

The 152nd Open

Press Conference

Tuesday, 16 July 2024

Xander Schauffele



ED HODGE: We welcome Xander Schauffele here, the 2024 PGA champion. As a major champion, how much confidence does that give you coming into Royal Troon?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Probably a little more than before. I've never been on property here. Just trying to learn the course as quickly as I can.

I really enjoy playing links golf and all the challenges that come with it. It's always fun for me to come here and play golf.

THE MODERATOR: Your seventh Open experience, tied second in 2018 in Carnoustie. What lessons have you learned over the years coming into this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think links golf, there's a certain attitude that you need to have to play at a high level. That comes with playing links golf. That's sort of the first thing I learned when I was here.

Back home in the States when it starts raining, people always feel like, oh, one wave gets the rain, and out here it can rain the entire day, and it's just part of it. It's something we're not used to playing in the States. With that rain comes a lot of wind, as well.

I really enjoy the challenge of it. This is my seventh start now, and I don't feel like quite a veteran on links golf yet, but again, I really do enjoy it, and I think it helps me learn quicker.

Q. You mentioned learning the lesson of having the right attitude. Was there a day conditions-wise or a shot that really taught you I need to have this attitude out here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it was -- when you play parkland golf a lot, you feel like you need to be perfect and on. Not that you need to be perfect or on, but on a typical links golf course, there's always several ways to play a hole. If the weather gets really bad, you just have to, as always, take the bunkers out of play and really try and plot your way around the property.

It doesn't have to be super pretty. You don't have to hit the center of the face all the time. When it's 50 degrees and raining, center contact doesn't even feel like it anyways. So just kind of

place the ball around the property and really just try and get it in the hole in as few shots as possible.

Q. What have you learned about this place in the few days you've been here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I've played 18 holes now. I played nine and nine. The front nine -- it's a tale of two nines a little bit. The front nine is much more straightforward. The back nine's a bit trickier.

Overall, I feel like it's a pretty straightforward Open Championship venue. It's pretty fair and pretty straightforward. I'm playing the back nine again. There's a few tee shots there that are a little uncomfortable, so I wanted to see that side again.

Overall, I think it's a really fair test of golf. If it's really windy, it will be really fun. If the wind lays down, I think that's how you saw some low scores back then in '16.

Q. I'm trying to get a sense of what do you think the mood is like of players now when we get to the last major of the year, compared to late March/April when the major championship season is in front of you in terms of optimism or whatever. And how much difference does it make when you've already got one?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Makes me feel a lot better that I have one now. Everyone is just trying to put themselves in a position to win. You try and get yourself in the right head space. Everyone is pushing. For us on the PGA TOUR, our playoffs are right around the corner. On the European Tour, there's still a lot more golf to be played until their playoffs and finals. For us, it's nearing the homestretch here, so there's a lot of people that are super focused and trying to tune their game in to the best of their ability.

Q. Rory's caddie Harry Diamond gets a lot of flak. You're another guy who has someone that you grew up with or a friend on the bag. Is that ever tough, being a friend and a boss?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It can be. I think most guys who have their friends as caddies, they at some point have to take one of the hats off. It's got to be a working relationship as well.



I'm lucky to have Austin. He's done a great job. I believe he's one of the hardest working caddies out here.

I love when we don't have much information in a book because I know he's going to go out there and walk 25,000 steps to get all that info for me.

In terms of mistakes and things of that nature, it can be tricky, but open communication is the best way to solve those problems. I feel like most of the guys out here do a pretty good job of that.

Q. What is it you look for in a caddie? I know you're saying obviously Austin does a great job of it. For you what makes a great caddie?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just a good sound board. I need someone to talk to every once in a while. All that stuff that he has to do on the golf course, I expect him to do those things, and he does them.

Then besides that, be a distraction when I need it. Since he's my friend, he can provide that more than a stranger could.

Q. You're paired alongside Tiger Woods on Thursday. I wonder what you make of recent comments suggesting that he doesn't know when to quit and he's been described as like a tribute act now in certain areas. I wonder if that has any relevance to you and playing alongside him and how you see him as a player now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: He's still El Tigre to me. He's still wearing that red on Sunday. Yeah, I just heard some of those comments that were said by Colin. Whether it's his honest opinion or not, the game of golf needs him, needs him desperately.

Selfishly, I want him to play as long as possible. It just helps all of the guys out here, just with the amount of eyeballs that someone like Tiger Woods brings to golf.

He's still got a lot of fight in him. I think he's pretty honest with his own assessment. He'll hang them up when he feels he's ready, and he's still got a lot of bite and a lot of fight in him. I'm not too worried about him, and I look forward to playing with him the first two days.

Q. Is he still the biggest draw in golf then? He's the biggest name, biggest celebrity?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, if you just want to come out and try to watch a single shot on Thursday and Friday, you can be my guest (laughter).

Q. What were your first memories of playing links golf and

maybe your best memories of playing links golf?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: In the U.S., we have Bandon Dunes. That's probably the closest thing to links that I've ever played. Maybe it's a little bit better now since it's a lot older. I played it - shoot, I'm old now - probably 15 years ago. Makes me feel really old saying that.

Yeah, 15 years ago. I'm sure the course has settled in more. I hear it takes some time for these courses to settle in and things of that nature. Bandon Dunes was rather new when I went. You played the ball down, and the ball was running and Pacific Dunes and Bandon Dunes were the two courses built. Now there's 10.

