

THE PLAYERS Championship

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference

JACK RYAN: We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at THE PLAYERS Championship. Xander comes into the week No. 4 in the FedExCup, No. 5 in the official World Golf Ranking ranking and is tied for the most top 10s on TOUR this season with five. So if we could just get an opening comment ahead of your third appearance here at THE PLAYERS Championship.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's good to be back. It's kind of crazy that it's been a full year since this crazy COVID thing happened. So it's nice to be back here, played a few practice rounds already, it's nice to see some fans as well. This is my first tournament this season, I guess, or since COVID that I played with fans. So it's everything kind of feels like it's somewhat back to normal.

JACK RYAN: We'll go ahead and open it up to questions.

Q. Florida golf and California golf. Can you compare and contrast?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean it's interesting, this week compared to when we normally play this event it's more grain, you know, I'm used to it being a little more bone dry, the rough just seems to be sort of sweet sassy molasses. It's just a really weird difference for me when it comes to playing this week versus San Diego or even Vegas. Vegas has been bone dry and it's really sticky and sort of different here for sure.

Q. Do you like the style of golf better in California or Florida?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean I grew up on the West Coast, so yes, you know, I mean it is overseed right now, so it is kind of similar to back home, but much stickier, I would say than what I'm used to on the West Coast.

Q. When you look at the list of past winners of this event it's a pretty eclectic bunch, it doesn't seem like one of those courses that plays into one style of play. How would you describe TPC Sawgrass? What does it



test? What kind of course is it, from your eyes?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's just everything. I think that it really speaks to your whole bag. You can't really kind of hide any weakness out here. You can hit the ball great all day, putt really well and then struggle with chipping. Or you can kind of hit it bad, hit your irons great, hit it bad off the tee and hit your irons great and putt and chip very well and you're just not going to put it together.

So it's a big ask, there's a reason everyone wants to win this week and I think it's just because it really is a true test. Now these couple practice rounds we have had a little bit of more wind, which has made it pretty difficult.

Q. You're saying it does a good job of identifying who is really playing the best that week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you just can't fake it around the property. I'm a big fan of faking it until you make it, but this is not one of those places where it's going to do you any good.

Q. Had a couple of things. In your limited experience here what do you like about this course and what do you dislike about it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I like the fairness of the property. I think it's a really fair golf course. There's always a predominant side you can hit it towards off the tee or sort of into the green. Most of the time hitting towards trouble it sounds kind of weird but you almost want to be more aggressive to certain pins because if you do kind of bail on the obvious side you'll have a much more difficult up-and-down.

So those are some of the small things I've been trying to pick up on certain pin locations out here. Just either from watching film or just not even watching film but just thinking of what I've done in the past and what other guys have done in the past.

In terms of dislike, there isn't really anything that I dislike about this property, in all honesty.

Q. What's your example of an unfair course?



XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't know, any course that's sort of -- I mean everyone always plays the same course, so it's not really -- an unfair course would just be when things get kind of dicey with the greens and the wind -- when luck becomes involved, I would say.

So based on -- I've been on both sides of it, just as everyone else, where I tee off early, there's no wind and then the wind picks up and it's blowing balls off greens. So it's sort of the longer you stay out here the more it will balance out. And I think, I would say unfair is just whenever sort of the course conditions become a little ridiculous and that's just unfortunate.

Q. Secondly, given your relatively youthfulness here, there's been a number of players who have been in like in the top-10 who have taken a plunge in form and eventually worked their way back. You've been fairly consistent, actually, for the last three or four years. Do you ever pay attention to things like that that happen to other players and does it get your attention in terms of let's not have that happen to me?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you sort of -- you'll notice it, you know what I mean? I mean, when guys are in great form, you obviously see their name everywhere and you just know who has won recently. I think we're all very aware of who has won golf tournaments.

