

Waste Management Phoenix Open

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Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Will Zalatoris

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Will, thank you so much for joining us here at the Waste Management Phoenix Open. You're making your first appearance at this event. Just some thoughts on competing here in Phoenix this week.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, you know, I know a lot guys that love this tournament, love the atmosphere. Obviously a little bit of a bummer that it's pretty scaled down, but obviously getting my first taste of it is pretty cool. I know first time I saw 16, even though they said it's a third of the height and only 2,400 people in there, already on Wednesday I'm hearing guys all the way over from the range chirping at players in the pro-am. It will be a lot of fun.

THE MODERATOR: You make your 16th start, four Top 10s in seven, including last week at the Farmer's Insurance Open. Can you just talk about the state of your game coming into this week?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I'm really excited. Obviously last week was a really nice week. I love Torrey Pines. Obviously a golf course suits me really well. And so far, just kind of keep on keeping on from last year. Still working on the same things. Just sticking basically to the same process. You know, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Obviously I'm in a really nice position where basically it's kind of win or enjoy the experience and learn something, get more experience. So I know that every single week I've got a chance to win and be a full member on tour it's an exciting time. I've got nothing to lose, and obviously it's a lot of fun to be out here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Do you have any history at this course, or is this your first time?

WILL ZALATORIS: No, actually we had some bad weather this Dallas probably three, four weeks ago, so I came out here and made a little mini vacation of it. Really that's the



extent that I've had here. I haven't played a tournament here before. Golf course is great. It's lush. It's in absolutely awesome shape.

Really looking forward to playing this place, another golf course that I kind of -- not so much demanding off the tee, but hitting it straight and far will give you a lot of wedge shots in, I guess.

Q. You kind of had a bit of a slow start after turning professional. How did you flip that switch? And how do you describe the run you're on?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I started working with Troy Denton and Josh Gregory about two, two and a half years ago, and we really have done the same thing. You know, sitting after my first year as a pro, having two of those guys and my agent and myself just sitting down talking and just basically trying to put a process together of how can we improve. I remember two years ago sitting there and they were trying to tell me to go play mini tour events, just playing something. Just keep playing as much as you can. Try to get some reps, some confidence, and really it's just kind of funny how after that first year of just -- you know, we were just trying to basically get status on the Korn Ferry Tour, then the following year I get status on the Korn Ferry Tour. We're talking about keep on keeping on, keep trying to understand yourself so you can fix yourself, turn the off weeks -- try to make some cuts even when you don't have your A game.

It's paid off, so it's really fun to see the progression over the past two years to go from Monday qualifiers to now trying to pick a schedule on the PGA TOUR.

Q. Do you feel like you belong out here?

WILL ZALATORIS: I do. I said that it's one thing to believe it, but I felt that after the Open and finishing sixth there on the toughest test in golf, it's one thing to think it, but once you actually do it, it just give you that much more confidence. It's an exciting time. I love being around these guys and playing against the best players in the world. I'm enjoying every minute of it.

Q. What did you hear about 16? What have you heard about 16 in all its glory instead of this tailored down hole that it is now?



WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I've heard it's amazing. Guys just absolutely enjoy the atmosphere. There is nothing like it. I know the guys have joked that some of the fans will dig up some of your deepest darkest secrets ask chirp it at you as you're playing. You have to enjoy it. That's what makes it so fun.

You know, even I think it's funny in the couple practice rounds I've played there is even some guys are joking. If you miss a green they're booing. This is just on a random Tuesday. So it's obviously -- I've had some friends that have said it's a tournament that they have always wanted to play in because of the atmosphere, and so obviously a lot of fun to be inside the ropes and get to experience it, even though it's a little bit of a scaled down version.

Q. Just was curious Rory McIlroy was speaking just before you, and this is his first time doing this tournament. He was saying it's kind of nice to break in with no fans or few fans as opposed to 300,000 of them. Do you share that sentiment, or would you rather just jump right into the deep end?

WILL ZALATORIS: Absolutely. It's nice to get kind of a scaled down version of it. You know, I've had my little -- I've played at some events where we have had stadium like holes, like the Byron Nelson when it was at Las Colinas. Everyone always said there is nothing like this here. I tend to agree with that. Being in a little bit of a milder setting, kind of getting my feet wet before we have 300,000 people out there.

At the same time, I'm looking forward to next year when we've got all those people and just experiencing the craziness.

Q. Is that the most you've ever played in front of at the Byron Nelson? What's the most people you've played in front of?

WILL ZALATORIS: Probably the Open in 2018 would be best guess. I think Shinnecock would be the most, but maybe the Nelson. The Nelson, that's event near and dear to my heart growing up in Dallas. Having friends and family on 17 and hearing people scream TCA was my high school, stuff like that, is something that -- you know, you make a lot of good memories out of that.

It's fun when you walk off a golf course and you're talking about something other than your round, stuff outside the ropes.

Q. I see on one of your forms you filled out that rest is one of your big hobbies. Do you feel rested this week?

WILL ZALATORIS: That was a little bit of a -- I came in and played on Monday. I've had two months off. I'm 24 years old. I don't know if -- I shouldn't say I'm tired. You know, I'm planning on playing as much golf as I can over the next six, seven weeks. I'm on week two. If I said I'm tired at 24 years old, I think I need to get my head checked.

Q. What have you done with that copy of the Congressional Medal that Byron Nelson was given? You have a copy, I guess.

WILL ZALATORIS: I do. Yeah it's sitting at my parents' house. They've got a really cool kind of table of I guess the medals, my U.S. Junior trophy, couple pieces signed by Mr. Palmer. The USGA gave had he a really cool wooden flag from the hole-in-one I made last year.

But, yeah, it's sitting at home. I got it from actually a friend who's a member out of (indiscernible). His name is Billy Weiss. He was one of the top guys at the Salesmanship Club of Dallas and he gave it to me before he passed away.

Yeah, something near and dear to my heart. Obviously every time I see it I'm pretty lucky to have it. Also a good reminder of Mr. Nelson and everything that he did for the game.

Q. What is your Super Bowl prediction?

WILL ZALATORIS: I don't know, have to ask Tony Romo.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much, Will, for your time, and good luck this week.

WILL ZALATORIS: Thank you. Appreciate it.

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