

The Memorial Tournament Presented By Nationwide

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Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference

DOUG MILNE: We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at the Memorial Tournament presented by Nationwide making your fourth Memorial start with top-15 finishes in your last two starts and actually three if you take go back to the Workday Charity Open last year, top-15 there as well. With that said just some thoughts on being back here at Muirfield Village.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's always nice to be back at Jack's place. It's -- I played nine holes yesterday, obviously everyone's looking forward to the changes he made. I played the back nine and the changes were very obvious to me and I think they're for the better. So looking forward to playing the front nine this afternoon and checking those out as well.

DOUG MILNE: If I could, just pick your brain a little bit on your thoughts on those changes and what you've seen of them in your kind of your take away.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, just the way the greens settled from his previous change a few years back. Obviously some of the greens got a little severe and firm and if you use 16 as an example, I'm sure it's not what he envisioned initially and so he came in there and softened the green a little bit, wanting us to hit 7-, 6-, 5-irons into that green you can't have it be downwind and pitched from front to back too severely. So he kind of leveled that surface out just enough and it seems much more fair and I think the pin locations should be a little easier to place come tournament time.

DOUG MILNE: In the midst of a good year, six top-5 finishes, three of which were runner-up finishes, No. 6 in FedExCup, 5 in the world. How satisfied are you with the season so far.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, a lot of good. Obviously winning is a big goal each and every week, so we haven't accomplished that just quite yet and it's just, we're keeping things going. I think missed cut at the PGA was a bit of a bummer. Wasn't really in the right frame of mind, game

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was okay, a little exposed by some severe winds at times. It was a good time to sort of reboot and kind of recheck where I'm at kind of midway through the year. So this is always a decent time of year for me, usually when I kind of catch my stride and just trying to get in a rhythm. My year's been weird based on my schedule, I've sort of been playing one on, one off for what feels like months now. I haven't really had any build-up into tournaments where I'm playing, one, two, three in a row. So I'll get that near the back end of my year with the playoffs and sort of this Open run here, so looking forward to that.

DOUG MILNE: We'll open it up to questions.

Q. I got a couple for you. Can we go back to the course changes. Is it a challenge at all with the memory that you have built up in your four previous tournaments as you go around the place?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, not so much for me. I'm still relatively new. There's been guys who have been coming here for a decade and so I'm sure putting off memory and things like that might be a little tricky, but I never really had too much instilled in me in terms of green reads or anything like that. So most courses feel relatively new to me, not once I've played too often. So with that being said, I don't really have like anything kind of ingrained in my mind on sort of what or what not to do around the property.

Q. Ahead of the U.S. Open could you tell me the first time you went to Torrey Pines, the first time you played it, and how much have you played it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It was my, I played nine holes in high school. That was my home course in high school. Played nine holes there on North and South. This is prior to the North change, obviously, and some of the South changes as well. I mean, I remember Tiger in 2008, but I did attend some of the, I think it was called the Buick maybe at one point, the Buick Open, I believe, I did attend it a few times when I was in high school and then played it back then as well.

So in terms of recently I haven't played it much, I've been kind of waiting for the course to get into tournament shape for the U.S. Open to not get too acclimated to the wrong conditions.

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Q. The Olympics, as we get closer from the three-week cutoff until the teams are set, first off, if you do qualify do you plan on going and if you do, just what excitement level do you have about possibly representing Team USA?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, if I get in, I will definitely go. I got my grandparents in Japan, on my mom's side. I love Tokyo, I love going there, I've been there probably 10 times now in my life, so I just like the culture and everything. So in terms of representing my country, it's obviously a true honor. I had a little taste of it at the Presidents Cup just not too long ago and that's probably more of a team sort of environment than this would be at the Olympics, but, yeah, it's something new, something I've never accomplished, and never done and as a kid I, or once the Olympics were announced for golf, something my dad and I discussed, and so it would be a true honor to compete.

Q. Honestly, I know you're striving for that first major right now, but how special would it be to get a gold medal too, something that you can only get every four years and only Justin Rose is the only man living to have one right now.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean to be completely honest, growing up as a kid it was Tiger Woods in red winning majors was sort of what I envisioned, winning majors. Olympic golf is so new I would be lying if I said -- if I was, you know, an Olympic diver or swimmer or track star, you know, they only have four to five events a year and they're building up to this Olympics. We have majors, we have four majors every year. So in comparison it's, obviously, winning a gold medal would be really cool and I don't think us golfers really realize how cool it is, just because it's not something that's been put in front of us much. Like you said, Justin Rose is the only golfer to have a gold medal. So it's fresh, you know what I mean? So for us, we see our greats in our game winning major championships. So I think golf staying in the Olympics would create that sort of aura and awe around it for us to really want it more than before.

