

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
January 22, 2020



XANDER SCHAUFFELE

DOUG MILNE: Xander Schauffele, thanks for joining us for a few minutes prior to the start of your fifth start here at Farmers Insurance Open, more recently off to a good start this season, a couple of runner-up finishes, top-10 in your third start this season. Talk about being back here at Torrey Pines coupled with how you're playing so far this season.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, consistent start I would say to the season, playing pretty well, in decent form. Love being here at Torrey Pines. Home is 20 minutes away and I just -- I missed the cut here a lot, but it just shows how much I love this event, I keep coming back. So looking for a good finish this year.

DOUG MILNE: You've had a chance to get out and see the course, just some thoughts on kind of how you're going with it this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, just classic Torrey. The weather's perfect, the rough is up, penalizing as always. The greens are, you know, Torrey-esque, a little bumpy here and there, smooth in certain parts. Sort of exactly I think where the tournament director or whoever wants this event to be and I think the players are happy with the course as well.

Q. Welcome back, Xander. I wanted to get your thoughts on kind of your grouping. You're with a hometown group with Phil and Fowler tomorrow. Then also maybe wanted to hear a little bit more about your caddie, because I understand you knew him from SDSU as well?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's a nice pairing. More familiar playing with Rickie as a member of the Presidents Cup team, so that was a nice experience getting to know him a little bit better.

Phil, local guy, played with him a few times at home. He's obviously busy, so it's not like I see Phil every day, but definitely nice to see both those guys on the pairing sheet.

Austin, yeah, he's a great dude. We go pretty far back, I guess, for how young we are. We both transferred in to San Diego State at the same time, mine was after a year at Long Beach State and Austin did two years at a community college up in Paso Robles. That's his hometown. We've just, we've worked ever since I got out of school. We both played at San Diego state as well. He's a golfer. Doesn't really like playing much now that he's caddying all the time, but he's been with me ever since Q-School after my senior year.

Q. What's the analysis of why you haven't played better here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's hard. You know, it's no easy go-around. I kind of laughed the other day when I thought about me coming out here as a college kid, it was just -- you have to be smart. You're going to hit some bad shots out here, a lot of management.

I feel more prepared this year than I have in any other year. I was sick last year during the event. I got the flu on, I don't know, Friday of last week. I feel great now, which is nice. So game feels ready, mentally I feel ready. Just touch up on a few things. Like I said, I did have the flu so I wasn't able to practice as much as I'd like coming in, but this is my backyard so I should be comfortable.

Q. Just what do you think of the changes that you've experienced so far with the course itself?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You know, I enjoyed them. I think sometimes changes make courses worse. I think none of these changes have done that. I think they've made them better, if anything.

Some of them are a bit tricky. You know, like the cross bunker on seven. It's not a bunker we can get into, but the hole does look -- it has a different appeal to it. Nine, the bunker there is a great placement for guys just trying to bomb driver, 3-wood. Got to plot a little bit more management-wise than before. I think on four, they did a great job with four making it accessible from both sides coming up to the green.

So for the most part -- and the course just looks awesome with most of those trees unfortunately going down. It's just that open feel. It has a different feel to it, you see more of the ocean. It's just got a cool vibe.

Q. Xander, as Doug said, three top-10s early this year, top-20s in three of the four majors last year, top-10 in the World Golf Rankings. All those things considered, how close is your game in your mind on the verge of majors where you've contended before early in your career? How close do you feel to that breakthrough at that level?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Close, you know. I think people say -- people feel close and they're far away and people feel -- look at Andrew Landry. It was nice to see him win last week. He was not in good form for a while, and I'm not surprised when I saw his name on top of the leaderboard, I knew it wasn't going to go away. When we start to feel things and get in a groove, things start to click.

To say I feel close or whatnot, I don't really know what that means, but I feel like my game and, you know, myself is slowly maturing. I'm more comfortable out here, I don't panic as much each year that I play out here, and every day that goes by I get more comfortable. Usually when I'm comfortable I play good golf. I think it would be awesome to win a mayor this year, but with that said, there's so much golf before that, so going to go day to day.