It was cold and rainy, and I remember playing every hole in the wind and rain. My rain gear was completely irrelevant at some point, and I just kept going. I was 13 or 14 or 15 years old-ish and had the time of my life. It was something that I've never experienced.

I just expect it when I go to play links golf. I expect bad weather for it to play tough and for people to complain and whine. If you have a good attitude, you get that edge.

Q. There was a theme in Valhalla, how many times you have to be close to win, and then you won. So how close were you at Carnoustie? What are your memories of Carnoustie?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Carnoustie was interesting. It was such an interesting approach for me. I went to Germany to my dad's hometown and my brother's hometown and a few other cities in Germany.

I actually remember I was in really bad golf shape. I think I shanked my first shot on the range at Carnoustie Sunday night. It was pretty eye opening. I was in Germany drinking beer and eating pretzels for four days straight before that.

My expectations were so low on how I was going to perform, and I actually played great. I had that crying baby on 17 there. I was in a bad spot regardless, but that probably didn't help in that situation.

I was close. Thinking back to it, I was pretty blue eyed in that moment. At the time, I just remember Jordan and I shot a million on the front nine, and we were just trying to salvage the tournament. I was happy with the way I fought back. That's sort of what I take from that tournament.

Q. Could I ask you about the Postage Stamp, that dinky little par-3 in a world of ever-lengthening golf courses?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's refreshing. It's really hard. I played it for the first time today, so pretty fresh in my mind.



Yeah, it's really nice. Most of the holes we play are 255 yards. It's kind of cool to have a hole that's super scary that is that short, and I think it's going to provide a lot of entertainment if that wind picks up off the left.

Q. Is that more fun to play? What challenges does it present? Is it more psychological than anything else?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Fun if you're just playing with the boys, I think. I don't know about for a tournament. Trying to win a major championship, and you have a little hole like that that can mess your entire week up.

It's more fun than playing a 250-yard hole with no wind, but it's probably harder.

Q. Xander, Tiger was in earlier. He's added some lead weight to his putter. Rory is tinkering with his stroke just a little. These greens are so much slower than what you've been facing all year. Do you make any major adjustments when they're this pace?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I haven't. I brought weights for my putter, basically lead tape essentially. I haven't yet. I played last week at Renaissance, and they were actually faster than what the greens are here.

It's Tuesday, and it feels a little late to do it, but I may do a little bit more putting tomorrow and see how I feel and then go from there. It all depends on the wind as well. I think, when it's uphill into the wind out here, it plays really slow, and it's something that we're not used to.

Just because you hit a green or you hit a shot to 40 to 50 feet back home, it doesn't really feel like too much of a deal. But out here, it has your full attention with a crosswind or downwind or into the wind. So I may add weight to it, but I haven't done it yet.

Q. You just said Tuesday is a little bit late to make a change. Is there a time during major weeks when you're at the prep and the swing work is done, like it's go time?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It just depends on what kind of position you're in. You'd like to be done before you arrive on property and just play your rounds and go through your process and rest up as much as possible and see your physio and your trainer and get your body right and get your mind right at the end of the day.

It just varies. I just referenced Carnoustie where I was having beers and eating sausage and pretzels and everything that I've never done before to get ready for a thing just to get on the right time zone, and I felt like that was important. I guess it

paid off.

Usually when you're swinging well going into the week, it's helpful in majors.

Q. Did the idea of winning a major prior to winning a major seem daunting to you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Say that again.

Q. Before winning PGA, did the idea of winning a major feel more daunting than maybe a normal Tour event?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You put more emphasis on it, but daunting is not really how I would view it. We're playing golf out here; you know what I mean. It's not like anyone's dying after they don't shoot the round of their life.

Yeah, you build it up in your head, and it becomes something, especially when you're close and you haven't won. I was able to put that aside and really just treat it like a tournament, a normal tournament.

Q. Now that you have won one, do you feel more at ease with that process, I guess?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: In this room, maybe. It's easier to face you guys and talk about how I've done it; you know what I mean. You guys can't ask me that question anymore about how I've never won one. So...

Q. What's the most daunting thing you've ever faced?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Getting my Tour card probably. It's sort of a reality check. You build up your whole career to -- what's the most daunting thing I've ever faced? I'll repeat it. Yeah, getting my Tour card, I'd say. Your whole life, everyone tries to help you, and you kind of become an adult, and you get out of college, and all of a sudden, it's all fun and games, and then you're like, I need to make a living for myself because I haven't done anything else my entire life. So how do I know how to do anything else if I've only played golf?

That's probably the most pressure I've felt in my life is to get a Tour card and maintain it and then push on.

Q. I need to follow up on that. Your relationship with Austin and the fact that he live all that time with you, and you went through those times together. How did that help in your relationship with him as a caddie?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I give him a lot of free passes, I feel like. We made a lot of mistakes together early on. I knew we were going to make a lot of mistakes early on, and so did he. We were on the same page when we made the mistakes, and

we talked about them after rounds.

We've missed nine cuts in a row, and we roomed together. So we put our friendship to the test, I'd say, in those moments, and we survived them, and we were able to laugh at the end of those nine weeks and able to get our card at the end of that that year anyways.

That definitely brought us together closer, and we have a pretty good bond that's probably impossible to break, I'd say, regardless of what happens in the future.

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