

# TOUR Championship

Tuesday, August 22, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

## Xander Schauffele

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at the 2023 TOUR Championship. Xander making your seventh start this week here at East Lake where you finished top 10 every single year including that first win. What's it like to be back at East Lake?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's always a good feeling coming back on property here. A little further back than I wanted, but I've been in this situation before and got a big mountain to climb during this week. So I'm going to do my best.

THE MODERATOR: You're entering the week 15 in the FedExCup. What's the mindset going into this starting strokes format?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Nothing to lose. I think a lot of guys who are pretty far back feel that way. So just need to kind of have a really good Thursday, Friday, to position yourself for the weekend and if you can kind of get within some sort of touch within two, three shots it means you played really well the first two rounds and maybe give yourself a chance come the weekend.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

**Q. You're no stranger to playing in hot weather events and including here which we're kind of known for having a hot weather tournament. Curious if it's more of a mental or physical challenge to play in these temperatures over the course of four days trying to win a golf tournament?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Well, if you're in really good physical shape then it's probably a little bit more mental and vice versa. So I think it's going to be both, to be completely honest. Everyone has to deal with it. There's only 30 guys here so it's not like anyone's teeing off at 7:00 a.m. and the next guy is teeing off at 2:00 p.m.

**Q. Couple things. We've only had once since I think 2009 where the No. 1 seed coming into this thing has**



**actually gone on to win the FedExCup. What would be your best college-educated guess on why that is?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Say that again. Sorry. There's only been once in the last 10 years you said?

**Q. No, since 2010. That a No. 1 seed coming in has actually gone on to win the FedExCup.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's just, it's really hard to stay in really good form for a really long time. It's just golf. Guys will catch stride at certain times, guys will sort of dip at certain times and peak again. And our season is getting a little bit shorter, but it's been pretty long wraparound for many years, at least since I've been on TOUR. So just staying hot for a, really, throughout the whole year is a really hard thing to do.

**Q. What do you plan to do now that you got the rest of the year off, after Rome? What do you plan to do?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm going to play Zozo. I think that's it. I'm not really sure. I might play Bahamas in the Hero, maybe, in Tiger's event there. But pretty much kick back and relax as much as possible.

**Q. Lastly, Jay this morning said he was certain, confident that the deal would get finalized with PIF. What is your level of certainty with what little you know?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I'm very certain that I know very little. Which means I don't know a lot. I, honestly, I have no idea what's been going on. So, just trying to win golf tournaments and kind of back to that whole transcript. Maybe that's the wrong word. But just that whole thought process. Sorry, my brain's a bit hot here. I just came outside and I can't really hear with this generator blowing all over the place.

**Q. Tiger and Rory's Primetime Golf League. What prompted you to sign on to that and what appeals to you about that format?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it might be, hopefully, but I think it really could be like a really interesting way to grow the game of golf. Obviously having those two names up top heading that league is very important. They're pretty



powerful names to approach your own name to. But it's pretty much going to be golf in a different light. It's more of an entertainment, I would say, aspect to it versus sort of like a competition. I know there will be a competition, but it will be very entertaining, I would say, with how intimate the environment will be. So hopefully it grows the game and it will be a pretty cool thing to be a part of.

**Q. How did you get involved with it specifically?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's a really good question. I kind of got wind of the whole thing in its sort of younger stages. And then have known the Full Swing, a couple of the guys, for a little bit of time. One of them lives in San Diego. So I can't really pinpoint the exact time of when I heard about it, but it was I think along the lines of when other players were kind of getting wind of it as well.

**Q. What kind of, now that you've actually qualified for your first Ryder Cup team, what kind of input do you expect to be giving as it relates to the next six? Have you spoken to Zach yet?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: He did give me a phone call. It's quite an honor to actually qualify for one instead of being picked. Thank you for mentioning that.

**Q. (No Microphone.)**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: What's that?

**Q. Take that as a positive.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you're a very positive person. I appreciate that. Yeah, it's cool. It will be, you know, it will -- to sort of have, I guess, a seat at the table leading up to the picks. But at the end of the day we have our scouts and we have certain people giving certain information and data to Zach, the captain, and all the vice captains. It will be ultimately Zach's decision. But it's probably pretty cool to have some input in his decision making.

**Q. Secondly, how would you handicap -- this is our last event of the season, obviously -- how would you handicap the Player of the Year race when you've got Rahm with four wins and a major, Scottie with two with THE PLAYERS and a remarkable consistency and leads the Money List and something else. How do you look at that as a player who may or may not be voting? Did you vote last time?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah.

**Q. Okay. Good.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I think we're supposed to. They ask us to vote and I think we're supposed to vote. But, yeah, that's a really good question. I think this week will be pretty important in determining who may win that.

**Q. (No Microphone.)**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Havi had an incredible week or finish a couple nights ago and he won Memorial as well. He's going into this week second. So, I mean, I don't know. I really don't know. I'm curious who the nominees will be once you log into that.

