

# U.S. Open Championship 2022

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Brookline, Massachusetts, USA

The Country Club

## Will Zalatoris

### Flash Interview



THE MODERATOR: Will Zalatoris, 1-under 69. Can you talk us through that final round?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I battled like crazy. Obviously, you say that about every U.S. Open round you play, but considering where I drove it today, the fact I was even under par was obviously pretty nice.

I thought I made a lot of nice putts just to keep myself in it. Stealing one on 9, saving par on 13. I really felt great with the putter all week, and I hit a great putt on 18. It just happened to hang out there.

It was fun, man. Matt's shot on 18 is going to be shown probably for the rest of U.S. Open history because that -- I walked by it, and I thought that going for it was going to be ballsy, but the fact that he pulled it off and even had a birdie look was just incredible.

So hat's off to him. He played great all week obviously and gave a solid round today.

#### Q. Did you think you made that putt on 18?

WILL ZALATORIS: I did. With about six feet to go, I thought I had it. I was just checking my phone earlier, and a bunch of people were saying that Zinger had said that everyone missed that put high. I was the closest one all day. I was, like, thanks for the consolation prize.

#### Q. Is this a different feeling for you than Southern Hills?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, a little bit. I battled all week. I was pretty sporadic off the tee here and there. I had spurts of really good and spurts of really bad.

I think this one probably is going to take a little bit more processing than that one. Like I said, I've got no regrets. I thought I played great all week, especially getting off to the start that I did today.

It stings obviously. Obviously to have three runner-ups so far in my career in majors, but keep knocking on that door.

We're obviously doing the right things. I'd pay a lot of money for about an inch and a half, and I'd probably be a three-time major champion at this point. We'll just keep doing what we're doing.

#### Q. How long did it sting before, the previous runner-ups?

WILL ZALATORIS: I think this one -- I'm just fresh coming off of 18 because I thought I had it, and it just happened to stay out there. This one hasn't sunk in.

Masters was pretty special, just obviously being there, considering that seven months prior I was playing on the Korn Ferry, and then having a chance to win the Masters.

Yeah, this one's -- I honestly don't know what to take from this yet. I was pretty pleased just because I'm known for my ball-striking. I'm sure all the Instagram morons are going to say it has something to do with my left wrist flexion coming down, but I promise you, it's got nothing to do with it.

I think just keep doing what we're doing. This one stings for sure, but I know that we're going to get this.

#### Q. Real quick, club on 16 and kind of your emotions at that point.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I hit 6 and pushed it about 20 feet. Tip your cap, say thank you. I knew that I had a chance there to get it going.

I hit a good putt on 17. I just had a really hard time getting uphillers to the hole this week just because they're so uphill. The greens are so fast that you're so used to having ones that are trickling back down the hill. I left so many straight uphill putts short this week. I think it's something that -- I made good putts. It's just the nature of the beast.

These greens are brutal. Like I said, to shoot 67, 69 on the weekend, I'll take that in any major championship.

#### Q. You've been close obviously a bunch. Was there something today that you felt the near misses at

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**Southern Hills or the Masters that you drew on that you improved on today? Like that you did better than other times?**

WILL ZALATORIS: I think I'm just more comfortable with it now. Ryan mentioned to me on the 1st tee today that when we played Saturday in the final group at the Masters -- my first Masters where I finished runner-up, he and I were both way more nervous in that situation just given that we hadn't even been in a final group on TOUR yet.

So I think today, even though I got off to kind of a rough start, I just felt comfortable all day. Even kind of being behind the eight ball and having to save par, it's just a tough golf course. Accept bogey whenever you can, and I happened to save par a few times.

So I think the comfort level being in these situations is just going to get better and better. I've already been asked, how nervous were you on the putt on 18? It's like I've got nothing to lose. It either goes in or it doesn't.

I'm not happy with finishing second. It's not like I'm trying to coax that down there. I'm obviously trying to make it. The comfort level is there, especially now that I know I can do this. I just have to keep waiting my turn.

**Q. We probably watched you guys sit and wait on 15 tee for ten minutes. What's that like in a major when you're tied for a championship, there's all this nervous quiet tension in the air, everyone is wondering what to say, what conversation to make? What was that like?**

WILL ZALATORIS: Matt and I were just making jokes. I saw his brother Alex. Obviously he went to Wake Forest on the side. After the long wait, Billy said, play well today, boys, like we're on the 1st tee. It was fun.

I tried to stay loose. My hip has been locked up all week, and I was just trying to make sure I stayed fresh with the cold air. So I really just stood there and stretched.

It didn't affect either one of us, obviously given Matt made birdie. I hit a pretty good tee shot, but obviously two yards offline out here doesn't really pay off much.

