

THE PLAYERS Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at THE PLAYERS championship. Xander, you're here making your sixth start. Can you just open up with some thoughts about your return to TPC Sawgrass.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's one of my favorite stops on TOUR. I love the property and the facilities and everything that goes with this week. Excited to be back.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and open it up to questions.

Q. Jay was in here earlier today and he said he believes he has the support of the board and I am the right person to lead us forward; I believe that in my heart. Given the recent agreement with the Strategic Sports Group, do you have confidence in Jay going forward?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I guess we'll start with the easy ones. (Smiling.)

Yeah, I mean, you know what I've said in the past on how I feel about it. Trust is something that's pretty tender, so words are words, and I would say in my book he's got a long way to go. He could be the guy, but in my book, he's got a long way to go to gain the trust of the membership. I'm sure he's got the support of the board, since they were with him making some of those decisions, but for me personally he's got quite a ways to go.

Q. You first stopped here tied for second five years ago. Since then, what do you feel is the biggest challenge you've encountered here on this course? Actually it's been more of a rocky road since then for you.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, they moved the tournament to a different time of year. Completely different property to be completely honest. Back in May, I believe, is when it was. It was firm, fast, the greens weren't overseeded, they were just Bermuda; the place got brown; it



got sketchy; balls were rolling all over the place.

Now it's green, it's lush, softer, slower, super thick rough, not Bermuda, rye overseed or whichever you call it, and I could be wrong with that one. It's just a completely different property. So just need to adjust to the play style, and I know I can do it, I just need to do it.

Q. With the state of golf and players playing on different tours, do you feel like there's added emphasis on the major championships?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Considering that brings everyone together?

Q. Yeah.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Maybe. For a viewer. For me, it's pretty similar. A major championship is a major championship. I don't see myself preparing or thinking about it any different than I did prior to the splitting of tours.

Q. I guess the better way to ask it is do the TOUR events feel a little different now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean you see less, I just see less of the guys that I'm used to seeing when I first came out on TOUR. So that aspect is different. But my day-to-day is pretty much the same. Still trying to prepare and win these events like I was prior.

Q. You've been doing a little work with Chris Como recently. Just wondering how that came about and what you guys are working through.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I've actually known Chris for quite some time. One of my buddies back home in San Diego, he sought out Chris's help 2010 maybe, in 2009, 2010. So he would go see Chris in Dallas, and I would FaceTime my buddy and Chris would be there, and so it became kind of -- I've just known of him and known him for quite some time. I've always liked Chris, and he's in West Palm, and I just moved over there, so it was a pretty easy meet-up. I think things have been going pretty well.

Q. Is there anything he's keying in on your swing, or what is the advice that you're kind of getting from him?



XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's a trickle. I think he's learning that I can be a bit -- I wouldn't call myself a head case, but a little too technical at times. So it's on a bit of a trickle in terms of information. But we're sort of still working through how he wants to feed me information.

But for the most part, kind of looked at my swing since I've been on TOUR from 2017 up until now and sort of how it's changed and sort of what he liked then and what he likes now and vice versa. So, I think he sort of understands my release pattern and just kind of wants to unlock that potential.

Q. You've won a TOUR Championship. You've won the Olympics. Those are big events. You've been on Ryder Cups. Is the PLAYERS a bigger step than any of those? There are a lot of people that it would be a life-changing event for, but you've been so successful already that I don't know that it would change your life.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, yes, it would be a very big thing to me personally. There's so much I want to accomplish in the game, so anytime I can check off a really big box or any box for that matter in this game is special to me and my team.

In terms of it changing my life, I'm not sure, to be honest. I feel like I'm the same guy before I won the Olympics or won the gold medal at the Olympics. But yeah, the PLAYERS is definitely something I want to win.

Q. Do you think the status of this event is compromised in any way by the current situation, which means that the Masters champion the U.S. PGA Champion aren't part of the field here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't think it helps the tournament. Yeah, I mean I think you would like to have those players playing, in an ideal world, but I feel like we're sort of beating a dead horse in this media room a little bit. The few times I click on the golf to read, we're definitely beating a dead horse, in my opinion.

I mean, everyone kind of knew what was going to happen when they made a decision, and this was probably the highest probability chance of the outcome, which is to have people on different tours at the time.

I know the guys are working on getting everyone back together, but in the meantime, I'm kind of on the page of it is what it is.

Q. Just to follow up on the question about Chris, how do you keep that new dynamic from changing, which

was a bigger relationship with your dad being your swing coach and letting that kind of filter into that relationship?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, Chris and my dad spoke. They have also known each other for a bit of time. From a similar approach, I guess, of just trying to not do anything that doesn't feel natural to me or force the club or have a feel that isn't sort of sound in my game. They're sort of similar in that sense.