In terms of guys who aren't playing as good, you can kind of tell as well when someone's winning a bunch and then they stop winning, it's kind of in your face. But there's something to be learned from that. I mean, on my camp we just try and -- everyone on my team just tries to make sure that my mind doesn't wander too much and I don't try and do anything too crazy. Us golfers out here, I speak for the most of us, that we're always chasing perfection and we always try and do everything so perfect that you can kind of go down a weird path or a beaten path where it's sort of not very fruitful. I think it's my team's biggest job to sort of keep my mind occupied on what I'm kind of good at and away from trying to change my swing or do anything too crazy at once.

Q. I know you played a lot of practice rounds with Patrick Cantlay and you guys have become pretty good friends. How did that friendship develop between the two of you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It kind of started at the Presidents Cup. We started both of us were sort of like I would say lone soldiers for the most part, in terms of playing practice rounds by ourselves. And I know his team pretty well and he knows my -- now he knows my team pretty well -- but I pretty much knew everyone on Pat's

team before I knew Pat really well himself. So it was kind of an easy mix. We just kind have a pretty laid back schedule for a practice time. We do enjoying a game every week, it's very competitive, and we feel like when we play against each other it sort of sharpens ourself for the best week possible.

Q. Who usually wins?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's a mixed bag. You can't fake it in that match either. Pat's a hard person to beat. He's pretty hard to -- it's almost impossible to rattle him. So it's really good practice for me to try to beat him every week and try to learn as many things from him as I can.

Q. What do you most like about his game and how do you describe his demeanor on the course?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Both of us are in the no-reaction type area to we don't really get too high or too low. We, I think we enjoy that about each other. He's just a well-rounded guy. I think he does everything really well. If you look at his stats, I mean I think last year or a year ago he had the best all-around stats on TOUR. So he really doesn't have a weakness and so there's a lot for me to learn from him in terms of short game shots and how he approaches the game. So it's been great for me. I'm not sure if he's learned anything from me, but I definitely learned something from him.

Q. Do the holes at TPC Sawgrass annoy you in any regard? Are there some -- we all know the 17th no one really likes, it's fun for everybody to watch it, apparently not a lot of fun for you all to play. But are there other holes that get your attention?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I wouldn't say 17 annoys us, it's a very anxious shot. You think about it all day, you walk up 16, you see the hole, you're sitting there trying to figure out what the wind's doing. It's a very -- if you hit a good shot on 17 it's a very nice feeling -- even though 18's a very tough shot.

I would say this week 16 is a very important tee shot, even though not many will talk about it, it's a very important hole. It's a dogleg left, aggressive dogleg left and the wind's left-to-right for the most part.

18 is another hole that will get your attention. I mean, there's so many tee shots out here where, depending upon what the wind's doing they can be either easier or more difficult and I would say those last three will definitely get your attention, just kind of off the bat, from what I can think of.

Q. Do you like to play games in advance of tournaments? I know some guys have really just gotten dialed in on, play nine-hole practice rounds, take notes, etcetera. Is that always a part of your routine these days is playing a game?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think so. When it's just Pat and I it's pretty easy to play a game and practice at the same time since it's just two people. But today we played a game Pat and I versus Jordan and Justin. That's a good way to start the week and a nice competitive match for all of us.

So I like playing games. I think you do most of your homework on your own time or on a Monday. If you can kind of challenge your game on Tuesday and Wednesday, just before the tournament, it kind of gets, for me personally it gets my mind in a more competitive sort of state and I think it kind of bears more fruit than not.

Q. Who won the match today?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: We actually tied. JT made like a -- we had them down every single way and JT made like a 35-footer on the last and Pat and I both missed our birdie putts. We played the front nine, so it was a good halved match.

Q. Patrick Cantlay, pretty much inscrutable to the general public. What's something that you know about him that the rest of us don't?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Man, trying to think. I mean, I guess no one really knows him. He's big into reading. I guess people could have guessed that in a sense. He's pretty well read. I would say he's pretty well read for how young he is. There's a lot of topics that he can talk about that I'm completely lost on.

JACK RYAN: Those are all the questions that we have. We appreciate your time and best of luck this week.

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