

Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at the Valspar Championship.

Xander, second appearance here. Can we get your opening remarks on being here.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's nice to be back. It feels great. It's nice to get back into the action. After a close call last week, sometimes it's nice just to get back to work and kind of put your head down and try to figure out a new golf course, so happy to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Looking back at last week, the runner-up finish at THE PLAYERS Championship, what are your positive takeaways from that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I played some really good golf. Overall, I was just there, again, in a good spot to win a golf tournament and didn't get it done. So I've accepted that and I have a couple nights to sleep under my belt now and feeling better than I did a couple days ago. So just excited to try and win again.

THE MODERATOR: With that we'll open it up for questions.

Q. When you're working through a swing and getting closer and whatever, what is your trust level when you get to Sunday? Does Sunday matter on trust?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: With my swing? Yeah, I thought I actually hit some better shots Sunday than Saturday, even though I shot 2-under and didn't shoot 7-under. The wind was a little bit trickier on Sunday later in that afternoon, and I kind of missed some of those important putts that I've made in the past when I've won a tournament.

So I did everything pretty solid that week. I think everyone that played pretty well. You just got snipped by Scottie in the end and he's been pretty good doing that as of late. Yeah, I would say the trust factor. It's a slow trickle. You

definitely -- I mean, I had some sort of F-it moments where wind was in, into my face, and in practice, I hit a bad shot or the day prior I hit a bad shot and really just have to trust what I'm working on and knowing that if I make a good pass at the ball, it will have a good result. A few moments there where I was able to build on some confidence just even moving forward.

Q. Were you hard on yourself Sunday night? Like, when you said you got a couple of nights sleep under your belt, was it because you beat yourself up a little bit or were you more accepting, knowing that there's a lot of other things going on?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I'm somewhere in the middle. I would say as I get a little bit older -- I think I'm always pretty tough on myself, but you kind of put it to rest to a certain extent. I would say I was more anxious sort of Sunday morning, and then you have all this adrenaline going and you feel like you're in the hunt and you feel like you have a really good chance to win and then you get this sort of really deflating flush. It's like this cortisol punch and then a complete downer after, even when you win, from what I remember a few years back. You're really amped up and you have all this emotion and adrenaline and then even after a win, you really have this sort of like calming flush, whether it's a gut punch or a celebration.

So I wouldn't say I was too hard on myself. I accepted it, it was overall pretty pleased with how I was able to play. Not being able to play super well since they moved THE PLAYERS tournament, so just another close call under my belt for now.

Q. You got enough going on in a final group, obviously, in contention like you were, how much harder does it make it when you see that Scheffler's making a run like he did, and obviously we know how well he's been hitting the ball and everything.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, no, I assumed someone would shoot low. It's been sort of happening all week where someone was shooting that 7-, 8-under, I saw Si Woo shot 8-under. Scottie shot 8-under, I'm not sure if one other person did, but there were some lower rounds



coming in. When you're chasing, it's, you can pile up those birdies and get into a nice rhythm. When you're up front, you're just watching it happen. So you try to be -- my dad sent me a text to try to be as proactive as possible and not reactive. I thought I did a pretty decent job of doing that, compared to prior, just didn't have it all there.

Q. I think it's a high compliment when you can win seven times out here and a lot of people will look at you and say, man, that guy can win more. What's your reaction to that, how do you wrestle with that, the split between the good finish and the trophy?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I just stay true to myself. I'm pretty aware of the path that I've been on my entire career. It's been a slower path, I would say. Sounds kind of weird, but just always consider myself sort of a slower learner, even when I was in college, I wasn't some world beater shooting 60 and playing in TOUR events when I was 16 or 17 or 18 years old even. I qualified for my first U.S. Open my rookie year. Didn't even do that. There's tons of guys who have qualified for U.S. Opens when they were 16. I always, that ate me up when I was a kid and it made me grind and push even harder, sort of have that chip on my shoulder. I just sort of look back on that, and I've had success, but to me I'm, I feel like the best is in front of me, and the only way it's not going to be in front of me is if I let all these things get to my head and not play my game.