Q. Xander, with this being an Olympic year, just curious how much that is into your

mind, what it would mean to represent your country again and just kind of your approach to that.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, day to day, for sure. Definitely on the list of goals. My grandparents from my mom's side live in Tokyo, so I would really, really, really love to go and play over there in front of them and some family. I love Japan. I've been there, I don't know, 10 times. Definitely a dream to go over there and play on that team.

Q. Xander, it has been well documented your father being your swing coach all your life up to this point. Just curious to see if you can talk about the putting coach, Derek, and looking back, how would you rate yourself when you started working with him and what part of your putting improved to get to where you are now?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, so Derek, yeah, he's definitely a solidified team member of mine now. I think we've been together for about six years. My college roommate saw that I had some putting struggles and he was working with him and he said, "Hey, Derek, do you mind if you give Xander a look?" I think that was my senior year maybe or late junior year of college.

You know, I wasn't a bad putter before. Derek would say I'm a terrible putter prior, but I always had decent feel, so it wasn't like I had brick hands for the most part. I think just working with him on the basics and fundamentals of putting, it sort of helped me get more confident on the greens on a day-to-day basis.

At no point would I consider myself a bad putter now, whereas in college I did.

Q. I hear the word "panic" come up quite a bit when you talk about your golf and I'm just not sure I understand what it means. What does panic look like on the golf course?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: If you just want to pull up some film from Maui on 18, that's me panicking. Probably didn't look like it, but brick hands came into play there.

You know, every day goes by, it took me like four to five days to get over that event. Fortunately, I was home before that and got over it. Like I said, just got to learn from those things. Panic in the moment, wasn't comfortable, haven't been in that situation a whole lot in my career unfortunately. But add that to the list. Hopefully not three-putting, but just the experience and I can be a little bit better moving forward.

Q. Do you do anything to measure things in your golf swing, force plates, 3D motion capture, anything to kind of collect data on what you're doing?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I've never stepped on any of those plates in my whole life. Pretty weird. TrackMan's used for carry, spin, maybe if I'm getting fit into a driver, we'll look at attack angles or stuff like that. I'm not like a face to path or path guy. My dad has solely

taught me just the ball flight laws sort of and my own body, sort of understanding that stuff. I say our ball flight's our biggest teacher.

Q. Do you have certain numbers you've kind of stored away and those are the numbers from when you're playing well and try to go back to those if you've gotten off course?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, kind of. He doesn't like when I video my swing, but I try to take a video of my swing when I feel like I'm hitting it well. Of course I look at it and if the camera angle's off or something, it looks the same as when I'm hitting it awful. Golf's funny like that sometimes. It just makes me realize you really just have to rely on the golf ball. The golf ball doesn't lie and whichever way it goes, you just have to listen to it.

Q. Xander, what do you feel you've gained the most from playing in the Presidents Cup and at what point this year do you allow yourself to look ahead to maybe a Ryder Cup situation?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Can you repeat the first part of that?

Q. What did you feel you gained the most from the Presidents Cup experience and at what point do you look ahead to the possibility of the Ryder Cup?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, just being part of that team aspect, it's nothing I've ever been a part of. Just, you know, sharing emotions with other guys out here that we normally want to beat is a different feeling. Just getting to know those guys on a more personal level was really cool for me.

I think it's just great to gain that team experience playing -- how often do you play alternate shot? I don't play ever when I'm home. Maybe play best ball with a partner, but beyond that, not much. So playing different formats, sort of understanding everything that goes into the week, preparation, stuff like that, you don't really learn anything besides learning from some of the veterans on the team. Yeah, the team camaraderie and just getting along with the guys, team dinners, all that kind of stuff. It's so cool, and I can understand why guys hate missing out once they've been a part of the team.

To the Ryder Cup, yeah. Being on that Presidents Cup team, now you get the itch to make any sort of team you can be on and it's definitely in our thoughts moving forward.

Q. I just wanted to take you back a year where I believe it was the first time you played with Tiger; is that correct?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Here, yeah.

Q. Can you just run me through how that felt knowing obviously a couple days in advance it was going to happen for the first time and then how the experience was

during the day itself?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Sorry, take me back to remembering what?