Q. Why weren't you in a good frame of mind at the PGA?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You know, I think frame of mind is a lot of choice. I just -- honestly, I had somewhat of a bad attitude about the golf course. I just didn't really like it. And normally my attitude is some of the best. I always joke about beating Webb Simpson and I did not beat him that week. It's just small stuff like that for me that's really crucial and kind of put me in the wrong direction early. My

setup and everything was great. I was kind of ready for the week. I wasn't hitting it great. I'm not saying I had enough game to win that week, but I definitely had enough game to compete, and for me to miss the cut was a bit reckless and kind of stupid. So just didn't really like the course and moving forward even if I don't like a course I got to wash that out of my mind and move along.

Q. You talked about success in Columbus, even though you haven't won here. How much do you think back to that U.S. Open qualifying playoff you were in four years ago and how much that kind of sent you on your way, in a way?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That was in Germantown.

Q. Oh, in Tennessee.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes.

Q. Skip Columbus but still talk about Tennessee.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it was kind of a pivotal moment. I played with Strick for the 36 holes that day. His caddie was his agent Mario, so it was a very sort of relaxed day as relaxed as a U.S. Open qualifier can be, but at the same time Stricker chasing to get into Erin Hills in Wisconsin, no one wanted to be more than him. So it was awesome playing with one of the greats of our game, trying at a hundred percent at a local qualifying or at a regional qualifier. And then after the round me making a putt to get in the playoff and then him coming up to me and letting me know that he thinks I'm good enough was sort of, those are the small little things you kind of take with yourself along the way. And I think it would be a real honor for me to compete for him in the Ryder Cup and it's kind of funny full circle when I think about it.

Q. Did you think about the that little message he gave you as you went to Erin Hills and Greenbrier and things like that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it was more so just like a pat on the back. He kind of -- as a young pro you're kind of hustling and bustling, you don't really know what you're doing, you're chasing your own tail most of the time. And for sort of an old veteran to come over, pat you on the shoulder and really be calm and just let you know that he thinks you're good enough -- I'm not sure how many kids he told he thought were good enough, but I believed him, you know what I mean?

Q. Following up on what Doug said there, does Steve Stricker know how much that meant to you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I haven't had the chance to tell him myself personally. I'm sure he does. I talked about it before. I think he really at that time maybe he believed in my game and what he saw that day more than I did and so it really just, it rubbed off on me in the right way and I haven't let him know but I definitely can.

Q. Last week Phil talked about some matches that he played with you at The Farms and how much that influenced him in what he needed to do. What are your remembrances of those matches and doing with Phil there?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I was playing, it was a golf course called The Farms, in Rancho Sante Fe there, close to his home. We started playing a lot over during quarantine. We didn't really have anything else to do, it was the only way for us to get out of the house. So obviously the mood of the rounds were great just because we're out and about versus being stuck indoors.

It was, I was playing really good golf. To be completely honest, Phil was playing probably some of the worst golf he's played. Obviously the course being narrow and sort of strategic didn't really fit his eye. So I took full advantage of him not playing well and me playing really well during that time stretch. But I think the big takeaway was, he's always joking around, but to watch a five-time major champ ask me all these questions I was sort of taken back. And so what I learned from playing with him was that he's really a student of the game and he's never really stopped learning. And he's probably -- I thought I was near the top in terms of being the most obsessed of golf and not being able to get away from the game, but I got to tip my hat and give it to Phil. I think he's probably, he's so obsessive and so passionate about golf that it's not really a surprise that he did win the PGA Championship because he's been telling himself for the last 25 years that he's still got it. So really cool to play with him and you can definitely learn a lot from what he's done.

Q. What was some of the that back and forth after you made the hole-in-one on the press?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: He tried to quick trigger it. He pressed. And the walk back to the 16th tee is like 80 yards or a hundred yards or so and we were jawing each other on the 15th green. I won the hole, he pressed, and then he quickly went back to the tee to tee off and it's one of the harder par-3s on the course. And he kind of wasn't supposed to hit first and of course he hits first and hits it to four feet or so. I'm letting him know that I could make him re-hit, since it's match play, but since he was getting his butt kicked, I figured I would let him hit it to four feet and not make him re-hit. But it was just funny. I wasn't really a

guy to make too many hole-in-ones and I kind of pulled a 6-iron toward the water a little bit, fell right in line with the pin and then trickled in. And Phil just sat -- there's a little mound behind the tee box -- and he just sat there like this, looking down at the ground, shaking his head, he just didn't really know what to do with himself. So I found that pretty entertaining.

