

TOUR Championship

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room at the 2024 TOUR Championship. You're entering the week ranked No. 2 in the FedExCup standings and making your eighth consecutive start. Can you start with some thoughts about your game coming into this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's the best position I've ever been coming in. I feel pretty good. I've been trying to get myself to trend a little bit better through Memphis and the BMW. I feel like I've done a decent job of that.

Yeah, just trying to learn a new golf course and get ready for this week.

Q. What was your first impression of the new East Lake?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's just new. It's firm. It's fast. Needs to settle in. It's a very brand new -- I'm not huge in agronomy, but I've played some new courses before, and they're a little bouncy. However it was designed to be played, it's going to be a little bit different for the first two years just because it hasn't settled in.

Q. Given your record here, was there any part of you that wanted to throw yourself in front of a bulldozer here and stop all this?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: 100 percent, yeah. Absolutely. My caddie, as well. He probably would have gone first.

Q. You know your record here; it's better than anyone's. How does this affect that now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, it's just a new golf course. Kind of a glass half full guy, so I've played a lot of new courses this year that I've done okay at, and this is a brand new property. Literally the bunkers are new, the grasses are new in the fairways, the greens are new, the grass on the greens are new, the runouts are different, the slopes are different. I think the only thing that's the same are the directions of the hole.



Whatever record I had is the past. I have no memory or anything really on any hole to go off of, not even a tree I could aim at that I used to aim at. It's just that different.

To me, it's got the same name; it's East Lake Golf Club. It's in the same property, similar square footage. But that's about it.

Q. Do you find that you'll be hitting longer clubs into the greens? For instance, Viktor Hovland was telling us he hit two clubs longer -- certainly one, into the first hole.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah.

Q. Do you do that on any other holes?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You try not to. I'm trying to think. They made 14 a par-5 this year, so that's longer. But it's a par-5 now versus a par-4.

I can't think off the top of my head, but there's a few fairway bunkers at about 300 or 305 yards that if I'm feeling good, I'm definitely going to try and take a big wipe over them because it's a big advantage to come into the greens with a club that's spinning versus bouncing around.

Q. It looked like you spent a lot of time in the 18th fairway kind of assessing the options and then you noticed that Scottie and Sam looked like they were kind of playing up 10. Is that something you've thought about, and how much trickier is that hole going to play this year?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I hit two drives up 10 actually. I didn't go and hit them or collect them. I didn't hit the fairway.

Yeah, I spent time trying to hit balls out of the rough into that little sliver of a fairway for the lay-up area. I tried to hit some drives over the tree over on the 18th tee, that tree right there. It's a really small fairway. It's just plain and simple. It kind of cambers right down the middle too, so if your ball is turning too much one way or the other it might roll into the rough; and if you're going into the rough, I don't think anyone on this property can hold a green hitting a lob wedge or sand wedge out of the rough into the green

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unless it's a really long one that I haven't seen or with a backstop. But you need to be in the fairway to do some damage out here.

Q. Last week you talked about your patience bucket is getting a little empty. I was curious how this stretch of the season feels. Obviously guys are tired and you're also playing for the biggest prize. What combination of things is that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, just a little bit of -- you try your best to fill -- at least I'm trying my best to fill that bucket up, whether it's trying to go to bed an hour earlier or eat dinner an hour earlier or just trying to chill out just a little bit more.

I'd like to think chilling out is one of my strengths, but it's the same battle for everyone this week and their caddies. We're learning a brand new property and there's a lot to play for. What was sort of like a, oh, we made it to East Lake, we can chill on Monday because we know everything about it is no longer.

Scottie and I were going out back-to-back on Monday afternoon to play nine holes to try and see what's going on.

Q. What happens when your bucket gets empty or when you see other guys and you're like, that guy's bucket is empty? Are you quicker to frustration? What does that look like?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I can feel myself get to the edge quicker, more frustrated quicker. You have to check yourself a lot whenever you're trying to compete. I know I'm my best when I'm patient and when I'm calm, and if I'm starting to get really frustrated about things that aren't fair, it doesn't matter. You're still trying to win a tournament. That stuff gets pushed to the side.

I've got my wife and my dogs out here this week, so they're helping me with my patience bucket filling, I should say.

Q. This week East Lake is hosting a creator's event, as well, and that's the second one this season. Do you think the amount of young people who like golf, do you think there's more of them wanting to become influencers now as opposed to wanting to become players? Do you think that gap might be narrowing with the rise of golf influencers in this day and age?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Probably the wrong person to ask for that question, to be completely honest. As I get older I've sort of learned that I'm a little more traditional, maybe more blue collar. I'm not really big in social media. I'm a big fan of sort of -- it's just not my jam.

I think influencers work really hard to put out content, and I could never do it personally. My message was always in the dirt, and for them it's pumping out content and putting their face out there and doing their thing. I know it's a lot of work to do it and it's tiring and things like that.

But if it's going to bring more eyeballs to golf I think it's a good thing, but the whole sort of social media influencer thing, I'm going to leave it to everyone else that's my age or a little younger because they're just way better at it.

