

TOUR Championship

Wednesday, September 2, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference

JOHN BUSH: We'd like to welcome Xander Schauffele into the virtual interview room here at the TOUR Championship. Xander is making his fourth start at this event, and Xander, just a phenomenal record here at East Lake. You're first-ever rookie to win this event in 2017; you followed that up with a T7 in 2018; and then a runner-up finish last year. Just talk a little bit about East Lake and your comfort level here at this golf course.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, well, it's become a favorite of mine for several reasons, but obviously playing well -- us TOUR pros are usually pretty biased on what courses we like based on where we play well. I do like East Lake a lot. It is a special week. Getting here means you've had a pretty solid year.

I don't know what clicked my rookie year, but ever since then I've sort of been comfortable. It's a very difficult golf course, and if you're not kind of on with all aspects of your game, it'll punish you in bad ways.

JOHN BUSH: Speaking of playing well, just a model of consistency this year: 15 top 25 finishes in 17 starts; you come in No. 14 in the FedExCup standings.

Just talk a little bit about your goals for this week and then also the season that you've had.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, consistency was a goal kind of starting the year; cleaning up some short game things and making sure I sort of contended more was a goal, just two years ago, as well.

I haven't really contended that much, which has been a bummer. Like you said, I've had a few top-25 finishes, which isn't -- it sounds bad to say I don't really care about that, but I obviously want to contend and get the juices flowing on the weekend, which I've been missing out on quite often.

I haven't really been playing that great, unfortunately, so I am happy with how I've sort of been able to back-door some weekends and try and play a little bit better with the



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game I have during that time point.

For this week, hopefully some old memories will spark on property here and I can get something going. I'm starting, I think, seven back. It's an interesting format, obviously, having Dustin and Rahm up top starting at 10- and 8-under. I think last year I started at 4-under, this year at 3-under, so I don't really see the big change for me mentally. Just kind of go out and get it. I've got nothing to lose.

Q. I don't know if you remember, but back when everything was shut down we had you on one of these calls. The TOUR put you on a conference call; you were in San Diego not really doing a whole lot. I'm wondering if you can just think ahead to now and how far we've come and any surprises that we have gotten to this point where I think 13 weeks now golf has gone off pretty well, not a lot of issues. Just sort of your thoughts on how far we've come and what it took to get to this point.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I remember. I was in my living room in San Diego pretty bummed out with the current situation. In all honesty, not really surprised that we're here. I think our commissioner, Jay Monahan, the whole PGA TOUR staff, I think the TOUR does a lot of really good work with sponsors, face-to-face communication, just an open line of communication, transparency that the TOUR has with the sponsors.

It's no surprise that our tournaments wouldn't be able to be run without our sponsors jumping on board in this sort of COVID-like train of no fans and no sort of entertainment on-site where they're just putting up the event for us, and the TOUR has done a good job of collaborating with them and making sure everyone is happy.

I think it kind of speaks to our commissioner and all of our staff on how well our relationships are or how good our relationships are with our sponsors, because without them we couldn't do anything like this. I wouldn't be sitting here.

I think it's awesome that there hasn't been any surprises. I think it was a little bit weird at first. I think no fans is still very strange. No grandstands here at East Lake is a very strange look, as well. Besides that, I think we're all very blessed and all the players are just happy to compete and

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sit here and be able to tell you we can play for the big championship here.

Q. How do you avoid complacency during this and have there been any moments during this where you have caught yourself and realized, Oh, I can't do that; I've got to be careful?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just big picture. I mean, there's so much going on. I think for me it's easy. I'm a day-to-day guy. I make little goals sort of every day or I have little goals in place every day, and I think if you can kind of keep to the small things it's easier to capture the big picture at the end.

For me personally and my team, it's been fairly easy, I guess, to sort of stay focused.

Q. Just a question on that last word that you just used, the word "focused." You spoke about 2017 and winning at East Lake, and then you also spoke about being somewhat bummed that you weren't in contention more this year. I'm wondering about focus and sort of what you've learned about your ability to cultivate it, whether it's dietarily or meditation or hypnosis or whatever it is. You guys are out there for four and a half, five hours, and it is easy to kind of let the mind wander a little bit. What have you learned about yourself and focus and cultivating it, and do you feel like it's still kind of a work in progress?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I think it's always a work in progress. Golf is strange. You play for five hours. You focus for about 30 minutes, maybe 35 minutes. There's a lot of time in between to think of good or bad things. If you can kind of focus on the good things -- it's okay to let your mind wander when you're on the golf course. I think for me, the whole bummed aspect is sort of expectations get high.

As I've gotten better, trying to make myself a staple on TOUR, I expect more things from myself. I invest more in myself, which then hopefully is supposed to produce some results. When it doesn't, then you kind of get a little bit down on yourself, or I guess you can become a little critical.

It's always good to look back to my rookie year. I had that sort of blue-eyed, nothing-to-lose mindset. I don't feel that different. I'm here at East Lake again. I have nothing to lose. A little less blue-eyed, I guess, than before, but it's always a work in progress working on the mental aspect of the game.

I think everyone is different with how they handle things,

and until you can kind of find something that clicks for your own game, we'll just keep searching.