Q. Playing with Tiger for the first time.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah.

Q. You knew about it two days in advance?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah.

Q. So how that lead-up was for you and then how the round itself was?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I don't know. I mean, I just viewed him as another guy. Obviously he's a special guy. He's just a golfer at the end of the day, a really good one. I was anxious, nervous. I knew the zoo that he brings along on property, so I prepared for that mentally.

Once we played, you know, I just felt like I sort of treat everyone in a similar light. I think I talked to him the same way I talked to him at the Presidents Cup, which wasn't very kind at all points, but I do like to make fun of him for being old and stiff and stuff like that, but he can shut me up pretty quick.

Q. I guess your mates and family, did they all sort of come at you early in that week knowing it was going to be with Tiger? Were people excited around you?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, you know. Or actually, not really at all. Thinking back to what my family was seeing, they couldn't see a single shot, so they kind of just enjoyed the walk at Torrey Pines and tried to see some shots here and there that they could. For the most part, when you play with Tiger, you might as well stay at home and watch from the telly because you're not going to see anything inside the ropes.

Q. So I've seen you play great golf with the flu, great golf with the stomachache, strokes gained while sick, what is it, is it resilience? What happens there?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's not strokes gained sickness, we like to do the whole strokes gained attitude. I joke that I'm still catching up on Webb slowly but surely. Just trying to have a better attitude than Webb Simpson will get you pretty far, so that's where I try to live.

He loved that. I told him and Paulie about that at the Presidents Cup, they got a good laugh out of it. I'm dead serious, I try to have a better attitude than you, and if I can do that I might win the tournament.

When I'm sick, you just expect less. It kind of puts your mind at ease. When you practice and put your head down and do all that stuff, you expect a lot of things out of yourself. When you're sick, you sort of don't, I guess. Maybe that's where the secret lies with me, but I'd much rather be healthy and expect a lot of myself than play sick, I can tell you that much.

Q. Xander, I'm curious, would winning here mean more to you, beside a nonmajor obviously, than winning any other tournament?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I think so. This was my home course in high school, so a lot of nostalgia when I'm on property. Yeah, I would come out here and play nine holes every day. I would get to leave high school early to play nine holes and it was awesome. Just thinking of that and sort of Torrey Pines being part of my developmental years as a junior golfer, becoming an amateur golfer, yeah, I think it would mean a little bit more if we were able to win here.

Q. When you're in that team room at the Presidents Cup, everybody's got their own personalities and kind of their roles in some sense, the funny guys, the inspirational guys or whatever. Where did you feel like you were at in all of that as far as who you were in that room?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I was comfy. I mean, probably, I don't know, a pest maybe at times, a rookie, clown. I mean, relaxed. I'm sure I could do a decent job of keeping a room relaxed versus high strung, you know. But I was quite comfortable when it came to just hanging out with the boys and kind of shooting the crap.

Q. Was that a bit of a surprise or did you kind of go in knowing that you would feel that way?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, I don't know. I am who I am, so I'm not really too afraid to talk to anyone and have a good time. I don't think it was a big surprise that we were all able to get along and have a good laugh here and there.

Q. Any way to estimate maybe how many rounds you think you may have played at Torrey through the years? Just secondly real quick, do you still live down toward Little Italy?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, live in Bankers Hill, yeah.

Q. For those coming from out of town, what is Xander's San Diego, a couple of hot spots or restaurants?

So how many rounds at Torrey estimate, start there.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Oh, man, they were nine-hole deals, so if you divvy it up, three years, high school matches, probably played, I don't know -- I definitely played Torrey at

least a hundred times I would say ballpark. Maybe a little less since it was nine holes.

Q. Xander's best restaurants this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't really have -- it's sort of a mood thing, you know? Little Italy if I'm feeling any sort of Italian or sort of like a trendy-ish upscale place. North Park has a lot of those places as well.

If I'm feeling Asian food, I'll go to Convoy. Mexican food I eat a lot, it's always a quick stop from the Grand, I'll go to Roberto's, Oscar's, Porkyland.

I get -- you know, it's probably not a good thing when the people start to recognize you at a taco shop, but I don't really care. I'm a Cali kid, so I'll keep eating the Cali burrito.

DOUG MILNE: On that note, we'll wrap it up. Thanks for joining us, Xander, and best of luck this week.