

THE PLAYERS Championship

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Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, USA

TPC Sawgrass

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by world No. 3, Xander Schauffele. Xander, welcome back, making your seventh start here and third of the season. Just start off how it's feeling after a full week back at Arnold Palmer.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's good to be back. I feel pretty good. It's finally a little bit warmer so that's helping. Yeah, a lot of work to do with little time.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to go ahead and open it up for questions.

Q. The last time you were here, pretty good tournament. Scottie kind of lapped everybody. Since then you won two majors. How do you feel differently after having won two of those tournaments as opposed to maybe a year ago at this time?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Unfortunately I think those two majors have absolutely nothing to do with what's going on right now, with what I'm doing, me just getting back into -- trying to get back into good golfing shape.

So it's a nice thing to think about in my head, but it's definitely not where my brain's going. I'm just trying to tackle the task at hand and learn from my flaws last week, my struggles last week and try and clean them up for this week.

Q. When Jay was in here earlier, he was probably either a bit generic, generalizing, evasive, whatever you want, whenever the subject of a potential reunification of LIV and the TOUR subject came up. As a player and in conversations that you've had with other players, do you sense that there's sort of a fatigue setting in because this thing has gone on for so long?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I think everyone was pretty excited. There were whispers about things getting back together, and I'm sure there's a ton of stuff that he's not allowed to talk about based on NDA's and things of that nature, so I'm sure that's where the evasive, sort of boring

answers came from.

Yeah, I mean, things take time. I think everyone knows that. Everyone should be pretty primed by what's been happening in our game of golf to be patient and know that it's just going to get somewhere at some point. No one knows when.

Q. How would you assess where you're at after last week health-wise and also in terms of your form?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Form's a bit dodgy. I feel pretty good actually, yeah. I think it was a true test. Probably the worst course to come back to after not playing much golf, just from a confidence standpoint.

But luckily, I'll convince myself otherwise. Overall, yeah, body feels good and I'm excited to try and get back in the swing of things.

Q. You said at the beginning like you feel like you got to catch up or you're running out of time type of thing. Is there any danger in pushing too hard to get yourself back to that point as quickly as you can? Obviously we know what's coming up; big tournament this week, the Masters, and you want to be ready, but is there some sort of fine line in there as well?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I think so. I mean, based on what I've been told, I hope I can't make things worse. I got pretty much all hands on deck to make sure after rounds and before rounds I'm in a nice warm spot to get going. Is there a little bit of fear there? I mean, a little bit. But I think that's probably how I got hurt in the first place, just too much run-and-gun. But I think I need a little bit of that right now.

Q. Was there just some rustiness last week do you think? I think you said you had only played 18 holes twice, right, going in?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, before Bay Hill I played nine holes with JT on a par-3 course and then 18 holes with some of the Ryder Cup boys from the team. Call it 27 holes going into Bay Hill, which, you know, I needed a little bit more probably.



Q. What is the transition from a nine-hole golf course to a PGA TOUR event at Bay Hill like competitively?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: A lot of nerves. A lot of thick rough. A lot of crusty greens. Just stuff you don't see. I think I can see myself hitting a correct shot. It's just it is different when the gun goes off. It's different having to make a six-footer after not having to make one for quite some time.

I had an off-season and I played Sentry, which is usually a cozy warm-up and then nothing, so it was literally -- it felt like it was, you know, not just six weeks but sort of call it three months since I had to hit an important putt.

So just getting the nerves, getting kind of getting everything out, clanking a few chips, dumping a few bunker shots, just all those bad shots I hit last week, trying to get them out of my system.

Q. Unrelated question, but we've been hearing a lot about this Fan Forward stuff. Just wondering what, if anything, you've learned from that experience?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I might get in trouble; I don't really know a whole lot about the Fan Forward to be completely honest. I feel like I try to sign as many autographs as possible after rounds and get every kid that I can get.

So I've heard, I know there's been -- I saw JT's e-mail when I was at home and trying to get a better experience for fans, but if you ask me specific questions on it, I will fail this test.

Q. What can you tell us about the expanding on-site fan experience?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I knew I hated him for a reason. I don't know, why don't you tell me.

Q. I don't know it myself.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Okay, very good.

Q. I wanted to ask you, when you came here for the first time, what you thought of this golf course and has anything changed when you show up years later?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I loved it. I came here before Puerto Rico my rookie year and played and it was like Sunday, it was 50 degrees and blowing 30 when I came here for the first time.

Q. What did you come here for? You weren't in the

tournament, were you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I was not in the tournament. I just figured I would play it eventually, so I thought maybe practice, you know.

Q. You played a practice round?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, yeah, before Puerto Rico. That's what I did my rookie year.

But I love property. I actually think it was -- you have to think a lot more when we used to play it in May, when it's dry and it's not overseed.

