

Arnold Palmer Invitational

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Bay Hill, Florida, USA

Bay Hill Club and Lodge

Xander Schauffele

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome world No. 3 Xander Schauffele to the media center at the Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard. Xander, you're making your first start since the Sentry in January. Can we get some comments on how you're feeling.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's great to be back, nice to see some familiar faces. And, yeah, definitely had some time to reflect in, you know, what was six weeks. Sounds pretty short, but felt like a lifetime for me, so I'm just really happy to be here.

THE MODERATOR: This is your fourth start at Bay Hill where you have a couple of top-25 finishes. You just got done with the pro-am, just some comments about how the course is looking, I know we got a little bit of rain.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's not the, I wouldn't call it like the dream place to come back to, to be completely honest, on short reps, I'm going to have to go to a special place mentally. Everyone kind of knows what Bay Hill gives you, it takes a lot more than it gives, and you have to earn every par or birdie or bogey that you make. It's a tough place.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions, please.

Q. Can you talk about the impact of your new coach Chris Como and how he's helped your game, and also is your dad still involved in coaching or has he completely stepped aside?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: My dad will always, he may be a few thousand miles away, but he'll always be there. He's still in Hawaii now, I don't think he's left the island. But he'll be out at the Masters. We talk all the time. So he's always going to have some influence on me to some capacity.

But Chris has been awesome. Yeah, it's been nice. Especially coming back, too. Just been able to see him a few times. I've been on a short ball count for the last eight days and was able to see him a few times in that stretch. Just trying to maximize everything I can to come back out

here.

Q. Can you give us a timeline of when you first felt something in your rib, when alarm bells first went off and all that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, no alarm bells, really. I mean, there were some bells that I ignored. There was no sort of, Oh, shoot, my rib's killing me, that kind of moment where, like it was in the gym or swinging. It was a kind of perfect storm. Trainer had to go back, renew his visa. I was left on my own and apparently I'm still a toddler. I kept training and golfing and training and golfing, and I'm used to having someone either hold my hand or do something as simple as soft tissue. I didn't get any help and I think that is sort of what put my back against the wall.

Q. When was that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: December -- he left December 13th and I kind of started feeling bad a couple days before Christmas. So even at Sentry I kind of told myself, Oh, I'll be back with my team, you know, I've kind of had this before and it went away. I'm not really sure if it was added speed or -- I really don't know. It wasn't like we were doing anything crazy that I didn't do for the last year or so. So it was really unfortunate and definitely something I learned from moving forward.

Q. What made you decide to come back?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just so I could sit here and talk to you, you know. I've been looking forward to this for the last six weeks (smiling).

No, I just, I tried, I tried to come -- I was sitting at home on the West Coast, that sucked for me. One of my dreams is to play Torrey South earlier in the year with long rough, cold, South only. And so to miss Torrey twice really, really sucked. I tried. I tried. I hit some drivers the Monday before Torrey Pines, kind of felt okay. Then I tried to play nine holes and then things started to feel worse and worse. And the doctors are like, Nothing's worse than hitting a wedge out of thick rough and having everything come to a complete stop, you could make it worse. So that was an



easy decision for me to make, thinking of long-term goals.

Q. I guess what I mean is, what was the confirmation that it was okay to play here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Lots of scans. CT scans, ultrasound, MRIs, that all came back clean. So there's minimal discomfort, but as long as I know I'm not hurting myself and the scans are clean then I'm going to be in a good place.

Q. Jordan obviously with his wrist he thought everything was good, and then he came back and there's been some causes that concern him a little, taking some time. So you don't feel like there's any issues with you coming back?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's a really good question. Yeah, one of my first things I did yesterday when I played, teed off on 10 and hit the fairway, and then first thing I did was throw a ball in the rough and take a wipe at it. I was telling Austin, If this doesn't go well then I'm going to get in my car and drive back to Jupiter.

