

The Sentry

Tuesday, December 31, 2024

Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii, USA

Plantation Course at Kapalua

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the 2019 winner Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at The Sentry. Like to go ahead and just talk about the course. You've been out there now for two days, can you give us your remarks on how it looks.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's really green. I heard Troon likes it really green and lush, and that's exactly what it is. The course is in the best condition that I've ever seen it in. A little bit of rain's made it a bit soft, but hopefully the wind sort of picks up and the balls start to roll into those spots you don't like 'em rolling in, and it will make the tournament a little bit harder.

THE MODERATOR: You took a little bit of time off the last couple of months. Can you talk about what you worked on in your game and how you feel heading into 2025.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Some of the same stuff. I would say everything I was working on with Chris last year is still not, you know, it feels like my swing, but it's still something that's a little bit uncomfortable. As long as I'm producing good shots I feel the confidence to keep moving in the right direction, and obviously got a lot of confidence after some results last year. But some of the same stuff, getting the club in certain positions and trying to move the correct way, so a lot of the same, to be honest.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. You say you're still getting that comfort with your work with Chris. You won two majors last year. Does that mean that there's even more way to go and even more growth to kind of build on where you're at right now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think so. There's certain times when you're trying to push your swing to a certain place or you stack two, three good weeks in a row, and you feel really good. I would say that was sort of last year was Quail Hollow going into Valhalla I felt really good. The Open Championship is a different beast, you're just trying to keep the ball in play, keep it low, leave it on right side of

the hole with the wind. So two completely different sort of styles of golf that cater to different things from your game.

Yeah, I'm excited. I'm excited to keep working with Chris and sort of see how well we can put the full swing together.

Q. What's like a normal length of time when you are rebuilding something as largely as you were?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm not sure. I never really tried to. This is my first go around. Hopefully everything feels normal sooner than later. Just like anything else, when you take some time off -- I took a few weeks off playing golf -- old habits die hard, so I start to shift back into sort of old swing patterns and it feels equally as weird to get back to what he wants me to do versus the first time around, so just a work in progress.

Q. For someone who won two majors and had a tremendous year, is there any part of you that feels a little bit under the radar, given how much attention there is on Scottie.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, yeah, just kind of cruising around right where I want to be. It's a wild time. Winning two majors and being further away, or closer to the 30th-ranked player than the 1st is -- hat's off to Scottie. He's a beast.

Q. Do you feel that way?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: What's that?

Q. Do you feel closer to him than you do to --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just based on the numbers I looked at this off-season. He just kept winning, even in sort of his down time, he won another event, which pushed him even further away. So it's one of my goals that will just have to stay on the calendar for a few more years.

Q. Do you think it will take that long?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: If I get there I'll be very happy but, you know (laughing). I'm just, I try not to be too



results-based, but just based on looking at the numbers and what I'm told, yeah, it's going to take some time and some patience.

Q. Lastly, do you know who is number 30?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No.

Q. What was your reaction to Scottie having to WD?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's a huge bummer. I hope he's okay. I heard he was going to be back for American Express, then you hear he has surgery. I didn't feel, like, too comfortable texting him. It's weird, because we're competitors, but at the same time he's such a nice guy, him and Mere. I just hope he's fine. We're a lot better off with him here in Hawaii than not, so hopefully he gets a full recovery and he's fine.

Q. You went, I think, four-win season, then a little lull, then the big season last year. How do you keep from having -- what do you think you maybe learned from when you did go through a lull that you try to avoid this time and keep winning?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's hard. I mean, you probably talked to Scottie about it, he won nine times or something like that, or seven times or eight times or nine times. I've never done that, I only won three times in one season, never four. You don't really focus on the wins. They stack up when you're focused on the little things. I think that's what the best players do is you focus on practicing and prepping the right way, and then you focus on small shots with your caddie, and then at the end of the day you give yourself a chance on the back nine. In those moments is sort of when you'll feel a little bit more heat and if you're comfortable or not to close. That takes a little bit of practice, and luckily I got a little bit last year.

