

# Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

## Xander Schauffele

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Xander Schauffele to the interview room here at the 2026 Valspar Championship. Xander, you're making your 209th start on the PGA TOUR and your fourth at the Valspar, where you've had some pretty good success. Just what are you looking forward to most being back here at the Copperhead course?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, good to be back. It's kind of a tricky course. I think I've always enjoyed the challenge. That's kind of why I've been back the last few years. Just presents itself well and different wind directions it can be a little intimidating. Just enjoy that challenge and, yeah, looking forward to having another good week.

THE MODERATOR: You said you just played nine. Did you see anything different, what did you find?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, the greens are soft obviously with the storm coming through, or couple storms, I should say. Greens are rolling really nice, pure. It's nice to be on green greens versus what we've had the last couple weeks. So hopefully we can get some putts to go.

THE MODERATOR: Since you mentioned the last couple of weeks, last week was third place for you and you played really well coming down the stretch. How would you describe the way you felt last week with the way your game's shaping up.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I felt pretty much unstoppable the first two rounds and then I had a weird Saturday. Then was having a weird Sunday for most of the day and then was able to sort of salvage a good finish there with the last four holes. Nice to obviously end the tournament that way. But would have been cool to be in the hunt there, but no complaints whatsoever.

THE MODERATOR: When you finished just a few groups earlier did you feel like you were still had a chance there?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, not really. Cam and Fitzy

were playing nice. Those holes were down wind, 17 and 18 were down wind. Anyone that's in that spot coming down those holes, unless it's sort of into the wind or a left-to-right wind or just something kind of funky, yeah, I figured they would manage and they did just that.

THE MODERATOR: If we have some questions we'll get you a microphone.

**Q. You said you felt unstoppable those first two days last week. How do you go about trying to recapture that feeling again?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just, you know, working on the same stuff. Maybe just seeing a few more putts drop. I think I played really good the first two rounds and whatever I was at was probably, what felt like the worst I could be at. Felt like I left a lot out there. I thought I was going to have a hot weekend and it was solid but nothing too special. Just digging into the same thing here this week.

**Q. As well as you played here at this course what have you learned you have to do well around here to be successful?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Just your approach needs to be spot on. The rough can be a little challenging around the greens depending upon what sort of lie you can get. It's a positioning battle around this property. If you're out of position it's easy to feel like you can get greedy and sort of force something. But sometimes that's not the best way to play this course. Just kind of plot your way around the property.

**Q. Being the highest-ranked golfer in the field does that carry some weight for you this week playing in this tournament, like it's not -- I don't mean this as a shot.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Starting to feel like one.

**Q. No, but it's not very often that you're like the highest ranked golfer in a field.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Dang.



**Q. I know. But does that carry some weight? Does it feel a little bit different?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Not really. It's my 209th start so I'm starting to feel like an old guy out here, to be honest. I feel that more than the actual rank in a field, you know what I mean. I think once the gun goes off and everyone tees off it's sort of anyone's game out here I feel like. The level of play is pretty high. So if anyone's playing really well, they're going to be right there. The only thing I can kind of lean on would be if I can put myself in a position to win I feel like I have a better chance than maybe someone that hasn't won. But you still have to earn that right there at the end.

**Q. Why do you think this field keeps increasing in strength? Why do you think players like yourself want to come here and maybe not go to Cognizant, it's a long Florida stretch, you've got the Texas two-step if you go, what makes this place attractive?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's tough. It's a tough course. I think it's sort of stood the test of time. There's a few holes where hitting it far helps, but you don't have to do that. It's had some really good winners. It probably fits nice in the schedule. It's a big haul to come over after I played, this is my seventh event in two months so seven of eight weeks. I think it's just a big haul to go from West Coast to East Coast and then keep going. So I think this kind of hits a nice little run going into Texas that a lot of guys like to play.

**Q. A year ago you came here obviously off a low point. You hadn't played well at THE PLAYERS and obviously this time you did play really well. How are things different? What is different from a year ago? I know that you were on the mend also at that time, but you did have a good week here last year for the tournament.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it was really confidence boosting. I was definitely coming back from injury. I was told not to play Bay Hill and PLAYERS as my first two coming back, two really hard just two really hard courses, two really hard cuts to make. Just two sort of punch-you-in-the-face courses after taking some time off, so definitely not a great place to gain confidence. And this one can bite you too. It's not like this is an easy track. Like I said, we have seen winners in single digits up to low teens kind of win this tournament. So just was able to start hitting my irons really good last year is what I remember. Just started hitting a lot of really quality approach shots. Didn't play really well off the tee, but sort of managed around the property and was able to take advantage of a good Sunday is what I remember.