So, yeah, I mean, is there concern? I'm not really too concerned right now, to be honest. Everyone's, I feel like I've been pretty conservative with everything. Hopefully that pays off. If things go south, I won't be scared to back off, just because it's, you know, what's down the road is more important.

Q. Is there a medical term for what it is?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: The MRI and what the radiologist told me was intercostal strain, with a small tear in the cartilage.

Q. We talked about this with Scottie, who was using a wine glass to make ravioli, so he's lost, he lost some time. You lost some time. Obviously it's time that you need to get yourself ready for these big events that are coming up. Are you concerned about that time lost?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes and no. I would be lying if I said I was in the most comfortable position ever. I've been practicing mentally to convince myself that I'm still in some crazy good form. Trying to use that sort of low expectation with serious focus to try and get the most out of what you're doing. Just think about all the greats that have had to take some time off and came back and played really well.

I think Scottie came back and he wasn't close to winning, but played pretty decent and put himself back in the mix, so I don't see why I can't do that.

Q. What side is the injury?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's my right side.

Q. So is that worse to be on the right side than the left the way you swing?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Your ribs, the way when you swing, it's rotational, so they both go through flexion and extension on both sides, depending on which side you're going through. So I guess they, you know, they may extend on my way down and compress and that could be part of the discomfort, but I couldn't tell you.

Q. Just to follow on the previous question, you won the last major played, obviously won two last year, going to the Masters you would get a lot of attention trying to get that one now too, and probably will anyway. I just wonder if this sort of, you know, you have to temper that a little bit and be patient with your self with all of this.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, yes and no. I feel if you're trying to win a major you got to get yourself into the best mental place possible. So whether it's you play your way into it, or your game is really sharp and you feel like you've been practicing really well, there's a few ways to do it. I've never won the Masters, so technically I'm still searching on the right recipe on how to get ready for that event.

Q. You sort of pointed to where it was that you were hurt. Do you mind giving a better point. Is it like in here on the right side?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Somewhere like right in here (pointing to head.) Yeah, I just, like, you know, T, I don't know what you want to call, T-6, -7, -8 area.

Q. Okay. So the lower ribs.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Sure. Upper. Upper? Upper maybe.

Q. Well, upper would be up here, because you got 'em --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you're right. Lower. Yeah, mid? Mid?

Q. Take your shirt off.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I've done weirder stuff in the last six weeks.

Q. Because all of us do different kinds of things when we move or work or play golf or whatever, and so we're trying to imagine how awful that must feel for you to hurt in the important part of a golf swing, it would be awful. So I was just curious so we can explain to people what you're feeling.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, you know, life, you know, it is what it is. I've come to that conclusion. I just, I feel lucky, you know, I haven't been hurt for pretty much my entire golfing career. And like I said, I consider myself pretty lucky, so kind of half empty, half full there, look on the positive side.

Q. You mentioned looking ahead to big events. PGA you're going to be defending champion. How do you like Quail and what do you like about it if you do?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Quail, it's become friendly to me. Haven't gotten over the hump quite yet on the property. It's just a big championship course. I think even if it's overseed or it's Bermuda, it plays very hard, and you have to hit a lot of quality golf shots. And yeah, a few of 'em, I think since I've been hitting my driver a little bit better a few of those holes sort of fit my eye and I can kind of take advantage of hitting it in the fairway and hitting it a bit further. Versus in the years past, you can't play that property crooked, it's just one of those places.

Q. Not only do you get sidelined in golf, but Scottie had mentioned like he had to brush his teeth left-handed and things like that. What daily life things did you find yourself limited in because of the ribs?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Oh, we can't talk about that (smiling). No, I'm kidding.