Q. When you did review your stats what stuck out?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: My wedge play sucked. It was really bad. Really, really bad. Golf is tough. With my club pitched a little bit more vertical in my back swing it's not catering to the best -- it's great for driver, great for long irons, the stats show that -- then, with wedges it's, you know, the club's moving around a little bit, it's not ideal for hitting like a distance wedge. It's something I'm trying to work on, still working on it now, still trying to figure it out, get the right feel for it. When my shoulder were a lot flatter, the club was way more laid off and shut, and I was more rotational. I was a really, really good wedge player, really good inside 150. And then the club is moving a different way, up more even across, and now all of a sudden I can, you know, smoke my driver and a 4-iron, but all of a

sudden, like a 90-yard wedge is a little bit, at times. So just trying to figure that out.

Q. Are you overall though good with that tradeoff?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It seemed to work for me fine last year, so I'm working through it. If I can find something in the middle I will, but maybe I just need to practice my wedges a lot more.

Q. Is that the area you feel like there's most room for improvement to catch closer to Scottie?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Results are results, but, yeah, that would be one area. Around the greens, short game, that's an area that's not bad, it's not nothing special that I do, just good enough. Those are some spots where I could improve, for sure.

Q. Curious for your review on the new Callaway drivers. Are you going to switch?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah. Yeah. I have all the new Elyte woods in. It probably was --I've been with 'em, shoot, I've been with Callaway for, feels like six or seven years now, and I would say it was probably the easiest -- I've been testing the Elyte driver for two months, and I literally have the exact same driver that they gave me in Vegas as my first look thing they did for their social media team. So it's been such an easy, super easy transition, and I really haven't really felt like I thought much about it. Looking down and it's good to go.

Q. Any other changes?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Put new irons in the bag. Same ones. I think that would be it.

Q. I feel like every week until Valhalla we would always ask you those questions about winning a major, and every time your answer would be, It's just a result, it's just a result. Were you being entirely truthful, like was it truly just a result to you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, by definition it really is just, it really is a result, you know. How you wear it or take it or feel about it is a different story. That's the hardest thing to do is process it as just a result. It's very, depending upon how you finish a tournament, or if you're in the lead and you lose the lead, or come from behind, you're going to, it's going to taste different to you when you process it. It's cut and dry to think of it that way, but it definitely, like, helps my brain process it that way, at least.

Q. As a process guy, I mean, in the way you play when



you finish 4th versus the way you played to finish 1st, is there actually a tangible difference in what you did, or is it just a numbers game where stuff worked out X amount?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, I think when I analyze it it's a numbers game. When I'm in it I try to -- I'm not trying to be a robot, I'm trying to get into a certain mindset or flow. That's sort of like my challenge this week is how quickly can I sort of lock back in to mid season sort of mentality. After having a couple months off it's hard to, you know, you play a lot of golf, but when you start playing tournaments your ball ends up in weird places. And sometimes, when you see it over and over again, you're like, Okay, I've seen this once, or, Okay, I've seen this twice. It helps when you see it a lot. But for me starting off, I'm going to get some weird lies in the first cut of rough and I need to be able to process it quickly and realize, This ball's going to come out with no spin, this ball's going to come out with a lot of spin. Small stuff like that is when I think my brain is the sharpest.

Q. I think you were the one who volunteered last spring the analogy of, Scottie's on top of a mountain, and you are climbing it each day.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah.

Q. Is that helpful for you to view it that way, that you have something to chase, do you think that's better for your competitiveness?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think so. We're all pretty competitive. We all want to beat each other pretty badly. He's just such a nice guy, and I really can't say anything bad about him, honestly, especially after what happened to him last year. I think the true colors show when you're facing a bad spot, like when he got arrested. So he's a 10 out of 10 guy in my opinion, so I got to try and hate him somehow. So if I put him at the very top of the mountain, and he's someone that I need to catch, then maybe that's how I have to put it in my head.

Q. He's got a sharp needle, too. What's the worst you've ever taken from him?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: (Laughing). Scott will only give it to you if you give it to him.

Q. Do you have to start?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah. He's a nice dude, but you saw some fire from him. I was really happy the world was able to see that side of him at the Presidents Cup. He didn't poke first, but he responded. So if you want to mess

with Scottie, he'll fire right back at you in the locker room.

Q. Have you messed with him?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Of course I have. I mess with everybody.

Q. What did you get back?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You know, a handful. Nothing I couldn't handle, but wasn't surprised to get it back either.

