

The 152nd Open

Press Conference

Sunday, 21 July 2024

Xander Schauffele



MIKE WOODCOCK: I'm delighted to welcome the 2024 Champion Golfer of the Year Xander Schauffele to the interview room.

Xander, congratulations. Tremendous performance. Can you sum up what this means to you and how it feels to hold the Claret Jug aloft?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's an honour. I've always dreamt of doing it. That walk up 18 truly is the coolest with the yellow leaderboards and the fans and the standing ovation. It really is one of the coolest feelings I've ever had in my life. I got chills walking down and quickly had to zap myself back into focus because the tournament wasn't over yet.

I can't wait to enjoy this with my family.

Q. They say winning the first major is very hard but winning the second is harder. It didn't seem that way for you? Is this the start of millions?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It was hard. It was very difficult. I think winning the first one helped me a lot today on the back nine. I had some feeling of calmness come through. It was very helpful on what has been one of the hardest back nines I've ever played in a tournament.

I mean, it's a dream come true to win two majors in one year. It took me forever just to win one, and to have two now is something else.

Q. You mentioned your family. They weren't really there in Valhalla quite as much in full force. I guess how did it feel to embrace it with them?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, in the end it makes it feel like it's all worth it. My wife's here, both my parents, my brother, and my uncle. My day ones, as I would say. They're all here to -- they haven't enjoyed it with me yet, but tonight will be awesome.

Q. Where does that final round rank among the best rounds that you've ever played?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: At the very tip top. Best round I've

played.

Q. Xander, was there a moment, looking at leaderboards, where you started to dream a little, or was it not till 18?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, after I birdied 14, I was able to hit the fairway, and there's a big board right there on 15 by the green. I was sitting there kind of peeking at it.

I was looking at the boards all day. I've tried it in the past where I haven't done it, but at Valhalla I was looking at them all day, and I really wanted to embrace it. That's what I did there, so I told myself to do the same thing here. Really just look at it and embrace it and take it for what it is and move on.

I looked up at the board there, and I knew, if I could birdie 16 -- I birdied 7 today -- or 6, sorry. That was the first par-5 I birdied all week. I was like, if I can birdie my second par-5 of the week on 16, that would be special.

Then as soon as I hit the green on 17, I had to really try and focus really hard to not let my mind wander too much.

Q. Was that chip on 16 a little bit scary over the bunker?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it was scary because it wasn't neutral. The grass was actually growing in. So I just tried to treat it like I was in Florida and go down and get the ball there. Something moving there, I figured I'd try to learn something off some grain. I know fescue isn't grain, but you can kind of play some of the shots similar.

Q. What was the club on 14?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: 14, the par-3, that was a 6-iron.

Q. What was more fun, making a six-footer for birdie and having everyone lose their mind on the 18th or having that walk that you described? What's the difference in the feelings you had?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's very different. Different times of stress. If there's a stress metre, I definitely peaked at different moments on the 18th hole today. The fact that it was a little bit of help and I could hit a 3-iron, 8-iron in versus driver, 4-iron, lob wedge or sand wedge or whatever it was.



There's calmness and super stressful moments when you're trying to win a major championship. I felt them in the past, the ones I didn't win, and I let them get to me. Today I felt like I did a pretty good job of weathering the storm when I needed to.

Q. You made a strong point about being here for the last couple of weeks in Scotland. How important is that to you in terms of preparation for this week? We've had four seasons in one day at some point. Is that key to be here as early as possible to try and prepare for this?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think so. I think it's essential. Just the time zone itself is a big thing to overcome. Then when you move along to the fescue and the deep bunkers and the finer sand, and then you talk about the wind, and then the greens being slower, literally everything is completely different than what we do over in the States.

If you can just give yourself an extra week to try and acclimate, I think it's a no-brainer.

Q. Just to follow up on that question, there's a perceived wisdom that you win a major championship in America, but to win one here, an Open Championship on links, makes you a complete golfer. Do you feel now that's true you're a complete golfer, and what does it mean to win it in the Home of Golf?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't know if that's true or not, but I'm definitely going to believe that's true because here we are.

