



Xander Schauffele

Press Conference
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THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We are pleased to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room. Xander, welcome to the 89th Masters. Last year you were coming off two major wins, the PGA Championship and the Open. What can you tell us you're bringing to Augusta this time for your game?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, a different sort of excitement for myself and my team, knowing that we've gotten over that finish line. But in all honesty, after a slow start to the year, I'm very fortunate and sort of feel happy to be here.

Not that anything terrible happened, but you sort of take it for granted when you're playing healthy golf, and it's nice to be back playing and feeling healthy and strong.

I am very happy to be here.

Q. What's your confidence level like? Do you think you can win this week, and if you do, why?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Absolutely, yeah. I think I know what I'm capable of when I'm feeling good, when I'm not thinking of anything but getting the ball in the hole. It's been a process to get back to that. I don't have a ton of reps doing it, but there's a lot for me to draw back on, sort of previous accomplishments to sort of let that confidence grow.

Q. Do you feel like you've turned a corner in the last month or so?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think so.

Q. Where?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just mentally more so, I think. I've never really dealt with injury before, so I've never really been sidelined. I'm trying to find all the positives to attach to the situation, and me not being hurt before and sitting at home thinking all these thoughts, watching everyone else play golf and sort of fly by me, it's been very motivating. Just trying to use that to perform at a higher level.

Q. Can you expand a little bit on perhaps what you can draw from your very solid performances here through the years during this season of injury for yourself?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, when I say "draw from," I mean last year I was firing on close to all cylinders at some points, and I sort of saw what that got me and how far that got me. If I'm healthy, I'm moving well, I'm swinging well, I'm doing the things that I did to prepare correctly in the past, like I said, I don't have a ton of reps under my belt this year, but I sort of know where that can get me.

So there needs to be a lot of self-belief that I can get back to that spot, and that's kind of where I'm laying my head to rest.

Q. What do you attribute the strong approach play at Valspar to? Was there something you unlocked going into that week that led to that career-best performance with the irons?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm not really sure. I kind of picked up the pace in terms of hitting a lot of golf balls. I'm not going to sit here and say that I felt amazing all week. The Valspar, that course, with the wind kind of swirling and your approach being very important, you can get a little tight out there.

Just knowing that I want to get to a good place, maybe I freed myself up that week, just sort of let the ball go wherever it's going to go, instead of two hands on the steering wheel, gripping tight, just kind of let it be. It turned into a really good week in terms of approach.

Q. You talked about being sidelined and watching from the outside. Has it been motivating or intimidating to see the level that Rory and Scheffler have performed at?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just motivating. Yeah, like I said, there's so many guys that have played at a really high level, and luckily I've learned that I can play at that level.

More motivating than anything else. They've been playing incredible golf. Rory has been playing unbelievably well this year with a couple wins already and kind of breezing through what looks like hard golf courses.

And it's just what happens when you're a really good player and you put things together. That's sort of what happens. Luckily I was able to do that last year, and there's no reason I can't do it again.

Q. First major you're playing since you've won a major. I'm wondering, do you feel any different?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Not really. I'd like to think I feel similar. Sitting here bummed out along with the rest of the field that we can't practice today. I don't really wake up and feel more accomplished. I feel like the same guy.

I think the big difference will be when I get in those spots, my dream is just to give myself another chance coming down the stretch. I think I said that after the PGA, at The Open, if I can get myself in a spot to win this thing, I feel pretty good about doing it, and I did it.

I think that kind of goes for every major I play in now. If I can get myself in a good spot -- I'm going to fail at times, but man, I think I can deal with it a lot better than I used to be able to before, before winning.

Q. How much pressure before you were able to win a major did you put on yourself when you went to the majors? Was it something that you were aware of?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah. A lot of it is just from personal experiences, it always felt -- you try to really -- it's hard to explain. It's the most fun you'll ever -- for me at least, or most of the guys I talk to, it's the most fun you'll ever have on a golf course, is being in the hunt coming down the stretch and everyone going at it. And if you can crown yourself the champ at the end, it is so cool. Even when I've lost, it's the most fun I've ever had.

Something about dealing with the situation, looking too far ahead, trying to slow yourself down, trying to stick to your process, trying to look at what other people are doing. There's so much going on, and I think until you've actually done it and sort of make sense of it in your own head, then you learn sort of how you can win.

Q. Xander, as well as you hit the irons at Valspar, driver was a little wayward. Anything you've identified in particular with that club, feel better about it heading into this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, a lot better. I put my -- I just haven't had a lot of reps with the new driver, so I kind of crawled back to my old one, knowing what it's done, just for the time being.