**Q. Wondering, are you at the point in your career where a season without a win feels unsuccessful? Because obviously you haven't missed a cut, most top 10s in your career, so you're playing as some of the most consistent golf that you've played, but just haven't kind of found that elusive victory this year.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's been a pretty weird year, to be completely honest. I had to withdraw from one of my favorite events of year at Sentry. And then kind of had a, I mean, a bit of a scare for myself and my team, to be completely honest, just because it was something new that we've never had to deal with. So with all things considered there I feel like I'm pretty far behind personally. But they have been present and helpful in reminding me that not too long ago I was pretty down on sort of what it was going to look like for this year. So we kind of had to dig deep and pull ourselves out of that hole kind of early and kind of catch or get into good form to just even make this Ryder Cup team. So it's been a weird year. Obviously, yeah, without a win it definitely feels a bit weirder.

**Q. (No Microphone.)**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Well, I don't even know how this tournament works, so, but you're right. The season is not over yet.

**Q. Now that the 2024 TOUR schedule is out, I'm curious to hear your thoughts on the designated event model that's now the signature event model. Do you feel that it's improving for 2024 and beyond?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, from what I read I feel like the fields and TV ratings from those designated event or signature events have been great. They have all, the ratings have been up from previous years. It's exciting golf. People want to watch it. I mean, it makes sense. We're putting out our best product with our best players competing against each other each week. So it's bound to

be exciting or as exciting as it can be if you're a golf fan. And, yeah, I think the flow of next year from what I looked at and what I can remember, it sort of, depending upon how much you want to play early on you can stack your season early and then there's a sort of three weeks on, it looks like. But you have two weeks off as well. So you kind of avoid the one on, one off or two on, one off, two on, one off type deal. It's sort of nice for us, when you play multiple weeks, to have two weeks at home. After three or four nights at home and having to leave again it goes pretty quick.

**Q. Along those lines, have you thought about your schedule for next year and based on the signature events will it change at all do you think?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Have I decided?

**Q. Thought about next year's schedule as far as fitting those signature events in and will it change?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You know, I think it all sort of varies on how good of a start. With this wraparound it's always been, you know, I'll play two, maybe three events in the fall. I'll be like 130th on the FedExCup starting in January. And then I have to -- it feels like you're so far behind. So, unless you win an event in Asia, what it was before, it changes sort of how you pick your tournaments. To me at least. I feel like if you can win an event or a couple early on, you really set yourself up in the driver's seat to sort of pick apart the rest of your season and make sure you can find a nice way to play your minimum events.

**Q. Going back to the Ryder Cup, what were your emotions on Sunday when you found out you had taken that spot?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I just bogeyed my last hole from like 150 yards with a pitching wedge. And the pin was in a bowl. Like, I was, I wasn't super excited, to be completely honest. I was hot and just pissed off. So once I did the interview and everything I felt a little bit better. Then as I sat down I felt a little better. Then as I thought about it I started to feel better. But like right when it happened they told me and I was kind of just like sick, you know what I mean. Like, that's great. But once I was able to talk about it and think beyond my bogey that I just made and get over myself I was happy.

**Q. Curious, with all the twists and turns and the heavy schedule that you just went through with the season, how big of an accomplishment is it for a player to make it to the top 30 and to do it like you have with this being your seventh year?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's always, I mean, for me personally it's always one of the goals that's listed is to make the TOUR Championship. It means that you've played very solid and consistent golf for the entire year. It just feels like especially with these designated events now it feels like it's harder and harder to qualify for this because I'm, we're playing against the top-50, top-60 players in the world. Every week feels like a major almost. Whether the venue fits it or not, it just feels like we're playing against the best players all the time. And it's almost like cannibalism a little bit. You don't get like an easy event to sort of grab a couple points here or there to make the TOUR Championship. So, yeah, it's definitely a big accomplishment.

**Q. Obviously being the last event of the year, the biggest purse that's going on, there's still some players that are tweaking and looking around at different equipment changes. Not necessarily you personally. But when would you, in your own mind, say, I need to work on technique or I need to make an equipment change? How do you sort of differentiate when you're maybe struggling with something, whether it's your gear or whether it's something that you need to work on more that way?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's a good question, actually. Yeah, it's tricky. I think it really depends on the individual, the player. I think equipment's so, you know, like advanced now that if you're swinging it a certain way and you feel comfortable, these guys can make you a club, from any company in all honesty, that will, if you're hitting it too far left, they can make you a club that starts further right. But like if you start swinging how you want to swing, I guess, to get the ball not to start so far left, then the equipment will start you way right. So it's like really you got to pick and choose.

Me personally, sometimes I wish I could blame other things and other people more often. I kind of weigh a lot of it on myself and blame myself a lot. So I usually will work on technical things myself before I blame my equipment.