No, the weird thing was really when I was at home and not doing anything, when I was sitting on the couch with my French bulldog, just watching other people play golf, or watching a TV show or something, I wasn't sitting there like, Oh, my gosh, I'm in so much pain. You know what I mean? It was sort of abrupt, like if I would wake up and roll over to grab my phone, or to grab something, or sneeze if I'm like sitting on the couch in a weird position. Stuff like that is kind of where I would remind myself like, Oh, okay, I'm not great right now. But if it was sort of me just sort of sitting like this talking to people I wouldn't be like, Oh, I'm hurt. You know what I mean?

So it was only really bad for I would say a short stretch after Sentry and TGL, where I think the inflammation was really apparent on the MRI. And then once we got rid of the inflammation it was only when I started twisting and

moving that it started to hurt again. But it's all part of the process.

Q. No having to put things up in the garage on a high shelf or anything?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, I'm too short. I got to get other people for that.

Q. Also, how many consecutive days have you been able to play golf, and are you concerned about having to go four days and then next week four more?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, I haven't, unfortunately, been able to -- when I was in San Diego I played nine holes with my irons only. Then shut it down through five days leading into Genesis, once I knew I wasn't playing. Then I played nine holes with JT on a par-3 course in Jupiter. Then I played 18 holes in Jupiter before I left. Then I played nine holes yesterday and 18 today. So this is as good as it's going to get.

Q. Scottie's been No. 1 for 90-something straight weeks. He has had such a dominant run at that top spot. Is it hard to have No. 1 as a goal right now, or do you focus on other things and let that kind of be something at the end of the road?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, it's in there somewhere. It's written down and it's definitely not hard to have it as a goal. I think when you don't do something it's pretty easy to leave it on a sheet. It's just sort of how long do you want to stare at it for. Right now, yeah, little wins are big for me right now. Whether it's getting through 18 holes, or 36 holes, clean, and feeling great, and getting a training session in, that's kind of what I'm looking for.

Q. Couple things, and I don't know how much you stayed plugged into TOUR stuff while you've been out, but as it relates to the TOUR Championship and whatever changes are being discussed, do you have any thoughts on what you would like to see, since you didn't like the old system, did you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I definitely haven't been that plugged in.

Q. Do you have thoughts? Did your brain shut down too?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It tends to. You know, I'm definitely on the simpleton side of things. I definitely wasn't sitting at home thinking of how I could make the TOUR Championship better. My whole goal was just to be able to play in it this year.

Q. Any thoughts on it now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Off the top of my head, I've heard all kinds of things. From, you know, match play to a smaller group, I guess, of match play at the end of the week, to sort of qualifying for that. And I honestly, I couldn't tell you. I have no clue what it's going to look like. I think there's a lot of people that need to be made happy, and then I think it's going to get presented and I don't think anyone's -- if it was such a good idea I think everyone would have landed on the same thing. But I don't think anyone's really come up with some great idea on how to get the whole thing right. Because it is tricky. That's all I got for you. A bunch of nothing.

Q. I heard you on a podcast once say that when you get angry you would try to rip a towel. Where did you come up with that, and tell me a story from the early days of your career when you did that.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You're trying to have me go to a dark place, you know what I mean? I've been steering away from that for quite some time. It was just some veteran told me that. I can't remember who it was. But they just said, If you're pissed off try to rip a towel in half and you will not be angry a couple minutes later, you'll just be sweating there in the bathroom all by yourself. So it was just a time on, you know, Korn Ferry Tour when I was rooming with Austin and, you know, I brought him out and his well being determined on how well I was playing, and it was all kind of crashing down on me quickly. I was missing eight, nine cuts in a row and I didn't want to show him that I was losing my mind. So I tried it in the bathroom and that veteran was right. You know, I was really angry and then kind of sat there and saw myself in the mirror and started laughing because like this is embarrassing. So I don't remember what podcast I said that on, but I'm shocked that I revealed that.

Q. What hotel chain were you at?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: An Extended Stay, probably. Going deep, baby.

THE MODERATOR: Happy to have you back, Xander. Appreciate the time as always. Good luck this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports