

# Arnold Palmer Invitational

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

## Xander Schauffele

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Xander, fifth start, four top 10s in the last five here at Bay Hill. Just some opening comments on being back here at this event.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, always good to be back. We all know it's a very hard week, so just been preparing for it and looking forward to the start of it.

THE MODERATOR: Coming off that T-4 at Riviera, just some comments on how your game's been progressing as you kind of gotten your season started here.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, been in a few, I would say, a couple or a few final groups this year, which is always the plan. Haven't been able to sort of really get over the hump or get myself close, I should even say, with six to nine holes in a tournament. So, Riviera I was pretty close there for a second I should say, and then bogeyed those hard holes and was pretty much out of it immediately. Yeah, just keep on keeping on is kind of what I'm doing right now.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. We'll open it up to questions and I'll just reiterate it's your third start here, and four top 10s in five starts this season, so there you go.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I was like, I don't think I have that good of a track record here, but I'll take it.

THE MODERATOR: All right. I'll call myself out. Go ahead.

**Q. Work with me on this here, at what point did you know you were a pretty good player out here?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Work with me? (Laughing).

**Q. I'm trying to think --**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Have I scarred you that bad?

**Q. You win Greenbrier and TOUR Championship. Was there a certain tournament or a certain moment, even if it was beyond East Lake, that gave you the kind of extra maybe a little boost of confidence, belief, that kind of stuff?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Probably looking all the way back to start of my freshman year, rookie year, I did a 36-hole qualifier at Germantown with Steve Stricker for Erin Hills, and I was, I mean, I love my job and I get really excited to play golf, but I was especially excited that week when I saw that pairing, because I knew that he would be trying everything in his power to qualify. So, I knew I was going to get a Steve Stricker at maximum effort. It was so cool to watch him win that qualifier or finish second, maybe. He had some really nice words for me, I played with him all day, and spoke with him. He told me to keep my head down, and that I'm a great player, and things of that nature. So, cool to know him a little bit more now and play for him on a team. I would say that was kind of the start, when I qualified for the U.S. Open, and then I played really well at the U.S. Open at Erin Hills. That was sort of the first time I believe like I could actually really have a good shot at being great at this.

**Q. Not to dismiss that, but anyone can have a good Open, Stricker might have said that to anybody.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thanks, man.

**Q. I'm just being honest. Did it take one win, did it take two, did it take -- at what point did you, did it, as I say, kick in to kind of an extra gear?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I still don't think --

**Q. I think he meant it, by the way. Sorry about that.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Sure, no worries. I don't view myself -- I think I'm really consistent and I'm a really good player. I'm still searching, I think, to be a great player in my own opinion. That's sort of how I view myself. Getting over the hump and winning a little bit more is definitely something that I believe will happen. I think the greats do win often, and to separate yourself from sort of consistent



and really good players is one thing.

**Q. Are you thinking about the Olympics at all? There's a lot that has to happen between now and then, but you're the defending champion, basically.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I like playing well in the events where you can't really sign up for and qualify or just tee it up in. So, yeah, of course, it's definitely on my radar. It's sort of at the back of my head. I know there's a lot of small things I need to do in order to qualify for the event, but first things first. I need to continue to have really solid weeks and keep my World Ranking up high enough so I can qualify for Paris.

**Q. Top 4 in the US, is it?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's correct.

**Q. What would you say is the best part of playing here at Bay Hill, and also what's the most challenging part of this course?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Best part I would say probably the, I don't know, playing on Arnie's property, seeing all the fans, seeing the iconic umbrella. Pretty wild to think about his last win coming in, someone told me actually, in '73, I believe, and we're 50, 51 years removed from that, and it still feels like he's sort of, not just here with us, but everyone supports him and talks about him and he's definitely the talk of the town. So I think that part's really cool about being here.

Hardest part about the property is pretty easy. There's water on several holes, and when the wind picks up a little bit it gets a bit intimidating out there.

**Q. Started working with Chris Como late last year. Curious why the switch or the move and what have you guys been working on?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I've sort of tapered off with my dad a little bit, he's still sort of my eyes day-to-day. I'm on the East Coast now, so him being on the west it's a bit tricky. So, besides a phone call, it's hard to sort of get him to watch me to hit a lot. I did a consultation in my first ever away from my dad in 2021, I believe, with Mark Blackburn. Now, I'm speaking and talking with Chris since December, and it's been great. I think he's just sort of been trying to get some of my swing patterns back to sort of 2018, 2017-2018, and then adding in a few things that he likes to see. Whether it's sort of, I don't know, something as simple as steepening my shoulder plane or things of that nature. Tough for me to do, but when I can seem to grasp it, it seems to help.

**Q. What are some of the patterns from 2017, 2018 that are really crucial to your swing.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just sort the way the club sort of moves. For a bit the club was getting a little bit laid off at the top. I had this sort of long, laid off look, I would say, sort of out and sort of flat, sort of laid off look. Feel like I sort of, in 2017, 2018, the club was a little bit more on plane at the top of the back swing. It's been a bit of work, but I think it's coming along.

**Q. Today LIV said they were pulling their OWGR application. They're not going to try for World Ranking points any more. I'm sure you know, that's been a fairly contentious issue for them, and in the whole thing. Where do you stand on the OWGR at this point? Obviously, some of their players have been upset about not having access to the majors, and there are some pretty good ones over there, although we have seen some exemptions come their way.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I think it's great that -- I definitely saw that Joaquin got an exemption into the Masters. I think that's very well deserved. Supposed to be a sort of worldwide -- it's known to be a worldwide event, it's a global deal of a major. All of 'em are, to be honest. So, it's good to see the top Chilean out there.