**Q. I wanted to ask about your thoughts on what came out of Brian Rolapp's news conference last week. Obviously there's a lot to unpack still, but curious if you've talked with your peers about where you see the TOUR heading. I mean he mentioned 120-player fields, more signature type events, relegation and promotion. Do you guys have any sense of where it's headed and do you have any thoughts on and if you like any of those ideas?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean, he sat with us and we spoke at Riviera. We had a player meeting there. He was very up front with sort of what he sort of the ideas, he said nothing's concrete. He sort of wants to honor what we have now and not just pancake the schedule just in one year. It's going to be sort of like a rollout plan. So other than that I think he hasn't been too specific with sort of certain things just because I think there's just -- as I said, this is my 209th event, as I get older I'm starting to realize there's a lot more that goes into a tournament than I thought 200 events ago. I'm starting to realize that there's a lot that goes into it. When you want to change things and make everyone happy and sort of create a structure that's supposed to be there for 50-plus years, I wouldn't want to have that job. He's asked us to be patient and I think we're appreciative that he's communicating well and kind of keeping things in front of us. Other than that, no, I'm not going to sit and speculate. I did that for too many years. Just being patient, trusting that he's going to do the right thing by all the players and set the TOUR up for a good future.

**Q. As someone who's been part of the Signature Events fields that are smaller, with the no cut, the idea of expanding them by 40 or 50 players, are you okay with that? I mean, in theory that's not great for someone like you who's been in them.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I don't think it does anything to me. Yeah, I think it really doesn't do anything to me, honestly. If it's 70 or 100 or 120 I don't really care what number it is, as long as I'm in 'em and I'm playing and I'm playing well, that's kind of all I care about. So the opportunities are there, it's probably -- I don't know what the right number is. He's talking to media, he's talking to TV and all these things on sort of what's the right number, what's fair for everyone and those things. So like I said, there's lots to navigate to get that number right and it doesn't really make a difference to me if I'm playing against 70 guys or 100 guys or if there's a cut or not. I think I've proven that I pride myself on making cuts no matter what the field looks like.

**Q. As you worked your way back from injury what has**



**been the hardest part of your game to get back to a hundred percent?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Probably my brain. Yeah. Besides the actual rib itself or that sort of intercostal area, my brain. You have doubts and certain things creep in, and you definitely take good health for granted when you have it, when you're kind of running around as a kid. So now that I'm old and dusty and, you know, things kind of come at you fast. I think it took me a little while to get my feet under me and sort of get that confidence back to compete.

**Q. How is the weather, the rainy weather the past couple days changed how you're approach thing tournament?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it will sort of soften up the property. I think you can maybe be a little bit more aggressive than in years past. Usually these greens have a nice, they start green and they kind of get this little she know and sort of brownish color to 'em by Sunday. If the weather stays nice and sunny and a little bit warmer I think they can get there, but if not, then I think guys will be a little bit more aggressive coming into pins come the weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Since we're talking about being old and dusty and out here for more than 200 events, how has things changed for you and how do you think you've changed? You're a two-time major champion, a gold medalist in the Olympics, but you were also Rookie of the Year in 2017. How has that in 10 seasons changed you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You kind of live and learn. The injury was sort of the biggest hurdle I've had in my career in terms of, I felt like you can be leading a tournament and you lose it and you kind of learn from that. You never really expect to be injured ever. You don't plan for that. Luckily, I have a good team around me to sort of push me or keep me going and keep me healthy. It was one thing that was tough to learn from, but overall, I don't know, I mean, I think one thing I still realize is that I love playing golf. I love competing. If I spend two or three weeks at home I start to miss being out here. I'm sure that's going to change at some point.

Last week I was sitting at THE PLAYERS in the physio room watching Adam Scott playing and winning in 2004 with like the likes of Kevin Sutherland and Jay Haas and those guys out there. I was like, holy smokes, you know, he's been at it for a while. And it's impressive that he's sitting out here at 45 with 190 ball speed just doing his thing. So there's a lot less of those guys out here is what I've realized. When I first came on TOUR there was more, a few more of those sort of older 30 year olds and younger

40 year olds. And the TOUR's getting younger, which is great for golf, but I'm realizing I'm starting to be in that sort of weird spot, so I need to stay healthy and stay strong and keep competing.

THE MODERATOR: I just want to ask you, you mentioned the cut streak and the pride that you take in making cuts. You did have that current record, which is no longer current after missing that first cut this season. When that happened or when it was happening how did you feel? Did you sort of feel a relief of the pressure or was it a disappointment.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, for sure disappointing. It was kind of -- what was the most disappointing was there was no leaderboard on the North, and I can't really pull my phone out to look at what the cut line is, so I was kind of like guessing. And I feel like every other epic cut line that I was on, it was like 17, 16, there's this big old leaderboard right in front of my face, and I was like this is the number you need to get to. And it was sort of like a dog chasing a ball, like no matter what happens I'm going to get this ball. And the way it ended was it was like, all right, you missed cut. And I was like, I guess I'm going home, you know, and I guess I'll have the weekend off. And it felt weird to have Saturday and Sunday off for quite some time. If I could change anything I wish there was a leaderboard somewhere on that back nine that would have kicked me in the butt even more.

THE MODERATOR: With Scottie taking that mantle from you has he given you any grief about it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, no. No, he can give me grief about a lot of other stuff, but I don't think we're talking smack on that one.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Xander, appreciate your time have a great tournament this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you.

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