

WM Phoenix Open

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

Scottsdale, Arizona, USA

TPC Scottsdale

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the media center here at the WM Phoenix Open. Xander, making your sixth start. All five prior starts, they've been top 20s. How are you feeling entering the week coming off back-to-back top 3s at this event?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Good. This place has been kind to me, so I'm hoping it continues to be and put myself in good position for the weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Special atmosphere this week. What do you like specifically about this tournament?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, no different than years past. Probably a little bit more hectic with the Super Bowl down the street. But yeah, just got to embrace it. It's a lot. I think I embrace it pretty well. If you're making birdies and playing well, then the crowd will be on your side, and that's kind of right where you want them.

Q. I was told to ask you about your recent haircut and your thoughts on it.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah. Just a buzz cut. I'm assuming my caddie told you to ask that question.

Q. Yes.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It was Austin who cut my hair.

Q. Give him a grade out of 10.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't know. I don't look at myself very much. How did he do? I feel like I'm kind of sneaky balding, too, so...

It's all right, though. A little fade on the side maybe.

Q. 7.5.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think he'd take that, to be honest. It was free, too.

Q. Rory was asked in here earlier if he feels like the best player in the world, and he said right away, yes. I'm curious if you've ever felt like you were No. 1, the best player on the planet.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I feel like I've had flashes where I've played to that level. I think the beautiful part of what I'm doing is I feel like I haven't even touched up on that yet. There's a lot that I need to do to get to that point where I wake up and can just do everything with the golf ball, and the mental game with that also follows.

Yeah, I've had flashes and moments, but it's definitely something that everyone, Rory and the guys who are very confident in saying it, they've been there at No. 1. They believe they can be No. 1, and I do, as well, but I just know I need to do a few more things with my game in order to do that. Well on my way.

Q. Talked to a couple guys, and they mentioned how this week can be exhausting or a little bit more tiring than other PGA TOUR weeks. Is that the case with you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah. You know, probably. At the end of the day, you're maybe a little bit more mentally drained than normal. Just a little bit more focused. There's a lot of really good holes on this course that demand a lot of focus, and when there's a lot of stuff going on and you're waiting on a tee box for 20 minutes, you still have to step up and sort of sack up and hit a really good shot.

I think for those reasons, maybe it becomes a little mentally draining at times.

Q. Hovland mentioned 16th especially is, quote, a "s--- show." How enjoy --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Subtle.

Q. Yes, exactly. Do you enjoy that atmosphere?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, juices get flowing in there, tend to club down versus trying to hit a sawed-off



shot. Yeah, just hit the green and people will cheer for you. It's pretty simple.

Q. Yesterday you said you're at a point now where you're feeling almost 100 percent, no more excuses. Is that the case? You're at your best?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I feel very healthy, which is great. It's been -- Palm Springs and Torrey was a little iffy, good days, bad days. But just kind of a healing process. Very lucky, like I said before, I've got a really good team around me, and they've been telling me and giving me good advice on what I can and can't do and should and shouldn't do.

I've been following their every step, and I'm feeling really good body-wise.

Q. You're never owed anything in this sport, but do you feel a sense of one or two that got away and there's that extra drive to get it done here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think you just have to go and get it. I feel that's the mentality. If you sit around feeling like the game owes you something, you'll probably be on your couch before you know it. I feel like no matter what happens, you've got to go and get it, and I think in every one of those moments where I had a close call, I didn't get it. It's one of those things where it puts a chip on your shoulder, one that's already there, but it maybe adds another mark to it, and then you've just got to move on.

Q. In a normal tournament when you're in contention or in the lead, it's intense coming down. It's not easy to get it done on the final two or three or four holes. In this tournament, because of the way it's structured, you get to 16, you're sort of surrounded by everybody and it's rowdy and crazy. Does that make it harder just because those last three holes are just -- especially 16 are just so intense normally?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think if you just -- the crowd obviously adds to the excitement, which is great, and if you just look at the holes coming down the stretch, they're really demanding shots. It's very much an execution finish. Hit the fairway on 15, you've got an iron into the par-5. Hit a good iron, you're on the green. There's no real -- it's hard to play to a side because it's an island green.

Then you've got 16; it's a short iron.

You've got 17; if you hit a good tee ball, you can get on the green. If you pull it a little bit, you're in the water. If you go out to the right, you have a really hard up-and-down.

18, if you hit a good drive, you're going to have a lob wedge or sand wedge into the green. That's just kind of how the hole sets up. If you pull it, you're in the water, if you blow it out right, you're in the bunker, and all of a sudden you're playing like an actual -- guys can make it look really easy when they're executing shots. There isn't really like a side to miss on on this course. You have to just, once again, hit good shots and then you'll be in a good position.

I don't know if I really answered your question, but I think with the crowd and atmosphere and putting a bigger emphasis on execution, maybe that's why it's so exciting coming down the stretch.

Q. You led the TOUR in par-4 scoring average last year. Just wondering what you think you do so well on par-4s that allows you to do that.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's probably multiple answers to it, but I think if you think your way around certain holes, there is a dominant side you can play to. Sort of play your way up -- the fairway is obviously where everyone's eyes goes, but if you kind of frame a certain hole a certain way based on how you hit it and how you're hitting it, you can kind of give yourself a bigger advantage on a hole to certain pin locations.

I think probably last year I started chipping a little bit better than in years past, which probably helped me. You're allowed to be a little bit more aggressive into pins, make a little bit more birdies, and then for the most part I'd say I play to the fat part of the green a lot of times. It just suits my eye most times. If the pin is left or right, I try and work it from the center of the green to the hole and I try and execute golf shots that way.

That gives me a lot of opportunities to putt -- make a two-putt from 40 feet on par-4s where guys may short-side themselves. Guilty of all those things I just said, but maybe that's the answer. I'm not sure.

Q. If someone was to parlay you winning here on Sunday into a Super Bowl team winning on Sunday, which team would it be?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't have any skin in the game. I'd probably bet on the Chiefs if I had to place a bet. I'm just hoping for a close game. I'd like to see a game-winning drive there in the fourth quarter. I think that would be really entertaining for selfish reasons, but I'm sure fans from both sides would love a blowout after the second quarter. I've got nothing in it.

Q. Looking back to the first time you played the 16th



hole on a Saturday, what exactly was going through your head?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I feel like I was way more nervous. You kind of get anxious when you're out there because the music is so loud. I think I was more nervous. I think it was kind of just nerves to hit the green.

Then I missed the green a bunch of times and I got booed, and it's not so bad. Nothing is worse than hitting a bad shot on your own, by yourself. It just sucks all around, so getting booed on top of it doesn't really make it too much worse.

Q. When you set up to the ball, it kind of looks like you're adjusting your hands a little bit before you actually hit it. Have you always done that, or is that from an old grip change?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I get really nervous before I'm about to go, so I have to regrip club a lot. I'm just kidding.

It's not something I do intentionally. I think it's just to kind of keep tension out of my forearms. I don't want to be super tense and static, so a lot of guys move their feet, I kind of just move my hands. Yeah, hopefully I don't do it -- if there's a time where I start doing it a lot, and I remember that video of someone, they started counting how many times he's regripping. Hopefully I don't get to that point, but I'm sure someone will let me know if I do.

THE MODERATOR: Perfect. Thank you, Xander, for taking the time. Good luck this week.

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