To be honest, I think the criteria was sort of set in front of 'em, and they did everything in their power to get on with the OWGR, and it seems that they're, they haven't met the criteria. I haven't read too much of it, to be completely honest, but it seems that they're not seeing sort of eye to eye on making an exemption to make LIV have World Ranking points.

So, I'm not sure as to why they pulled their application for it, but it is what it is.

**Q. They don't believe it's credible in its current state. I'm just wondering, would you think that they should have just gotten in a room and figured this out somehow?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, I'm not, you know, fortunately, I'm on the other side of the fence, I'm definitely one of the players. You know, I just try to play really well and collect as many World Ranking points as I can. So, whatever that may look like, this is sort of the structure it is right now with no OWGR. It just seemed like it was a pretty clear thing to start sort of how it was going to look and, unfortunately, they didn't meet the criteria. But the LIV Tour definitely has really good players, and players that are in the top 10 or top 25 in the world, and there's

many of 'em. So, they're just sort of unranked right now, but to me, I do believe they're definitely top-ranked players in the world.

**Q. I know it's still early in the season, but do these events, these signature events, do they feel special or different for you, and if so why?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, they feel special. I want to win them more than a non-signature event. I know there's better players playing in this tournament. The courses and the tournaments hold a lot of history. So, I feel like they're signature. I definitely, you know, I try to get up for every tournament every week, but there's definitely some more intent, I would say, to getting it done.

**Q. How much do all the other things factor in? The more points if you win one of these events, the more money, the more perks. Does that factor in at all?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Not really, to be honest. That's not really my driving factor when I wake up in the morning. I think I'd pretty much lose sight, not sight, but I'd lose some motivation if it was that way.

**Q. This year's produced a lot of winners unexpected winners, let's say. If you look at the World Rankings particularly, I think Wyndham is the only one in the top 25 who won. How do you explain that? Is it depth or just the nature of the game?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Probably the nature of the game. Credit to that more than anything else.

**Q. In your case, what do you think -- you said you're going to keep on keeping on -- but what is an element you think that's been missing when you have had opportunities?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just a little bit of a comfort factor. I know I'm going to be uncomfortable, it's pretty hard to feel super comfortable. I think the times you see guys win by six to eight shots coming down the stretch, they're pretty comfortable. I haven't had that moment yet. Just a little bit of a comfort thing. Just not entering the week feeling pretty good, but not amazing, and then putting myself in really good space, and then old habits seem to kick in in my swing that I've been fighting off, and, as soon as I feel comfortable, some old things will peel back in, which I don't need. So, just some small stuff I need to clean up.

**Q. How are you feeling right now?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, still working on it. It's just

Tuesday, so I have another full day, full 18 holes to prepare and just excited for the week.

**Q. There's, I think, upwards of maybe 69 or 70 guys here. Does that feel right like the right number or do you think there should be a few more? 80? 100? I know you don't want to, they don't want full fields, but it seems pretty small.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's a good question. I'm not equipped to answer that. There's a lot more things that come into play. We're going to play in twosomes, I'm a huge fan of that.

**Q. So are we.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: (Laughing). Yeah, I think it's -- people talk about how slow the game is, playing in twosomes helps the pace of play significantly. Even when you're out of place, you can pick it up with your partner pretty quickly.

But in terms of, I am fortunate to be sitting where I am, eligible to play in these tournaments, so I haven't really spent a whole lot of time thinking of looking what it would look like if I was on the other side, but I'm sure I would potentially have a different opinion.

**Q. Nine tournaments into the season we've only had one guy inside the top 50 win. Do you have a good explanation for why that is, and if not can you make one up?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Can I make one up? (Laughing). Nine events isn't a really big sample. I think there's still a lot of golf to be played, and we're kind of getting into what I would call sort of the thick of the season. I imagine you'll start seeing some of the higher-ranked players winning.

**Q. I don't know how much you pay attention when you're not playing, but of some of the first-time winners, Nick Dunlap and Pavon and Jake and Austin, do any of 'em impress you, and if so how?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I always think it's impressive to pull through and win. I was fortunate enough to play with Nick at Pebble, to see kind of what his game is like. He, unfortunately, didn't play very well, but I can see why he won, to say the least.

But, yeah, thinking back to when I was trying to win my first event, I remember it very clearly, so it's a very exciting feeling. It's an extreme feeling of relief as well at the same time. You're just kind of over the moon throughout the rest

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

of the year. I'm sure all those guys are, you know, a bad round is, a bad round played is much easier to swallow than prior to the win.

**Q. Did you know much about Jake in college?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, yeah, Jake and I were on the same PAC Coast team up in -- we actually roomed together in Canada for a tournament. I've known Jake for quite some time in junior events, up until he was at UCLA. Saw him kind of spotty, obviously, but for the most part I've known Jake pretty well for quite some time.

**Q. Is it kind of surprising to have a rookie who is 29?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, everyone's got their own path. I always knew that he would land somewhere out here. He's always had unbelievable power for quite some time. He built himself up pretty nicely, and then was hitting it really far in college. Then, even when we were 19, I remember him, he was hitting it pretty darn far. So, he always had really good hands, was a good putter. So, he was going to figure it out eventually. He took his path. 29, I don't know what the average age of a rookie is, but I know when I was on TOUR it was 30 or 31 maybe. So is it less than 29 now? Probably close to.

**Q. I don't know.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm not sure either. Sorry, I'm asking you the question.

THE MODERATOR: Xander, thanks so much for the time, and best of luck this week.

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