Q. I'm doing a little travel piece ahead of the Open on San Diego, Carlsbad. How do you describe the golf scene there, what is it you love so much about it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think San Diego golf is so relaxed. There's a lot of public courses, even the private courses seem to be more laid back, I think in terms of rules and sort of what a non-golfer would think of country club stuffiness isn't really a thing in San Diego. A lot of kids are getting out. Everyone tries to get out after work. It's definitely a recreational sport or activity outside that people love to do and enjoy. So we get a lot of traction, especially during this quarantine time, I think golf is up a couple hundred percent, especially in San Diego, just because you can go out and play any time of the day. And I just, I really enjoy the sort of the vibe that people bring to the course out there.

Q. You mentioned Phil. I'm just curious, triggered a thought, rivalries. There's Jack, Arnie, there's the famous ones. Tiger, Phil. But I would imagine that every one of you guys has a has some kind of rivalry, friendly or otherwise. Is that fair? Are there guys on TOUR that you kind of you measure yourself against and you kind of have a --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's more so just the media comparing individuals. Unless you really -- golf is so weird because unless, unlike other sports there's always brackets and always teams that always face each other from the east and west and if two teams are at the top of their level they're always going to face each other in the end.

But with golf two individuals can be at the top of their game, but it's not always that you'll get paired together and go head-to-head on a Sunday. I think rivalries are created when sort of you have an east or west, for example, go head-to-head each year at major championships or big golf tournaments. And recently there's been sort of Dustin's taken a seat at the top and everyone probably has a personal rivalry with the No. 1 player just because everyone wants to be the No. 1 player in the world, but no one really uses that comparison. Along the way you have matchups that you kind of like or people you really want to beat, but besides that, it's -- golf is so individual and you're so in your own way most of the time that it's really hard to

really think about anyone else outside of your own team.

Q. A crowd question. It was weird when the fans went away. Is it weird when they're coming back? You guys are very adaptable, but just speak to that if you could.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's refreshing. I think when you hit good shots or even just watching the PGA Championship obviously the crowds got a little crazy there at the end for some, but in all reality it was better like that than not with people there and the excitement level around golf and people just wanting to watch. So I think for me personally it's very refreshing to have fans back and when you hit a good shot to have that affirmation of someone clapping or saying something besides your caddie giving you a fist bump, it does feel normal again. So I'm a big fan of the fans being back.

Q. Wanted to follow-up on the Phil thing. What kind of questions was he asking you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just sort of feel questions. What I'm feeling with my driver, what I'm working on with my irons. Sort of what I'm thinking when I'm putting. I was trying to just -- I'm more of an, in terms of watching someone else, maybe more visual and then I'll ask them a question. Like I would watch every short game shot he would hit, obviously, I would be an idiot not to, and sort of just asking him sort of what he thinks about certain holes and how he attacks certain holes on TOUR. Obviously he has more unorthodox route sometimes, but for the most part he has a plan in place and he's always trying to do something.

So it was just crazy to think that someone like him -- I mean five years ago if someone would have asked me if Phil Mickelson asked me for advice out at local club in San Diego I would have been kind of like, I don't know if I really buy that. But there we were in Rancho, sort of trading shots.

Q. Did you -- was there a sense of I guess gaining a bit more confidence, not that you're lacking, but a little more confidence in kind of beating down a Hall of Fame golfer a few days in a row?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, when someone's not playing their best it's never really, it's not like -- when two people are playing really good and you get the best of them that's when you gain some confidence. We had a few matches, we went over to his home course in Rancho Sante Fe Country Club and he beat me there. He beat me 1-up. And I'm sure he got more out of that than I did. I was more pissed off than not.

But those are the kind of matchups you want. You never want to beat someone down on 14 or 15, you want to have that match go to the last hole and have that last putt mean something. So that's why we always as pros compete and have little side games, just because we're trying to emulate tournament golf whenever we can and kind of find ways to put pressure on ourself.