Q. What have you seen lately in your game that you really like?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I like how the club's moving a little bit more. Chris has helped me a lot in that department, helped me understand sort of what my swing can do and how to sort of move the club a little bit better and more efficiently. That part's been sort of enjoyable. There's still times where I don't trust it, if I get into sort of a weird wind or into the wind and things of that nature, I sort of revert back to old. So that's something I'm still working on, hitting balls this morning on the range was nice, when it was blowing about 30 into a freezing wind, that was a nice wake up call for myself that I still need to do a lot of work, so, yeah.

Q. We've got an extra week because of the way the calendar falls with the Masters. I think you typically usually take a week off before Augusta. Are you looking at two weeks off this time?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes, I am.

Q. Is there any contemplation, did you have to kind of re-figure out what to do with your schedule?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Not really. I'm going to take two weeks off going into Augusta. I don't have some secret formula of what works. I've talked to plenty of major champions of how they have done it and some say that they have -- multiple guys that have won multiple majors say they have done it differently.

Q. That means nobody knows.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I think you kind of stick to what makes you feel comfortable. I'm going to be pretty comfortable. I'll be around my team and getting geared up and rest. After a week like last week it does take a lot more out of you. Even today, I'm laid back and relaxed, but I still feel a little more tired than a normal Tuesday. So just trying to regroup and make sure I'm ready to fire for Thursday.

Q. When we talk about strokes gained attitude, which was one of your favorite topics, how is it, is it the same as it was two, three years ago? Does it change depending upon how you're playing?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I would say it's pretty decent. The strokes gained expectations, if you want to throw another one in there, that's something that needs to be managed. You want the world for yourself and expect it from putting work in. But I would say my attitude's been pretty solid. You would probably have to ask Austin, he's probably a little bit more objective than I am.

Q. How's Austin's attitude?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's a bit dodgy at times. No, I'm kidding. He's great. Only has good things to say after a tough week like last week.

Q. I believe the time you did play here you played pretty well, but it was only the one time you played. What are your impressions of this golf course and why was it a good fit this year?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I just moved to Florida, so it's nice to be able to drive with my wife and my dogs from event to event to event these last couple weeks. I actually came out here my rookie year from the West Coast, and I was first alternate and just sat around all week. I've actually played the course a few times more than just the once, two years ago, I believe. But, yeah, it's a great stop. It's a really hard golf course, it's very demanding. You have to plot your way around the property and hit really quality shots. I think you're really rewarded for hitting good golf shots on this golf course because the rough can be penalizing. Some of those tee shots from what I even

remember two years ago are much tighter than I can recall. So, good golf will win this tournament.

Q. You mentioned the advice from your dad after THE PLAYERS to commit, execute and accept. Which one of those three do you think is the toughest to deal with and how would you say that philosophy has kind of shaped your career?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, he even tried to adjust it. All these things have come from my dad, this steady drip caves a stone, that's from my dad as well. Everything that's sort of up in my brain mentally has been fed to me by my dad, and probably from some sort of German philosopher way back when. Yeah, he even wanted to change it to commit, accept, execute, because you sort of have to accept before you hit the shot, no matter what happens. But just from a long time, even when I was nine, he made a little thing for me that had the CEA in it and it sort of had a nice ring to it. So I feel like it sort of applies to everything that I do on and off the course, and it's a really simple way to think of things and pretty effective, if you can make it work.

Q. If Long Beach State is to face San Diego State in the tournament what's the game plan, who are you rooting for?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I was actually, last week I had -- it was nice -- I'm not a huge fan of watching sports on this coast, but I was sweating out those SDSU games, the quarters and semis and then we were on course for, unfortunately, that last one. And then I had my old teammate Kevin, another caddie staying with me last week, and we were sweating the Long Beach game. So that was cool for them to get in the tournament, winning conference there. I'm not really sure. Hopefully just root for a competitive game. I think the fact that I spent three more years at SDSU would probably make me a little bit more loyal to that squad.

Q. The steady drip caves the stone, was that the first time you brought that out in public?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't know. I say a lot of things in this room that I can't remember, or in these rooms, that I can't remember, to be honest. It's something that we've talked about for a really long time, ever since I was a young kid and sort of not feeling like I was accomplishing as much as I should, that's something that he would sort of hammer into my head.