After coming off of injury, it's hard to sit and do driver testing and find the right head. I quickly went back to that old one knowing how much success I had with it.

Q. Xander, do you know much about Justin Hastings who's in the tournament having won the Latin American Amateur, plays at San Diego State? Did he ever reach out to you or did you ever meet him?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I was able to go to -- I had a thing on campus at SDSU and was able to crash SDSU's wedge practice. So was able to feel young again being on college campus. And was able to congratulate him and everything he's accomplished. Yeah, I think my coach here, Donovan, is out here with him. Unfortunately today no one is golfing. But, yeah, I saw him yesterday practicing.

It's a great feat for sure.

Q. Are you aware that -- I believe he broke your school scoring record --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you. I was not aware of that. I would never -- that's not surprising. I would have never called myself some all-star when I was in college. But that's good for him, and thank you for that. That's helping my confidence, my growth process. (Laughter.)

Q. After so many great performances and so many highs last year, to get injured, did you find yourself feeling unlucky or why did this have to happen? If so, how did you get past that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Definitely didn't feel unlucky. I felt dumb at one point sort of being at the brunt of it's my fault. Felt a little unprofessional, felt irresponsible and I felt sad. Then I was motivated, then I felt sad again. Then motivated finally.

I don't know if there's like a grieving process, but I kind of dealt with it on my own. Like I said, I knew I was going to come back and play, I just didn't know when. When it comes to feel, I feel like I'm a kid. I just want to go out and play golf and compete at a high level, and that was stripped away from me. Luckily I have a very supportive wife and family to keep me entertained during the downtime.

Q. Did you learn anything about yourself in that period of time where you were sitting at home? You mentioned it was the first time you've ever been seriously injured.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah. Maybe I was more emotionally unstable than I thought I was through certain weeks (smiling). Everything is gravy when it's gravy. It was a nice wake-up call to maybe be a little more responsible when need be.

No, it was a reminder of how much I love to play and compete. I think that was a -- I think guys talk about, oh, I've been on Tour for 20 years, things go by so fast. For me it's been eight or nine years. I could be wrong. But it's gone by very fast. To be able to take a step back after winning two majors and sort of accomplishing a lot, to still feel some fire burning watching other guys playing really well is a huge thing because at some point in my life that's not going to happen, so I'm lucky that it's still learning.

Q. I know you mentioned you watched a lot more golf on TV during that time than you ever have. What have you learned from viewing the PGA Tour and what were you taking in during those times?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's funny, when you're in the mix it's hard to see certain things. I'm peanut gallery, too. Everyone knows you can't short-side yourself there, stupid stuff like that. It was good to let myself watch a little bit of golf and then turn it off completely and then kind of work on me again.

Q. With a day like today where you don't get to get out on the course, do a lot, how does that impact your preparation for the tournament especially when there's another day later in the tournament that we might be looking at similar conditions?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's just part of -- to me, whenever things get weird or difficult, I just remind myself that if you want to win one of the biggest events that we play in, you've got to deal with these things, and whoever deals with these things the best will win.

Like I said, I'm lucky to have a good team and have half my team, whether it's physio or gym or something of that nature, to keep myself occupied. It's not always about hitting the golf ball. It's just part of it.

Q. For you or really anyone else who hasn't won this yet, when you get here, do you have good or happy memories, or do you think more about the close call in '19 or the tee shot on 16 in '21?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Well, now that you keep mentioning this stuff -- you have a little get-together before this media session?

Q. Just getting warmed up.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, it's all -- to me, it's all good feels. I played the back nine yesterday. Now I'm thinking about how I wrenched that shot, thank you. It's at the front of mind. But when I went there, I was like, how is this hole different once the storm came through. I was looking at trees. It almost felt like I was playing the back nine for the first time. There's trees you aim at off the tee, and over the 11th green you can -- when you're walking down 10 you can see half the course.

It's pretty crazy to sort of see how many -- it's sad, too, to see how many trees have fallen. But it's all good feels. I don't ever walk on property saying, I wish I could have done this better. It's sort of how can I prepare the best this year.

Q. What gives you good vibes driving into the club?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Being able to walk into this media room, to talk to you is sort of what got me out of bed this morning. (Laughter.)

Q. You were talking about when you're in the hunt, what would you describe it as? Is it some kind of serenity? What exactly is it to you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's a good question. Doug, take notes.