I think it's a real thinker's course. You can't just bomb driver and catch the corner of the fairway and it stops. You're trying to shape shots so the ball runs out into the correct spots, and around the greens is really, really scary when the greens are almost kind of Bay Hilly. I still think it's a great test and it produces great winners.

Q. You finished second your first year, or low score of those not named Webb, and then you miss a bunch of cuts and there was a back-door T20 and then a really nice finish last year. You're not alone like that; there's guys who have won this thing who wonder how they ever won here. Why is it, do you think, that you've got so many varied results of so many people? Like there's no steady like Tiger-at-Firestone stuff; these guys are all over the map. What is it about the course that does that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's just -- Scottie won it two years in a row. I think if you, someone that has kind of got the whole package is going to play well here. You're hitting a lot of fairways, you can shape the ball off the tee, short game's wicked, you can get a little bit of relief on the greens. It's not like you need to putt the lights out of it to play really well at Sawgrass; if you can strike it around the property, you can give yourself a little bit of relief.

Q. When you really, really want to win a particular event and there are expectations that you could and should, or could anyway, is that good? Does that add to you? Or what are expectations like? Can they be good? Can they be bad?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it's however you shape it up in your head. I feel like it's good to have high expectations. I think for me, at least personally, when I'm -- when I really want something, I usually work and am motivated extremely hard to get to that point. Just like a dog chasing its tail, I feel like I'll just keep going until I get it, and I'm stubborn that way.



I'm not thinking about the actual end result when I'm trying to get it. I'm thinking about trying to do all the things correctly to get there. So it's extremely validating and rewarding when you're able to meet the expectations and when you don't meet them you just keep pushing and you keep working harder.

Q. I know it's ongoing, but physically what did it take for you to get back to a point where you could play? And then you kind of mentioned it, but before rounds and after rounds, what are the things you're doing to make sure that you're physically ready to play?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just extra physio work. I won't even call it extra. Just making sure certain parts of my body are moving well. A whole lot of nothing to get healthy, unfortunately. That area just seems -- people say there's not much blood flow there, so any sort of movement will maybe slow it down, so I did a whole lot of nothing. Just sat around and sort of waited for it to heal. Then, yeah, good physio work, seeing my trainer, kind of see both those guys twice a day.

Q. What did you use that free time for?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I was able to spend some quality time with my wife. Not a time where she -- I'm at home doing nothing, so I think she probably got sick of me after the first week, and so able to watch more golf than I normally watch, watch a ton of shows that I normally wouldn't watch early in the year. I got to see some friends in San Diego that I haven't been able to see either because I'm trying to prepare for golf, so it was a pretty weird stretch for me.

Q. How does the rough here compare to last week, and is there any mental hesitation at all because of the rib healing?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I kind of got that out of my head last week. First thing did I was just throw a ball in the rough and said here we go, you know. So took a wipe out of it and felt pretty decent. So I think there's less hesitation compared to last week.

Q. Is the rough about the same?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's different. I would say it's very lush and healthy here. It's a little stickier almost. Golf balls will sit kind of mid, and it seems more dense.

Bay Hill, felt it was a little bit spottier and kind of would fall or not sit as sort of upright. I don't know if that's a fertilizer thing. Just they're both thick though and good to avoid.

Q. The answer to your first question earlier, you talked about blood flow. Are you still having issues where you're not getting good blood flow for the area that's injured?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No. He asked - sorry I don't know your name - but he asked, you know, what I have to do to get better and I said a whole lot of nothing. Just because there isn't a whole lot of blood flow in the area, it takes time to heal.

Q. The other question is generally you come to a golf tournament, your idea is to win and that's what you're focused on. Do you have that focus this week, and if not, what is your goal this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, definitely trying to win still. It may look differently in my head or I may need to work extra hard to get to that spot compared to other weeks where I feel like I can kind of let my round come to me or, you know, have what feels like coasting through preparation a little bit more. I need to have a lot more intent coming back to do the right things so I don't go down a weird path too early. So the goal and the mindset are the same though.

Q. Wondering with Scottie trying to three-peat here, you've played with him a lot, is there anything you admire about the way he prepares for a tournament?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I think I admire his shots more. I played with him nine holes today and he just hits it really nice. He chips it really nice and he hits it really nice. That's sort of the things that I can see.

It's not like -- he's not like hitting it 50 yards past anyone. He's just hitting the extra fairway more than someone. He's hitting it closer than everyone, and he's chipping it closer than everyone.

I had to do so much homework on the greens myself, I didn't have time to watch him putt. So, yeah, he hits it really nice, and I think he's just got really good structure and preparation, so it's definitely something I take note of, but it seems like clockwork to me now.

THE MODERATOR: Xander, thank you for the time.

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