Yeah, it's a completely different -- like we just talked about, it's a completely different style of golf. It makes you play shots and have different ball positions. There's so much risk/reward when the wind's blowing 20 miles an hour and it starts raining. There's so many different variables that come into play. It truly is an honour to win this.

To me it's big. To me winning the Scottish Open was big because it meant my game could travel. So to double that up and win a major in Scotland is even cooler.

Q. Along those same lines, many of us sort of romanticize links golf and Open golf, but I wonder if you feel that now yourself, if there's a magic to it for you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I always felt it coming over. I talked earlier in the week that my first time playing any sort of links style was when I was 13 or 14 at Bandon Dunes, and I immediately loved it then. I'm a competitor. I like to challenge myself. I like challenges in general. If you tell me I can't do something, I'm going to try and do it.

A kid growing up in San Diego, to tell him you can't play in the wind and rain, that would be sort of the peak there for a kid there on the West Coast in 75 and 5-miles-an-hour wind. It's a really cool thing for me and my team.

Q. To follow up, when you came in yesterday dripping wet, you said how much you love your job; your job comes with a lot of freedom that most people can't relate to. But I wonder if you might expand on that a little bit.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, not to get negative, but there's a lot of parts of my job that I don't like, too. The freedom is just being outside. It's one of the coolest jobs in the world. You get to be outside in the sun. I don't have to sit at a desk. I'm my own boss...most of the time. Those are some freedoms that I definitely don't take for granted.

Q. Xander, when was the last time you got really visibly angry on a golf course during a tournament?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm not sure. I think a long time ago I just kept tracking my rounds where I got angry, like truly deep down angry, and my mistakes started compounding. I really can't tell you. I get angry, but to me it's all about the next shot. I know it's cliché and people try to talk about it, but you really can make yourself happy if you try to hit a good shot as your next one versus just snowballing the wrong way.

Easier said than done, of course, but I've never broken a club, but I've gotten pretty pissed off on property. You can probably ask Austin. He's like an elephant. He keeps track of all these things in his mind.

Q. Just related to that, your California mellowness, do people mistake that maybe there's more fire inside than we can see?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I like -- I mean, everyone in my family knows how competitive I am. I may not be the guy running around fist pumping, but that's just who I am. I kind of know how I need to be to perform at a high level.

The same way I don't get really angry, I also don't let myself get too over the moon because to me it's the same thing. If I'm sitting there snapping a club, that would be the same as me running around fist pumping. It would take too long for me to adjust before my next shot to hit a good one. I've kind of embraced this sort of SoCal, laid-back kid, but there's obviously a fire burning deep within, or you wouldn't have a couple majors sitting by your side.

Q. Similar question to one that's gone before, but I wonder if you could maybe talk to us a little bit about winning that trophy in particular, the history, the tradition that comes with that, to see your name on that trophy and having won it

in Scotland, obviously the Home of Golf?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I haven't really -- I've been sort of running around a bit since that final putt has been holed. I was in the waiting room for maybe 10 minutes. I was just informed, just on the tip here, dating back to the first Open at Prestwick there, if you start looking at it, which I will definitely have time to tonight, I think it will all really sink in and settle in.

Right now I'm just -- I feel very -- you know, pretty speechless when it comes to -- if I sat in a room by myself with this, I would just stare at it and gaze and really try to take it all in.

Q. You mentioned the fire in the belly and the ambition that you have. Before this season had you ever thought about completing the Career Grand Slam? If not, are you going to start thinking about it going forward?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, before I had any majors, it's something I've always wanted. I'm one step closer and still have a long way to go. But if you don't see yourself doing it, you're never going to do it.

Q. Players that have won two majors in a season recently, like in the last decade, like Rory and Jordan and Brooks, they're largely regarded as the best players of this generation. Would you say now that you've sort of cemented yourself as one of the best of this generation?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't really think that way, I guess. I think the guys in the States sort of know how these pressers go. Pretty much that's you guys' job to speculate on those things. I'm just trying to win as many of these things as I can and play the best golf as I can and be a decent guy.

So I'll let you ponder that one.