Yeah, it depends. It depends on how you deal with it. I've had different forms of it. I remember going down -- starting with Jordan at Carnoustie, and it feeling like I was -- I had the rope in my hands, and it was just slipping and I couldn't get a hold of it. And before I knew it, the front nine was done, and I shot like 44. And it was like, holy smokes.

Then there's been other times where I've been in there and I was aware of that one moment, and I completely lost the grip. And I tried to slow things down, and I was almost playing so slow that I was throwing myself off.

There's a peaceful -- if you can find it, there's a serene part of it if you allow yourself to enjoy it almost. But I think it's so high stress that you sort of -- the hardest thing to do in those spots is to stick to your process, is to have the correct conversation with your caddie before you hit the shot as if you're teeing off on Thursday. That's the hardest place to get to. And the better you can get at that when you're under the gun, I think you'll be more successful.

Q. The situation where you came in here last year and you hadn't won a major, and now you've won two, and we've been kind of talking amongst ourselves about, believe it or not, Career Grand Slam versus trying to win a major. Is that a thought that you have had?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Believe it or not, it was always a thought before I won any of them. It's a lot cooler to be a lot closer to that dream of mine at 31 versus 35 or 36 not having won one.

Q. I want to clarify the pronunciation of your name.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: If you asked my dad, he'd probably say "Schauffele," but I'm the only natural-born citizen in my family, so I'm the only one waving that flag in my household. I give Schauffele as an easy go, but yeah, I'd say that the correct pronunciation would probably be the first one.

Q. I know a lot of these golfers have some superstitions, different things. Do you have any routine superstitions when you come to Augusta that you want to make sure you do every year?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Not really. My big goal when I come here is to feel prepared enough to not want to sit on property and practice all day because like a kid in the candy store, it doesn't get a whole lot better than this when you're trying to prepare. You feel like you lose yourself. You can sit on the range for six hours sitting at different targets, go chip, go putt. Before you know it, you're absolutely exhausted. I did that my first couple years without even realizing it. That's more of my goal when I come here.

Q. You've talked about how people have underestimated you really your whole career. Having won two of the three last majors, do you feel like you're coming into this week floating a little under the radar after the injury, and do you like that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't know if I've ever sat and talked about how I've felt underestimated. It's sort of how people would talk about me when I was playing well.

Yeah, it's kind of nice. Like I said, I haven't been in great form, but the only thing that really matters is that I think I can win and my team thinks I can win, and everyone else can just talk about whatever they talk about.

Q. Did you find the course to be different when you played it yesterday?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just some trees. Behind some greens and off 10, for example, if you are feeling extremely dangerous, there's a little gap on the left side of the trees where you can kind of hit it through. I think it's a little risky, but in the past your ball would hit a tree there and fall 90 feet from the tee box.

There's a few spots where you can get a little risky if you're feeling dangerous. But for the most part, I think the course is going to play the exact same as before. You may have a target you can't aim at. Like over the 11th green, there's those three trees, but you can just use the bridge as a reference now if you'd like.

Q. With the injury holding you -- giving you a little bit of a late start, how much of a distraction is that? How hard is it to ramp back up and get back into your normal routine in preparations for these majors?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Been pretty easy, actually. As soon as I got the green light, all the scans came back clean, everyone was telling me I was good, I was out the door running. People were trying to holster me a little bit longer, know that I'm just going to go berserk and try and hit too many balls.

But like I said, as soon as I got that green light, I was very excited to do everything I can to get back in a good position.

There hasn't been any sort of setbacks since starting. I haven't thought about my rib or anything of that nature, which is -- that's the nicest thing about it.

Q. We talked about Joaquín Niemann last week, and he said that he looks to you when thinking about a talented player that took some time to win his first major. He's obviously feeling well for this week. What would you tell him and all of the players seeking their first major after the process that you yielded?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, Joaquín is unbelievable. He's been winning at a pretty decent clip on the LIV Tour. Joaquín knows, he's been winning a lot more events than I have, but you're always a lot closer than you think is what I tell anyone that's been close. It's hard to wrap your head around. It's never anything that's that fancy and you're always a lot closer than you think you are.

Q. Xander, during your downtime you mentioned you spent some time watching golf. What else filled your time? Was it video games, knitting? What are you doing during that downtime yourself?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, knitting for sure. (Laughter.)

