there's a chance of me wanting to use it here, it's in the bag this week. I'd be lying if I said I'm 100 percent super comfortable with it, but I think each and every day I get with it -- it hasn't even been two and a half or three weeks since I've used it. Each day I use it, I get more and more comfortable.

Q. How much are the Olympics in the back of your mind? I know it's a big deal for you given your family history. It looks like everyone is bunched up there or three or four guys are bunched up for the spots and it will be decided this week. Is that in the back of your mind?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Not as much as this one is. Thursday to Saturday was what was in the back of my mind. Giving myself a chance there on Sunday is what I've been pushing for these last couple weeks. I'm aware of it, but I guarantee if I am coming down the stretch on Sunday with a chance to win, I'm not going to be thinking about the Olympics.

Q. How big a deal is the Olympics to you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I've said this before. I'd be lying if I said it was something I dreamed of as a kid. I dreamed of playing here as a kid. When I dreamed of playing here and trying to win this golf tournament, the Olympics and golf wasn't really a thing.

When I think of things you want to accomplish, it's major championships, big golf tournaments, things like that. Olympics is such a fresh thing, it's such a -- we play so much golf throughout the year. It's not like I've been working my whole career for this one moment just like all the other athletes. It's hard to compare it to golf. You talk about other specialties in sports. It is a big deal. Obviously representing your country is a huge honor, but for right now this is the most important thing to me.

Q. For so many months with no fans on the course and you and Phil paired together in San Diego, are you aware of how special a moment that could be Friday, Saturday if you both play well and large crowds following you around? Is that something you look forward to?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, absolutely. It's so nice to see people and to have people clap or even aww when things aren't going great. It just feels natural. When I turned pro, I played in front of people, and it was something I had to get used to. It was more in that boat where it was really weird when no one was around. Things are starting to feel more normal, and it definitely helps out fans rooting you on.

Q. You mentioned the Phil dynamic, some of the extra rapport and competition you've built up in the last year or so. Does it spill into your rounds together at all, or do you think it's business as usual?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Business as usual. It will make us feel more comfortable playing against each other. We're here to win this individual golf tournament. We're not going to be playing some sort of side game during this event.

But I think us playing together will make our pairing more enjoyable just because we're more familiar.

Q. How much do you remember being here in 2008? Did you walk around with with your dad?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I lost my crew that I was with. I couldn't drive a car, so someone brought me. I can't remember who that was. I was on the 18th -- I had to watch Tiger finish, and I just remember the putt he made on 18 and me being up against a tree and being part of

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that environment and how cool and special that moment was and how motivated I was shortly after it to go practice and try and hit the same shot he hit there, hit the same putt.

A lot of that day, I remember just that last hole.

Q. How much has this tournament been circled on your calendar?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, once I've become more established, I realized that I'm going to have an entry in, and definitely in terms of Farmers prep and stuff like that, I've paid more attention and tried to focus more and tried to come out more when I can. When they do close the course down to the public, I've tried to make an extra effort to come out here and practice just to get familiar with the property for an event like this, so I've definitely been trying my best.

Q. Do you remember the first time you had a putt out here, probably back in high school, when it broke uphill because it was going towards the ocean? How do you sort of rewire your mind when you stand over a putt to know that it might actually break uphill or not break?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, the tricky part in high school is we played a lot on punched greens, so putts were breaking left and right when they shouldn't be and going straight when they shouldn't be. No real memory to pull on from high school besides the views and the tee shots and just the fun experience of being out here as a kid.

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