Q. You've said in the past that you kind of used the negativity of others outside your circle as a motivation to perform. Now that you're going to be a universally acclaimed double major winner, what do you do for motivation now that you can't feed off the negativity of others because there won't be a whole lot after this?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: If you look hard enough, you can always find it. It's something, when you feel like you need an extra kick in the butt, there's several easy ways to motivate yourself. There's still a lot of things that I'd like to do in my career, and this is a very big leap towards that.

The fire is still burning, maybe brighter than ever.

Q. We know how close you and your dad are, but I'm wondering, do you remember the first time that you guys

spoke about the possibility of you winning a major championship?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Long ago, yeah. I decided to take golf seriously when I was about, I don't know, 13 maybe. I sat down with my dad when I was maybe 15 and 16, and we started to really hash out some goals and dreams of what I'd like to do. I was on the couch with my dad a lot watching other guys win majors and win big tournaments.

My dad and I, we've definitely talked about this. We've watched that walk up 18 pretty much every year until I've played in The Open. It's definitely something that we've both dreamt of.

Q. Speaking of that walk up 18, I noticed that you waited for Austin to kind of make that walk with you. Why did you do that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Pretty obvious. I mean, Austin, he's one of my best friends, but it's a team thing. I'm the one hitting the shots, but at the end of the day, it's a team thing. It's a team environment that I like to have for my team, I guess.

I was marching, and I was sitting there, and I was just trying to focus, and I sort of looked up, and I saw yellow leaderboards. In my head, I was like, you're about to have your moment here. No one better to share it than Austin because he deserves it as well.

Q. What would you say you did best this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I felt like I limited the mistakes pretty well. There was one really -- lucky to only have one really hard round in sort of the wind and rain, and I managed that day better than I ever thought I could, to be honest. I felt like I just controlled a lot of what I was trying to do, and the moments where I was losing control, I sort of -- if I hit it offline and into the fescue, I wasn't too worried about it because it's links golf. It's how you play golf out here. As long as you avoid those coffin bunkers, you can move that ball forward and get yourself back in the hole.

I think the style of golf maybe helped me mentally play this week. The style of golf you can play out here, you don't have to be perfect or hit the prettiest drives or anything. As long as you're moving the ball forward and dodging bunkers and keeping holes in front of you and making sure your chips are into the wind, all the stuff that us pros talk about, it's easy to talk about, it's harder to actually do when you're out there.

I think Austin and I did a pretty good job of plotting around this difficult property.

Q. In the past when maybe you had some finishes that



weren't to your liking, you preached process over the results. Given the kind of jump we've seen from you over the past couple months, was there anything you kind of recalibrated in your approach, or was this just trusting the process you already had and it finally matching up with the results?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's all part of the process. It is an incredible feeling to be up here with the Claret Jug. It is just a result at the end of the day, and I really do believe that.

Sometimes things go your way, and sometimes they don't. When you're playing -- today I felt like I really controlled a lot of it. I kind of grabbed onto it, and there was no chance I was going to let go of it. I was pretty aware of that and really wanted to make sure I did that.

But for the most part, all those tough losses in the past or those moments where I let myself slip up and dream too early on that back nine, I was able to reel myself in today and make sure that didn't happen.

Q. Can you just give us an insight into what the celebrations might look like tonight? Are you going to go all out like Bob MacIntyre did a week ago, or is it going to maybe be a bit more low key?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That was an incredible, incredible win for Bob. I don't know if I'm going to have as much of an embrace, not being Scottish, but it's going to be -- it will be low key for most, but for me, I don't really drink a whole lot ever. I don't really get to celebrate too many things ever. This game is cruel at times.

So I have my whole family and most of my team here. I'm just curious to see what my dad is going to pick as a first drink to drink out of this.

Q. And you know what you're going to put inside the Claret Jug tonight?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: My dad is -- he's not in here. There he is. He's going to have to figure out what he wants to put in there because he's taking the first gulp out of it.

MIKE WOODCOCK: We'll wrap things up there. Xander, congratulations again. Champion Golfer of the Year, Xander Schauffele.

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