I ask a lot of questions, and that may lead to too much information at times, and like I said before, I think Chris is just trying to put me on a slow feeder at the moment.

Q. From a human level, was it hard to shift full-time away from your dad?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I still talk to my dad all the time. It's not like I don't. My dad, from a very young age, my dad told me, he's like, happy that I can be your coach, but there might be a time where in order for you to take it to the next level you may need to go see someone else. So he said those words to me when I was a kid, and he'll still say them now.

So having his trust and his loyalty there, there's not much of a burden on my plate, fortunately for me.

Q. Camilo Villegas was selected as the new chairman of the Players Advisory Council. What are your thoughts on this, and how do you anticipate his involvement in this concept?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it's great. Camilo is someone that I've watched play for a very long time, so I think it's nice to have -- I think when you look at a board or a council, you kind of want a little bit of everything in there, and I think Camilo will bring that sort of elderly experience factor that someone younger might miss.

Q. No intention on jinxing you in any way here, but --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Don't say it.

Q. What goes into making 41 cuts in a row out here, as competitive as it can get, and you're not ducking the big tournaments, you're not cherry picking a whole lot? What is in somebody's game to make that many cuts in a row to be that consistent?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Commentator's curse, here it is, right? (Smiling.)

No, just playing, not thinking about it too much, to be

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

honest. I play to win and I don't play to make cuts, so it makes it easier to make the cut when you're playing to win, I think, when you're up sort of near the top of the leaderboard often.

I think most of my big grinds on TOUR have been some epic cuts that I've made, just pulling something out of my hat at the last second, whether it's making a putt or holing a shot from 175 yards or something of that nature. So, just trying my best every time I tee it up.

Q. Understanding that we're a little focused on the LIV thing and obviously you came in right after Jay, when you talk about it, first, do you think the board is representative of what the players are thinking?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: The board as a whole or like a player directors, independent directors?

Q. Yes. Not the independent directors but the player directors.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I would say -- I would imagine the player directors have our best interest and have been trying to navigate this space to the best of their ability.

Q. The other end of this equation is, what do you want either Jay to do or the board to do that would make you feel good about the situation?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I haven't really put a whole lot of thought, honestly, into what would make me feel good when it comes to that whole thing. I've really, I said it in Maui, really put my head in the sand is what I said then, and what would make me feel good is to raise this trophy on Sunday. I haven't really thought too much about how to alleviate the pains of an entire membership.

Q. Jay was very hazy on certain details beyond saying that progress was being made. Obviously there's been a lot said about transparency. Are you hearing any more from a player's point of view than perhaps we're being told in here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: To be completely honest, I would consider myself pretty uninformed. Haven't really sought out a whole lot of information just because, you know, when I felt like I did, I didn't get any.

I'm a pro golfer at the end of the day, so I have to hope that things can go well at some point, but, yeah, I have seriously no details or extra facts to throw out to you. And if I did, I don't know if I would tell you, to be completely honest.

Q. It feels like Scottie's put some distance between himself and everybody else with the way he's playing. Do you feel like he's the guy that you're all chasing right now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes.

Q. And does it kind of a feel like a challenge, an uphill battle if he gets that putter working?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes. (Smiling.)

Q. I know you said you've tried to keep your head in the sand and decouple yourself from what's going on. That being said, though, given that so much is going on, has it been challenging to find joy coming to work given all these weighty things being discussed?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Actually that's not a terrible question. I love my job. I love playing golf. So for me to come and work and mess up and then try again or hit a good shot and try and validate it, to me it's the best job in the world.

So if you start poking around and you can't get any answers, I can imagine you can make your working environment pretty terrible, so I think it's sort of how you go about it, and fortunately for me, you know, I have trust in some of the people that are leading us and hoping for a good outcome, and in the meantime, just trying to play the best golf I can play.

Q. It's hard for a lot of people to believe that Tiger hasn't been out here playing at all for five years. Some people felt like he would come out here this year as a preparation for Augusta, but he's not here. How much, as a competitor, do you miss him specifically not being here, but just at other places in general, just knowing it's winding down for him?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you know, I like to look at it sort of half full. I feel like coming out, I just -- you never know how someone's career's going to go, and he kind of had a rough go for a little bit with his body and everything.

So I think to see him win the Masters, to see him win at East Lake, I find myself very fortunate, and I think all the golf fans should as well, and if there's anyone that's going to talk about putting their head in the sand and find some way to win another golf tournament, I would imagine it's going to be him. So being his competitor, I pull for him pretty hard, and he's kind of the heartbeat of golf, in my opinion, and any time he tees it up it's a spectacle.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect, thank you for the time. Good luck this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you.

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