Yeah, I mean, I was able to see some friends, catch up on some dinners with some friends that -- I was in San Diego for a majority of it and then Florida. But between trying to get treatment, actually spending time with my wife when I'm supposed to be at a tournament and my dogs, seeing friends, during the day, I watched a lot of shows, a lot more shows than I -- it wasn't that hard to sit on the couch for five hours and -- like dang, I can kind of see how people get behind bingeing five hours of shows. It's not that hard. But it was a while since I was able to do that. I literally was just stalling, stalling for six weeks.

Q. Where does your self-belief come from?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Self-belief, it's sort of been hammered into my brain by my dad. Just always -- he was always hard on me but always wanted me to believe in all of the corny positive self-talk. A lot of that stuff is from my dad, and I'd like to think it's something I'm decent at now. Like I said, I was tested when I was at home to stay positive and all that good stuff, but I'd say a lot of it is from my dad.

Q. But you need validation along the way.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, at some point it would help.

I think they turned your mic off because they're sick of you.

But yeah, definitely some validation helps along the way. You can't come in last place every week and tell yourself that you're really good. There's definitely a tie there.

Q. Throwing it forward to later in the year, I'd like to know about the household dynamic with the Ryder Cup and yourself. Is he fully rooting for you or is he waving his hat with the rest of the Europeans?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Oh, the hat-gate. I'd be shocked -- my dad is here this week. But I'd be shocked if he even makes an appearance out there. He'll be in Hawai'i all canoodled up out there doing his thing. We'll see if he turns on the Ryder Cup.

But yeah, he wears a lot of hats and a lot of flags. Whatever suits him best is the flag he'll rock at that time.

Q. Are you out for vengeance this year?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, nothing feels extremely personal right now as I'm sitting here at the first major, but you know, when the competition and the juices get flowing, some feelings creep in there that you want to take over or that you want to control. But yeah, those events are a lot of fun. I think everyone smiles when they think about a Ryder Cup. They remember all the fun times they had with their team. I'm no different. That's how I feel when I think of those events.

Q. You mentioned earlier, you kind of described playing in these events as high stress. I'm wondering over the course of your career what have you found works for you when dealing with the stress of playing in these tournaments?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Being level-headed helps. Whenever you're in a tough spot -- that's just me personally. There's some guys that ride the highs and lows. Look at Tiger; he was someone that wore his heart on his sleeve and he did just fine. He's more of a me thing. Me staying level headed helps me deal with stress versus sort of losing my cool.

Q. When you were binge watching all those shows, did you identify with any of the characters or any narrative arcs that seemed similar to your own?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, not really. Not really. Some world-ending shows where people are living underground. I didn't really feel attached to any of that. It was more of an entertainment thing.

Q. Was it a concentrated effort with Chris Como to switch from being laid off to more having the club going down the target at the top?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah.

Q. And why?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I just think he thinks the matchup for how I release the club into the ball or how I like to basically put the club on the ball through impact, it's -- not safer, but maybe a better place to repeat a swing from when the club is a little bit more on plane or even a little across, just the way the club peels down when I do it correctly, peels back down on to the golf ball is a nicer thing versus when the weight is behind you. I have a lot of side bend and I shift laterally a lot. When the weight is laid off and whenever the club is pulling you back down and around, you sort of get this slingshot effect that can't be -- that's not great at all times.

He saw it as a good way to sort of get the matchups correct, and it's proven to be pretty effective.

Q. How long did it take you to get comfortable with that and when did you feel that --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Still working on it now, to be honest. I'd say home is sort of laid off for me, where it wasn't always. If I look back at swings in '17, '18, my club was a lot more on plane, and then through COVID and me playing like a certain style of golf and golf course, I think I got a little bit flatter shoulders, a little bit more laid off and the club started moving in a weird way. I definitely still work on getting the club in a better position up top, even today.

Q. You mentioned how you're always closer than you think you are in terms of winning a major. Was that a mantra that you were telling yourself beforehand, or is that something you've realized now after you've actually won them?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Man, I was telling myself all kinds of things. Probably after winning one. I don't think I told myself in your head, however you dreamed it up as a kid -- I pretty much had my hero moment where you're the kid at night putting on the green, saying, this putt to win a major, I had that, so I'm lucky in that sense to be able to say it. But when I wasn't winning tournaments or majors, I didn't tell myself I was close. I kept telling myself that I'm far away and that I need to get way better and all those things, and in fact, I was a lot closer than I thought. More of an after-the-fact thought process, unfortunately, for me.

Q. Were you envisioning yourself anywhere specific when you were making those putts as a kid?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just any putting green you're on with your friends. Just the random call-out, I guess.

Q. Do you believe you can win this week, given your comeback?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't think I'd be here if I didn't.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, and good luck this week.

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