Q. You've had the low 72-hole score here three times, have one trophy, and it's not a FedExCup Trophy, to show for it. Is that frustrating at all, and how hungry are you to win that top prize?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I figured they just needed to change the course so I have a better chance. (Smiling).

Yeah, I mean, you're going to be pretty hungry when you get close. You're champing at the bit. It's right there in front of your face. You're never able to hold on to it. No doubt at all, I'm very hungry.

Q. Jay is going to do his State of the Tour tomorrow, and I'm curious, do you feel he's been more transparent with the players and with the public?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I actually don't really know. I'm not going to -- I haven't really paid attention, to be completely honest. I've been a little busy with my own -- with my head in the sand, as I said earlier this year or last year or whatever.

I really have been focusing on my own stuff, and I have not sat and asked a single person, how is the TOUR doing, because I just care how Xander is doing, and that's pretty much it.

Q. Has anybody come from the TOUR and tried to talk to you about --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No. In my email that I should read more often, he'll send sort of updates here and there, but it's a very private matter what's going on between -- trying to make tours merge and the state of golf and those things. Those are sort of behind-closed-doors talks. It's not a room that I was ever in, and I really haven't thought much about it.

That's probably why I've been playing much better. I've just been focusing on my own stuff.

Q. Back to the course changes again, do you like

them? And with those changes in mind, is this still the proper venue for what's at stake here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's just too new. The course is really, really new.

I wouldn't have been surprised if we had to play a different venue for a year or two, like to let this course settle in. That's how new it is.

I mean, I'm not sure. Once it's settled in, it could be awesome. Once the grass lays down and you're chipping up and down these hills with grain and you can get some spin off that zoysia -- I think it's zoysia in the fairways there leading up to the greens.

But until then, it really is hard to tell. You can hit a really good shot -- on 18 I saw someone from the fairway hit a long iron that landed literally half the size of this table in between the bunker, the rough, and the green in the fringe, and it hit really soft and plugged; and then a ball that landed this much further, it just went straight over the green. It's just because it's new, so it's hard to tell.

Q. Have you had a chance to play the front nine this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I played all 18 already.

Q. No. 8, it seems like it's a bit of a change. Does that change the way you're going to play the hole?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think they're going to make it drivable one day, which will be interesting. If it's drivable, I think I definitely plan on hitting driver. Used to be a pretty intimidating tee shot with that wind left to right. It still is, but just because it's drivable it feels like it's easier potentially.

You can hit it in that right bunker and try and get up-and-down from there. But if the tee is back, it's going to be a 4-iron or a hybrid for me kind of up that right side, and kind of play from there.

I guess it used to be driver, 9-iron or pitching wedge, I think, and now you're effectively maybe hitting the same club in but just less off the tee.

Q. I asked this of Scottie so I wanted to ask you. When you're playing leisure golf with friends of yours who aren't pros, how do you even things up? In other words, are you giving them tons of shots? Are you playing your worst ball? Anything fun that you do to give them a chance?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No. I just beat them. I don't

give them shots. It's just not fair. They just have to suck it up for the day and play golf with me.

Q. Does that mean that they're low handicap players --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah. I try not to give out any shots unless I really have to or I know the person or trust them. I mean, I have a pretty small circle of people that I play golf with. It sounds like Scottie has a bigger crew that he'll play with.

But for the most part, if he's giving someone 10 or 12 shots, he obviously knows that guy very well, and he either wants him on his team or he doesn't depending on the day.

Q. Do you actually have an index at your home club, and do you know what it is?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No. I couldn't tell you. To try and make as many birdies as possible.

Q. Who's the worst player you've ever played with?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: The worst player I've ever played with? That's a messed-up question. You know that, right? That's like me asking you who's the worst journalist you've ever sat next to.

Q. That's not a real question, though, is it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I guess.

I don't know. I've seen some pretty bad shots out of my own body, unfortunately. Usually when I'm playing with someone that's not very good I try not to look, and the worst shots I've seen are in a pro-am probably. My golf bag getting hit, Austin and I almost getting hit.

Q. With the schedule we've got now, what is your appetite for playing overseas, and can you see yourself ever late in the year taking on various traditional tournaments, whether they're Opens or things like that? If there was ever part of a schedule that included a lot of collaboration with either other tours or bigger events, how would you feel about that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That seems more like a question you'd ask. You didn't lose your touch just yet.

Right now, it sounds terrible. As of right now, it sounds terrible. My brother's bachelor party next week sounds terrible, too. I'm in a place where I'm trying to get over this finish line and play some really good golf coming in so I can enjoy myself.



But it really depends on the -- because if you want to give ourselves a break, you push those events further back to December, but then all of a sudden December leads straight into Hawai'i. Now you're on the other side of the world depending upon which way you go, I guess.

I mean, it's interesting. I'm not really sure. I haven't really put a whole lot of thought about how I'd feel trying to tee up in a series overseas in November or December, or October even. I'm going to go overseas to Japan to play the ZOZO.

That's the only event I'm going to play this off-season, or I guess this fall season, off-season leading into the new season. I'm excited for my trip to Japan. I always am. It's a warm and fuzzy place for me.

But to tack on multiple events would probably be tough.

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