Q. What did you shoot at Rancho Sante Fe?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think he shot 67 and beat me 1-up. I must have shot 69 or 68. It's a tricky course in terms of green reading and you can kind of hit it anywhere off the tee, which gave him a big advantage.

Q. General idea of the stakes or do you not want to say?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, that's not for me to say. They're much larger than most games, I can tell you that.

Q. I want to take you back to 2017. Your experience with U.S. Open sectional qualifying. What your experience was like and how relieved were you when you got through?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It was a really cool experience. Obviously playing with Steve Stricker. Someone I didn't know. Obviously personally I knew his name and what he's done in his career. So I knew I was in one of the, probably the best group I could be in at Germantown, playing with one of the best golfers to ever play, wanting to play in Erin Hills in his hometown more than anyone else. So I knew that he was going to give it his all.

And when you're doing a 36-hole qualifier those can drag out a lot and it's always nice to play with someone that's locked in for the 10 hours that you're out there.

Just a big sense of relief of getting through. I can't remember how many people were in the playoff, but I remember getting into the playoff was a bit hectic for me at the end and being able to sort of clutch up and get into my first U.S. Open was a really big deal for me. And it was kind of a lot of not fatigue, but I just was really exhausted through that whole process, I had to play the next week in Memphis and I was so relaxed at Memphis that, just because I got into the U.S. Open, knowing I was going to go to the U.S. Open the following week, that I'm sure that helped me in my process competing in my first U.S. Open that my mentality was just kind of happy to be there versus expecting the world type deal.

Q. Wondering if there's an unintended benefit of not

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winning those events that you've been close at is that you've regained some of that underdog mentality that you have loved so much over the years.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you know, I think it's funny, I'm trying to learn how to -- I think this whole underdog role is probably why I've been successful, but at the same time I think it's always important to play with a chip on your shoulder, but at the same time I think it might be the reason that's maybe holding me back in big moments. So it's kind of funny when you think that -- I've talked a lot with my dad about that, you know, trying to read some material that will help me sort of explore some new kind of avenues with how my brain will think. But it's interesting, like I said, the reason I'm so successful is because I kind of ride this underdog wave, but when you're trying to win tournaments and be -- once you're at the top of a leaderboard, you can't chase a ghost, you know what I mean? So there's no one in front of you to sort of bite at and so I think mentally it's such a new realm for my brain that I'm just trying to process it all and really get more comfortable and think differently, once I'm at the top. I think it's okay to chomp at the bit moving up, but once you're up there you got to be assertive and comfortable and do the right things still, you can't really be like waiting for someone to get ahead of you to chase again, you know what I mean?

Q. What are some of the things that you're experimenting with, if you don't mind?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You can use programming a bit. I think everyone's got a bit of programming from their parents as kids. That's a word I like to use. That's a word that's commonly used. Kind of just how the brain works, how I think, how I will be, how I play offense when I'm playing golf. It's just a deep-rooted thing in me where it's always, I have to go out and get it and that's still the same thing, but it's sort of how I'm going to go do it, I guess. And it's more so, when I'm up at the top of a leaderboard, how I need to think differently is kind of more what I'm getting to.

So I still need to get to the top of the leaderboard to try out all these new things, you know what I mean, and I think all these experiences in the past are going to help me be more comfortable once I'm back there. But it's more of just like an overall thought process I'm trying to change moving forward.

Q. At the PGA they had a picture of you and it said in the entrance way and it said, Las Vegas, Nevada as your home city. How long were you there and what drew you back to San Diego?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Oh, that's just -- I mean, I'm --

currently I do live in Nevada, I'm splitting time between San Diego and Nevada. My fiance's parents live in Nevada as well, so we kind of, we have a home near them and a home as well in San Diego. But I think my agent or someone must have put that on there once I moved. I moved at the beginning of this year and I think it got kind of mixed up.

And I told him, I was like, Every time I get announced on the tee it says Las Vegas, Nevada, can we switch that back, because my home down, I did grow up in San Diego and even if I move to somewhere overseas I would still want to be announced from San Diego, even if I'm living in a European country or somewhere in Asia, it doesn't really matter to me.

Q. Where is the best fish tacos in San Diego?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I go to Oscars. Oscars there's a place in La Jolla, a place in Hillcrest. There's so many on the coast, it's kind of crazy. I mean, Oscars is one that's close to me, so it's always easy, it's really good. A little Mexican joint.

DOUG MILNE: All right, we appreciate your time best of luck this week. Thank you.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thanks.

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