Q. Some of your best grinding last year was probably that Friday at the Scottish, when you were right hovering around the cut line, and played hard coming in. Why was that important to you, and is it more of a just a sign of the consistency and something you're more proud of than people realize?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I feel like, yeah, I feel like I've always -- I just take it really personally. I feel like you try and shape up your game to a place where you either win or you don't, and it sort of shakes down to that.

When I was a rookie I missed a lot of cuts by one shot, or Korn Ferry Tour or rookie year on TOUR, and even when I missed it by one, I was, I'm the guy who thinks he can hole out from the fairway, like I did at Riviera, to make the cut by one, and have to make like a 4-footer in the dark. So there's a certain self belief in me and I take that stuff personally when I'm on the cut line or too far back. It's a huge challenge that I really enjoy in the game is when you're sort of there and the pressure's up, and you might be in 60th or 70th, but you still have a lot to prove to yourself.

Q. Is Tiger's record unbeatable?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I can't even think that far ahead. I know that's just a result, but that's putting that -- that's in a different category. So I'm just, like you said, I really, I really enjoy playing golf tournaments, and when there's a cut line, I enjoy battling that out, too.

Q. You can't say "either one" as your answer here. Is there a major that you still need that for the career Grand Slam that you most want to win next?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: (Laughing). Either one. I'm not picky. I'm really not.

Q. Is there one you think suits your game better?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I feel like Augusta would be a decent place for me. It's gone -- the redesign has gone

more distance bias, too, so that could sort of pair into me hitting it a little bit further, giving me some edge. I'm always looking for an edge anyway I can, so maybe that.

But, you know, I love U.S. Opens. They're sort of that -- every day at a U.S. Open feels like you're on the cut line. That's just the beauty of that tournament, it's an absolute monster. So, again, I'm not picky at all.

Q. What's the status of your dad's place over here that he's been working on?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's great. Yeah, my wife and I went over, we hopped over there for 20 hours, I was with my mom and dad over there. It was beautiful. It was a little bit rainy and then the sun broke out. But it was awesome to just be there. His container is still there. He's got some new equipment, so he's kind of progressed out of the dark ages of using a hand machete or something to clear out some area, got him some heavier equipment so he can make some more progress. But he loves working on the land, and I think he just feels really good, he feels healthier, and is just a happier guy, so that makes me happy.

Q. If somebody told you a year ago in January how your year was going to go, what would have surprised you or maybe pleased you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I would have been pleased if they told me that. Honestly, I don't feel like I would have been crazy surprised. I've been very close for a very long time. I had a really strong feeling after I won the PGA, just to really get over that hump, that, I was like, Just give me a chance at another one and I'm going to get it, is sort of how I felt, and then I was able to do that at the Open Championship.

So there was this, like, overwhelming amount of validation and belief that kind of grew in me that, Thank goodness. I did it. I can do this again. So I think that's where you saw that, sort of a quick clip of the two.

Q. I wouldn't know obviously, but I would think some players when they got past that hump and got the first one, I wouldn't say there would be a hangover of a celebration, but do you think it's normal to be thinking, I need the next one and I need it now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: We all have -- yeah, I think anyone that plays pro sports has got some serious problems. It is like a -- it can be under whelming at times to where, you know, I heard Scottie talking about it, to where he's like, he's talking about how great his season is, but he's like, I just want to go home and be with Bennett

and Meredith, like right now, versus talking to you guys.

It's like, for me, you know, that first one was really, really special, but as soon as is that second one happened I had that sort of the moment where I was like, Dang it, I got to wait a long time until I can play in another one. And that's like, you don't really, you know, you really have to set some time to enjoy it, with some family, with some friends, to share it, appreciate it, but, you know, it was nice that that came in the off-season. I would have loved to have just run straight back into all four of 'em shortly after, just to, it's just what I've always wanted.

Q. Did you ever have the proper celebration for winning the majors that you thought you might?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I feel like I've had sort of special moments with -- now that I'm in Florida, I've had a few friends, some of Maya's friends and some of my friends come and visit us. And they're very -- it wasn't like everyone all together, but it was very, like, individual celebrations that we were able to grab dinner and sort of talk about it, and sort of their experience with it, and them yelling in front of the TV, and these are people I've known for a very long time. So I think, yeah, I was able to -- I wasn't able to bring it with me to share it because my parents had the trophy, but definitely, you know, set aside a special moment to sort of share that with friends.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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