

AT&T Byron Nelson

Wednesday, May 11, 2022

McKinney, Texas, USA

TPC Craig Ranch

Will Zalatoris

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Will Zalatoris to the 2022 At&T Byron Nelson. Just coming off a 9-hole pro-am, this is your third start here at this event. I think you've been privileged to be one of, I don't know, a few players I guess that's played three different venues now in your three starts, TPC Los Colinas, Trinity Forest and now here at TPC Craig Ranch. So a question would be, what's it like to come back to a venue when you've already played at least once?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I played probably 35 rounds here at NTPGA events out here. It's amazing to see -- the course is in the best shape I've ever seen it in the 15 years that I've been coming out playing here. I've got a lot of great memories obviously from coming out to this event as a junior golfer and getting hats signed by pros walking off of 18 and obviously it kind of comes full circle now that I'm obviously now on the inside of the ropes and not on the outside.

So a lot of cool memories here and obviously a great venue, I think it's probably one of the top three or four events that fits my game, especially just with the length and the wind and like I said, this place is as pure as I've ever seen it so looking forward to a great week.

THE MODERATOR: You're coming in here off a really nice season, this is your 47th start on TOUR but your 14th this season. You've had five top 10s, a near miss at the Farmers in the playoff, including three top 10s coming in here actually just to point that out. But what is -- you're still looking for that illusive victory. What do you feel like you need to do this week to maybe get over that line?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I've been trending in the right direction, I've been playing some really nice golf over the last month, month and a half. I really have been putting nicely over the last, really going back to Match Play. I feel like every part of my game is really doing well and I just have to let the win get in the way. I've put in a lot of hard work with Josh Gregory and Troy Dunn, especially over the last month and a half, and it's paid off and just have to stay patient. Obviously watching guys like obviously Scottie



going on an absolute tear, he had a kind of wait his turn for a few years and then once the gates opened now it seems like every event he tees up he's winning.

So just got to keep waiting my turn and I know I'm playing some really nice golf and I know my best golf's only ahead of me this year.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take some questions.

Q. You mentioned this course kind of sets up well for you. Can you expand on what you like about this course, how it fits well into your game.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I mean obviously, for one, sleeping in my own bed always helps. But I love the fact that obviously it's a pretty big golf course, it's pretty long, you got to, the farther you hit it the easier this place gets. But playing in a lot of wind is something that I'm used to obviously living here since I was nine years old. So there's a lot of mid irons into this place which is the best part of my game and being one of the longer drivers on TOUR really matches up really nicely.

So being able to flight it and being able to control distance is huge here, just because even today is kind of a typical day and it's still blowing 10 to 15 and like I said I'm one of the longer guys out here and just -- getting off of No. 9, I smoked a 3-wood from 265 and if I barely mishit that driver off the tee I can't get there. So that just shows you that added length that I've had over the last year, it's really helped, but on top of that the farther you hit it at this place, there's a few tee shots that I'll lift up my left heel and just absolutely hit it just as hard as I can, just because it's wide, but the rough out here is no joke either. And there's a few holes that you need to keep it front of you, but there's some holes out here that you can just send it.

Q. You mentioned Scottie, how much is seeing a guy came into the year without a win and how much has that kind of like fire you up, motivate you seeing that you can kind of have a run like that?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it kind of goes back to even on our Walker Cup team, eight out of the 10 guys are on the



PGA TOUR right now and at one point I think three guys had won either on TOUR or on the Korn Ferry TOUR, and I didn't have status anywhere. So if anything it was motivating because I knew I could do what they were doing, I just had to kind of keep plugging along. So seeing what he's doing obviously is borderline Tigeresque, obviously with the incredible golf that he's played.

But at the same time the part that I love so much about Scottie is he's just such a good dude. And it tastes like vinegar coming out of my mouth, considering the amount of golf we play together, because I love him to death, it's really cool to see. And obviously playing the games at home together and him playing well and even the other day I thought I played pretty good at a little event we played here at home, shoot 66 and he comes in with 63 and it's like, Good grief, man, like have an off day.

But like I said, he's setting the bar pretty high right now and obviously he's kind of the guy to chase for all of us. But what he's doing is borderline Tigeresque, it's pretty cool to see.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish here to kind of set you up for that second major next week?

WILL ZALATORIS: Win. That's it.

Q. Do you feel like it's time to get that illusive win?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I mean, definitely. Like I said every part of my game has been feeling pretty good. This is a great place for me, I love being here, got a lot of family and friends. Staying in my own bed helps, but like I said, it's one of those where the win's just got to get in the way and if I keep playing the way I am I know that it's going to come soon.

Q. What was that event 66, 63?

WILL ZALATORIS: We had a charity event called Project Shelter down here and you all the pros come in and play in it. We were over at Preston Trail and it was pretty fun day. And it's a really cool event because there's a lot of great pros that play in it and obviously it's more in good fun, but you come in feeling like you played pretty good, shoot 66 and you're like, Come on, man, this is Monday, take it easy on us for once. It was a couple weeks ago.

Q. The one piece of news that came out yesterday about the LIV and the waivers being denied. Just wanted to get your reaction to it and if you've talked to other players in the locker room and just sort of maybe what the reaction is going around about it.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I'm on the Player Advisory Council so we've had a lot of talks behind closed doors about it. And I think it's great. I mean, look, if you want to do it, no one's stopping you, but what we have here is pretty good too, considering every week we're playing for a pretty great purse on pretty great golf courses and considering the benefits that we have off the golf course on top of that it's pretty tough to beat.

And purses are only going up here, but on top of that, like I said, no one's stopping anyone from doing it, but I think everyone agrees that the decision that came out yesterday is the best for the TOUR. Why would we -- you are obviously a part of this TOUR and the benefits that come with it and no one's stopping you from doing it, but at the same time I thought that the decision was, quite frankly, I thought that was the perfect response from the TOUR. Because we're in a great place, the TOUR's in the best spot it's ever been, it's only going to get better and why would we want to, why would we encourage our players to get releases for those events when essentially we have all these sponsors that are involved with the TOUR and are only making it better and better.

So we're trying to promote our best product possible and if you want to be a part of this where it's only getting better and better, then you shouldn't have it both ways. You have a choice, I mean, you really do. You can go if you'd like, but, you know, it is what it is.

THE MODERATOR: Last year you were voted by your peers as the Rookie of the Year, which is a pretty special award to achieve. How satisfying was that and more so how satisfying is it to follow-up with a really solid season?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, definitely. I mean, considering where I started off the year, thinking I was going to play another year on Korn Ferry and then was fortunate enough to get that spot in the U.S. Open and parlayed that into obviously having special temporary status out here and having a nice run, you know, it was a goal that I didn't even know that I was, that was on my radar, considering I thought I was going to be spending another year on Korn Ferry.

So it's pretty special and like I said, it all comes full circle coming back to this event, considering it's my hometown event and having all my friends and family with me.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

WILL ZALATORIS: Thanks.

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