Q. You spoke earlier about how special East Lake is to you. When you think about the 18th hole, what is it about that from tee to green that makes that hole so unique, especially when you're closing on Sunday?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's a par-5. Usually there's a ton of fans kind of surrounding that last hole. The clubhouse is right there kind of setting the scene behind the green. It typically is a very important hole. There aren't a whole lot of birdie opportunities on the golf course for the most part unless you're driving the ball incredibly well, and 18 sort of is one of those shots where if you can hit a good tee shot you really set yourself up for success on the hole.

The job isn't done yet. Just hitting a good tee shot doesn't mean anything. It's just one of the holes -- it's a birdie hole here at East Lake, potentially an eagle hole, and I think everyone here is aware of that and we sort of -- there's a tough stretch of holes leading into the 18th, and it's almost like a sigh of relief that once you get there you can kind of get one back on the golf course that's been beating you up for most of the day.

It's a really cool finishing hole, I think, for a big tournament.

Q. You talked about having daily goals. I wonder what some of the concrete examples of those are. What do those look like on a given practice day or tournament day?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, so they're small goals. I've been trying to make my bed every day. Every time I wake up, I try and -- someone called stupid, there's been books about it, about how important it is to start the day with a win. I don't know if it's changing much, but for a few weeks now I've been trying to make my bed at home. My girlfriend makes the bed always. I'm pretty bad at that. But here on the road or hotel or airbnb or whatever it is I try and make my bed.

And when I'm practicing, just to make sure -- a few notes in my phone just to make sure I look up -- not look up, make sure I knock down some points in practice versus kind of sitting there and letting your mind wander and hit a few bad shots and kind of letting it affect your attitude, I guess.

So I think those are kind of the small little goals I try and make for myself during the day to make sure I feel like I had a productive and successful day.

Q. How about in terms of talking about your rookie year and thinking back to that time? Was it more fun

playing on the PGA TOUR your rookie year compared to now? How has that changed?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You know, it's still fun. I'm still having a ton of -- it's definitely going by very fast to say this is going to be the completion of my third or fourth year, I think. I don't even know.

But yeah, I think I was more happy maybe when I got here my rookie year versus expecting to get here, if that's a big difference. Maybe I should just go back to being very happy -- I mean, I am happy that I'm here, but I'm trying to be more focused.

My rookie year I was just sort of thinking back to the BMW and how fortunate I was to will my way through, and I was out here at East Lake, on a property I had never seen, and I was just like a kid at Disneyland walking around. There was only 30 guys. Sort of thinking, This is sort of the big goal everyone is looking forward to at the end of the year, and I'm fortunate enough to make it. Now I know the course. I'm trying to prepare properly. Do all the right things.

Golf is kind of funny like that. I think getting your head in the right mental space is important, and maybe I do need to go back to my rookie vibes to where I'm very happy-go-lucky, nothing really matters.

Because at the end of the day, nothing out here really does matter that much. It's just a result of what you do in the meantime.

Q. Have you played better or worse since you started making your bed?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You know, I would have to check. I don't think I've played a whole lot better, in all honesty, but I do feel like I start the day with a win, which is nice. I know my girlfriend would be happy that I'm making the bed out here on the road.

Q. There are about five or six guys in the Player of the Year conversation, Dustin, Rahm, J.T., et cetera. Who would get your vote?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I would have to look at the stats. I mean, I don't know how everyone has finished. I know J.T. has won three times.

Q. Dustin, obviously, Rahm --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think Rahm and Dustin have won two times, I think. So it's sort of -- it's always an interesting battle. Obviously Dustin has been playing really

hot as of late. Jon caught fire mid and late, and then J.T. started off very hot.

I think depending on how well everyone plays here could affect sort of where the vote goes, but I would need to get a better look at the stats to really see -- to get sort of an unbiased opinion on who's been playing the best and most consistent, I think.

Q. You've got about five guys, Brendon Todd in there, as well, who have won at least twice. I guess where I'm going with that is does it come down to this week in your eyes for something like that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you know, it could, I think, if any one of those people you mentioned were to win this week. I'm sure they would get the vote from everyone. It's as simple as that. It's seemingly a tight race. Yeah, I really haven't looked at the -- selfishly I've been trying to look at my own numbers and get better, so I really haven't looked at anyone else's stats too much to see how everyone else has done.

Q. And you do vote, yeah?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I do, yeah.

Q. Just a quick question about Las Vegas. You grew up in San Diego, I believe, and I think you ended up in Scottsdale, but Vegas has Collin Morikawa and Maverick McNealy and it plays a fairly prominent role on the PGA TOUR. Did you ever consider that as your home base, and what's been your experience playing there?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, funny enough, yeah, I grew up in San Diego; I still live in San Diego. Potentially going to get a house in Vegas, though. I was thinking of Florida, Dallas, Scottsdale, Vegas, and Vegas is close. My girlfriend's parents live in Vegas, as well, and we'll go visit them.

Whenever I have time I'll go with her to visit them during any holiday. Yeah, it's close to San Diego. It's just an hour flight. It's not far. I love San Diego, but taxes are a bit brutal, so I'll have to get out of there at some point.

But yeah, I'm definitely strongly considering Vegas.

Q. And have you talked to Collin and Maverick McNealy and people like that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I have not, no. I haven't talked to anyone. I know a few of my old college teammates have kind of bounced around in Vegas and whatnot, but I played

the Shriners once or twice in the Summerlin area there.
They have very nice practice facilities, and so it would be --
the transition shouldn't be too difficult.

JOHN BUSH: Xander, we appreciate your time, and best
of luck this week.

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