Q. Off topic, or completely different direction, do you have any sense that, like last year it was referred to as this bridge year in terms of where the TOUR is going.

Do you have a sense that what we're doing this year is set in stone for the next couple years, and have you formulated any kind of an opinion on fuller field, cuts, no cuts, do you like the way it's going?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I haven't thought too much about it. On the spot, I feel like there seems to be a bit more of a divide than normal in terms of the cuts, no cuts, fuller field, smaller field. I think there isn't a big enough sample size to really tell what's right and what's wrong. I think everyone needs to understand that we are entertainers, to an extent, and we have to be loyal to the fans and produce a good product for TV ratings and things of that nature. That's sort of, now that we have a foot in the business department, I think that's sort of the direction things are going.

With the meeting yesterday, I don't know if you referred to that with the PIF, there's more questions looming, and I don't think many players are too privy of information. Jay's been trying to be transparent with e-mails based on what's happening, not giving, he, obviously, you can't reveal information of talks that are ongoing to the membership, which obviously makes sense, but he's been trying to be as transparent as possible on that front.

I think this is probably bridge, I would say, leaning more that way, more than set in stone. I think the TOUR's just trying to find the right way to push forward, and it's going to be impossible to keep everybody happy, but hopefully some sort of unification at the end of the day and then with that will be TV ratings. I think you can kind of put the horse in front of the carriage at that point and then sort of just chum along, versus sort of feels like we're sort of guessing a little bit on how to get it done, and it's understandable, because I don't think anyone has sort of the right answer to keep everyone happy.

Q. If someone asked you what you thought golf would look like in three years, would you even have a reasonable answer?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: My guess would be that we would all be playing together again. I think that's what fans would want, I think that's what TV would want, and golf as a whole would probably be better off that way. Just like all sports when they have been fractured, they have always come back together. So I'm just going to lean on the side of history.

Q. Would you, being in your position, be annoyed at someone from LIV who was able to come back and keep all the money that you turned down or chose not to take, however you look at it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think that goes into the accept boat for me, if we're going to run that sort of scheme on your question here. I have to accept sort of any decision I was going to make a long time ago regarding to what you just mentioned with money and moving and them coming back and stuff of that nature. So I'm very content with where I sit right now and I would have chosen otherwise if I -- I don't have any regrets of what I've done or what I'm doing, so I'm sleeping just fine at night knowing where I stand.

Q. You got to experience a really cool moment in Tokyo a few years back, winning Olympic gold. Where is that at this point of the year on the radar, and as you look at the top American finishers just last week, how tough a team is that to make?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, people have asked me sort of, like, You're not exempt for the Olympics? And I was, like, Do you think Michael Phelps was exempt? He had to swim and qualify every single time he made it back to the Olympics, so -- which is even more impressive. I think it's, part of the process of competing in the Olympics, is the qualifications period. Much more stress for other sports, I would say, than ours, just because we do have an ongoing season that we can compete in, versus -- it's not like I'm sitting here getting ready for four years and then playing one qualifier and it's like make-or-break type deal or Worlds or doing stuff of that nature to keep my ranking up to qualify. So I have a lot of respect for the other athletes that have to do that. So, yeah, if you look at our team, the World Rankings is a bit of a free for all right now for the American side. I'm in right now, and I intend on still, you know, playing at a very high level and qualifying for Paris and getting back and giving myself a run at it again. So, but, yeah, it's definitely at the back of my mind right now, but I definitely want to qualify, obviously.

Q. As the owner of a gold medal, do you remain hungry to do it again? Is it the same as it was chasing it the first time?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Two is always better than one, yeah.

Q. Was that experience in the Olympics better than you could have dreamed?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, any time you can represent your country is pretty unique. For me personally it was more unique with my dad's history, wanting to be an Olympian and using his teachings of when he was trying to qualify himself way back when for my golf sort of teachings. So, yeah, for me it's a little bit -- personally, it's more special and, yeah, any time you can put on the red,

white and blue, for me is an awesome experience, whether it's in a team event or in the Olympics or anything. So, you know, I definitely get up for those events.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Xander.

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