**Q. Not that the notice and comment period is over with the USGA with regard to distance and such, how much have you at all been following where the distance debate has been going on and what would you expect is sort of the tenor of the locker room? Have the players been paying any attention to this?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I would say a few. It's a really big deal for our game. But, to be honest, from like a talk amongst the guys, it felt sort of like a flash in the pan a little bit. It hasn't been a conversation that's -- you know, with certain companies saying they're not going to do it and our

TOUR and Jay saying we're not going to support it as well, I believe, it kind of just was that. That's our stance. So it was a hot topic for a little bit, but I would say it's sort of died down a bit.

**Q. We're five years into this format with the staggered strokes. I know one of the years I believe you shot the lowest 72-hole score but it didn't get you a trophy. I'm curious where you stand on it now. Are you good with this format or would you like to see it tweaked or go back to the old way?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I can happily say I've been on both sides of it. I've never won the whole thing, but I've won this event and I was given a trophy and I've won it and was not. So I can't really comment on that, just because I haven't thought of a way to make it better. I still believe that when I talk to some friends and people they still feel like a little confused on how it all happens. I think this is supposed to be like our most important event all year. It kind of comes down to this moment. And, like, for people to be like a little bit confused, it's still not a finished product to me in that sense.

But I think after Thursday and after Friday, like everyone knows. Like it doesn't even matter anymore how it started, it's all about how you finish it. And everyone knows what's going on when guys are coming down this nice final stretch here at East Lake and everyone knows what's at stake.

**Q. Wondering, after this tournament they close the course for a year and totally redo it. I wonder, as somebody who has played here a lot, what your thoughts about that are and how might it impact future TOUR Championships with a different course?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I really hope -- man, I'm a big believer in not changing anything that's already really great. When you go to a restaurant and order something that tastes really good, I usually order it over and over and over again. I'm not -- maybe I'll let my wife order something else so I can try it, but I'm going to order the same thing.

So when this course is set up great and the condition it's in right now, with really fast greens, rough is up, it's awesome. It's hard. You have to golf your ball.

So the guy that's going to come, Andrew Green is going to come in and he said he's going to take out a lot of trees and it's a little concerning, to be honest. I'm not a member here. I hear members are excited. But as a TOUR pro, we talk about distance and all those things, but the thing that we can't do is hit it through trees. So when you start taking a bunch of trees off a property it definitely can change how

it plays. And I'm hoping that East Lake keeps its teeth. Because when it plays hard you shoot 10- or 12-under you're going to win this golf tournament.

**Q. I wanted to follow up on one thing. When you bogeyed 18 on Sunday, that moment before you talked to somebody -- and I'm sure you were paying attention to your golf and not the scenarios -- was there any part of you that thought that putt may have cost you, before you got into scoring?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, not really. I was just so caught up, you know, just so caught up in my own moment. I just wanted to make a good pass at it. I hit a really good tee shot. That fairway is really hard to hit. And I did the really hard part. And I literally -- that pin was just, you could have putted it into that bowl from 150 yards almost. That's what it looked like from the fairway. I just hit like the most -- I was just angry at myself basically. So I think I was in my own feelings in that moment. To not back off or like buckle down and just hit a decent wedge shot. It was just kind of me being mad at myself for not finishing off a golf tournament. I hate bogeying the last hole. I don't care if I'm missing the cut or not.

**Q. As it relates to the Ryder Cup. We leave here on Sunday, I asked you about your schedule in the fall, but what do you think is going to be the plan between now and leaving for Italy in terms of either staying sharp or playing or whether guys need to or not?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I think unwinding, unwinding for a bit will be important. But from what I hear the Europeans are setting up that course to be really narrow with really thick rough. It's a hike. So definitely going to try and, with all that said, hit the ball a little straighter, get into good cardio shape and make sure my game's ready and not rusty whatsoever to compete. I know how those things can go when you're on property and you want to get a bunch of practice in. And it's a show. That Ryder Cup's a show. And there's so much stuff that goes on that sometimes you can't always get as much practice as you would want like one of these weeks. So I think going in ready is important.

**Q. We talked about the heat. Wondering what kind of snacks do you keep in your bag? What are you eating throughout the 100-degree round?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's hard to eat. Everyone hates eating. I read a few articles of guys saying they had to force food -- I think Jordan said he had to force some food down. That definitely hits home. Any bar that's not going to -- I mean, not going to melt, that's funny, right? Any bar that doesn't have any chocolate in it, I guess, or too many

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

things that's going to make it melt. A lot of salt.  
Electrolytes. I saw those fans with that cool sort of water blowing out of 'em are a game changer. Those are really nice. That's a nice touch. And those little mitts are nice as well. So I think we're more prepared than ever to sort of keep the guys and myself as cool as possible this week compared to previous years.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Xander, thank you so much for the time and best of luck this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you.

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