**Q. Are you glad it's a short layoff until the Open?**

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think my head's still here right now. That's one that is going to be obviously incredibly special being at St. Andrews for the 150th. I think letting this one soak in, take a few days off, might even take the whole week off and just kind of recover and then kind of get my mind back into it.

This one hurts in particular pretty hard, but it's motivating. I've got to keep doing what I'm doing. I know I'm going to get one sooner or later.

**Q. When you talked about taking a peek at his ball on 18, did you then imagine he's probably going to do this, and then you saw the shot that he actually executes? Does that cause any kind of recalculation of what your plan is in that moment when you see a shot pulled off like this?**

WILL ZALATORIS: No. At that point, it's match-play, and he's 1-up going into 18. You can't play match-play against someone all day because someone else may do something. At that point, you have to assume that he's going to hit that shot. When he pulled it off, tip your cap, well done. Now I have to make birdie and hope he misses.

I painted that shot right over the flagstick and just hit it a little deep. That golf shot was 1 in 20, at best. To pull it off in that situation is incredible.

**Q. Can you describe for laypeople just how difficult, like why that shot was so difficult?**

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, he had to cut it around kind of an island of rough in the middle of that bunker. Probably -- I don't know how far he had. I'd say roughly around 160, 170. So he's probably hitting a 7- or a 6-iron and opening it up, carving it off probably left edge of the green. And to get it to be just past pin high, like I said, the fact he had a look was just awesome.

Like I said, that's a shot that's going to be shown for -- when they show the highlights of future U.S. Opens, that's one that's going to be shown because that was just incredible.

**Q. You're a super young guy, and you've already been in three of the most intense environments that any sport can offer. How does the intensity of these experiences -- is there anything else in life that can compare to the intensity of these experiences?**

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I don't have kids yet or I don't have a pregnant wife yet, so I'm assuming that's probably got to be the closest thing.

It's something that I've wanted to do my entire life. So the nerves, honestly, it's an excitement because you've imagined being in this situation your entire life, and now I've basically been in it three times in a major, once on TOUR. That's why you play the game. There's nothing like it.

Every golfer who wants to win a tournament, you can say they're a little sick in the head because they're just adrenaline junkies. You want that putt on 18 to get into a playoff or to win a tournament or whatever it is.

Yeah, obviously, today is Fathers Day, and I'm sure I probably took a year or two off my dad's life, unfortunately. It was a blast.

**Q. I see you have Frances Ouimet and Eddie Lowery on your shirt today. What role did your caddie play in this final round?**

WILL ZALATORIS: Ryan's been with me for about three years now. He's basically been an older brother to me. He's been there through the ups and the downs. He's my biggest supporter when I'm out there. He's done such a good job with keeping me in the moment, especially in these situations.

We're out there cracking jokes whenever the tension gets high. Yeah, he's a brother for life. Obviously I know he'll probably read this, and he'll probably give me a hard time for saying nice things about him considering I don't say it that often to his face, but he's a great friend and someone that I'm grateful for.

**Q. Phillips had a lot of top ten in majors before he broke through. Jason Day, nine top tens in majors before winning. What's the key to being a guy like that as opposed to guys with countless top tens and haven't been able to break through?**

WILL ZALATORIS: I guess I've got to just keep doing what I'm doing. Frankly, at the PGA was kind of a -- I wouldn't say a surprise, but it was considering where I was Monday through Wednesday, the fact I had a chance to win and making those putts coming in was pretty nice.

It's just little things. It's not the same thing at every single one. We're talking inches. It's not like I finished runner-up by four or five a few times. It's been one for all three. So I've just got to keep doing what I'm doing. I've got to keep knocking on the door because eventually -- like I said earlier, the comfort level is there.

I'm not afraid to be in the lead. I've got nothing to lose out here. So let's just keep doing what we're doing and eventually we're going to get one.

**Q. Can you just describe that mental process when you have to convince yourself that and you've said all the right things and you've done exactly what you should have done and you have shown the play every time, but what do you have to tell yourself in those**

**moments?**

WILL ZALATORIS: I'm three shots away from practically being a -- having a chance of being a three-time major champion. A bounce here or there.

This week my driving was atrocious. I think part of that might have had a little bit to do with the hip. I thought that I -- the fact that how bad I drove it this week, to have a chance to win, I'm very pleased with.

All the other times, it's been maybe missing a four- or five- or six-footer. I guess technically I didn't three-putt once this week, and I didn't have a double. Typically that leads to playing well in a U.S. Open. So that's something that -- the recipe's there. The game's there. Like I said, I've just got to wait my turn.

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome to the stage John Bodenhamer to present the runner-up medal to Will.

JOHN BODENHAMER: Great playing this week. Proud to present you with the medal. See you at Los Angeles Country Club.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Will. Congratulations.

WILL ZALATORIS: Thanks, guys.

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