

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
January 26, 2021

XANDER SCHAUFFELE



JACK RYAN: We'll go ahead and get started here with Xander Schauffele at the Farmers Insurance Open. Xander grew up in San Diego.

Xander, if we can just get an opening comment here in your return to Torrey Pines.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I can promise everyone that this is not normal weather for San Diego. The tournament seems to bring out the worst of San Diego weather. It's been very windy and cold, but besides that, yeah, I'm excited to play. This was my home course in high school and it's always nice to be out here in La Jolla or near La Jolla, I should say. It's a very special place for me.

JACK RYAN: And you haven't finished outside the top 25 on the PGA TOUR since June. What's been the key to that consistent play and what's the state of your game right now coming into the week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it's just an all-around approach. I got sick this offseason with COVID, so I wasn't really able to attack or make a big leap toward the jump in distance and bulking up and all that good stuff, so I've been back to sort of my own guns and trying to do what I do best, which is sort of an all-around approach and I think that's, you know, beared some pretty good fruit and good results.

Yeah, I'm aware Torrey Pines has not been a place that's been too kind to me even though I love playing here. I missed the cut last year, I have missed many cuts here in my career. So I look forward to the challenge on both courses here, North and South, and trying to prepare my game to the best of my ability.

Q. Xander, welcome back. You kind of hinted at this, but I think last year you were in the top 25 in 18 out of 20 events and the only cut you missed was at the Farmers. What is the history of the struggles here in your mind and how unusual is it given the familiarity, this is your home course?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, as weird as this may sound, I've consistently been sick. This is the first year I haven't -- I mean, I got COVID, but I mean, I guess I put a little asterisk next to that. Fortunately, it was early.

But the last couple years I was sick in January. It's just kind of a time of year I've been working pretty hard with my team to figure out why this time of year, when it gets cold here, I get sick often and kind of in bad shape.

So I think that's been a big factor in my performance, just not being fresh. Even though I'm coming off my offseason, I should be the freshest I should be or can be. We've been factoring that in. So I feel much better now, getting back to full strength and definitely, like I said, looking forward to the challenge here at Torrey.

Q. You've had the great start recently, the three top-5s and sixth in the world and seventh in the money and you're consistent -- won four times on Tour, you're consistently right there. What's the key in your mind to breaking through and getting another win?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's kind of it. You can look at stats, which I do, that's sort of how I benchmark my goals. I achieved some of the goals on paper in terms of sort of nitty gritty statistical goals, but for the most part the ultimate goal is to win tournaments and I think my rookie year I kind of won twice kind of quickly. Wasn't really sure how I did it, I just sort of played really free.

My goal in the year following was to be more consistent and to put myself in contention more. Now that I'm sort of getting more comfortable out here and playing better, I realize it doesn't really matter sort of how good your stats look or kind of how good you're playing, it's sort of I think for me getting back to that sort of free, free thought process, kind of me having fun. I am trying to compete at the highest level, but I think I do that when I'm in sort of an open headspace.

Q. Xander, a couple of things. Are you playing next week in Phoenix?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I am.

Q. Do you have any concerns about the fact that it's going to be the first tournament back with a significant amount of fans? Supposed to have about 5,000 fans per day. Your thoughts on that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, relative to how the tournament normally plays, I think it will feel like there's no one out there. I personally am not concerned. I feel like the Tour does a really good job of sort of keeping -- I haven't seen the structures put up or sort of where people are allowed to walk or how close they're allowed to get to us, but I'm sure normally a Saturday's 250,000 to 275,000 fans out there and cutting that down to 5,000 fans blocked off in certain areas, I'm pretty sure most of the players are going to feel safe.

Q. Outside of this tournament, do you play a lot of golf at this time when it's cold out here in San Diego, and what are the keys to playing in this type of weather?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I do, I play -- I've been playing a lot just trying to get back into sort of what I like to call getting my golf IQ back, sort of making things easy on myself mentally when I play, so the last week I've been playing a lot. It wasn't this cold. It was starting to get a little chilly, but I think the biggest thing is trying to keep your body warm.

50 degrees isn't too cold in all honesty, but when you kind of sit around and wait a little bit, your body does tighten up just enough to make you feel uncomfortable. I think just preparation in terms of feeling warm and packing and dressing directly is kind of key.

Q. Xander, I apologize, I'm sure you've answered this before, but when was the first time you attended this tournament as a kid?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: As a kid, I mean, most memorable was Tiger in '08. Stood by a tree that has now fallen. Probably not -- in '08 I was what, 15? So probably when I was 13 maybe, a teenager.

Q. The tree by 18?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Sorry?

Q. The tree was on 18?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, when Tiger made his famous putt to get in a playoff with Rocco, I was there in sort of the arena-like thing, which is my most memorable experience here at Torrey Pines.

Q. I know you played on the American team. Do you have any thoughts on Davis Love getting next year's captaincy for the Presidents Cup?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That is pretty far ahead. I think that's a really easy pick for us on the U.S. side. Davis is -- he's sort of done everything correctly to become a captain, I think. If I had to think off the top of my head, he definitely would be up there. He's just a really good guy. I don't know him very well, but all the people that do know him speak very highly of him. It's not very surprising, it seems like a no-brainer for us.

Q. A couple for you. You're playing with Phil the first two rounds this week, also with Jordan. How many rounds have you played with Phil outside tournament golf here in San Diego? I know it's got to be a lot at The Grand, and are you in the black or in the red on the ledger?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: (Laughs.) Phil and I actually have just recently played a lot. I think quarantine was sort of the first time when we were back and allowed to play, we played the farms, Rancho Santa Fe a lot. We've played The Grand a couple times, his home course in Rancho Santa Fe a few times. I've played a lot with Phil. Fortunately for me, he wasn't in peak performance when we did play, so I was able to sort of, you know, take him on a few times.

But he's Phil the Thrill, it's always a real treat for me to play with him, and I still learn a lot from playing with him around the greens. Sort of his passion for golf and his mentality is pretty cool to see at his age, so I'm looking forward to this week.

Q. Is it almost just as fun to play with him in those kind of casual money rounds as it is in a tournament?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it's almost more fun. You know, I mean, in those casual rounds there's no microphones or anything, so pretty much everything flies in terms of talking smack to each other. He can talk and he backs it up pretty well, so when you play in those teams, you definitely want to be on his team because he'll kind of come after you if you're not on his team. But like I say, it is a real treat. It's probably more fun to play at a course just for less money.

Q. And then just to follow up on U.S. Open prep, this hasn't been the best venue for you so far as a pro, but how much will you be noting things any more than you have in the past because of the Open this year and knowing that you will be there?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think I have had success in U.S. Opens, so I think I need to sort of turn my attention to that on a positive versus looking at how I haven't played well at Torrey Pines. I'm expecting the course to be different and more U.S. Open-like even though Torrey Pines is obviously a real test of golf on a normal day or any day. But if it's a U.S. Open setup, I have had success and I'm just going to try and trick my brain into telling myself I do really well at these, it doesn't really matter. Like this is a new course for me, this is all new, so I might kind of take that approach to it.

Q. Obviously you guys are used to playing in front of empty courses, no galleries at this point. Curious your perspective what it's like for this event. Usually a lively crowd, and I know for you they're not allowing a lot of family and kind of support staff like they have in previous events. What it will be like for you not kind of having the familiar faces beyond just kind of the big crowd that you're used to when you're here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's sad. This is my hometown and I did grow up here, so I do know a lot of people that come out and support me and like to come to this tournament to sort of watch me play and sort of catch up. It is a bummer.

For whatever reason people always say it's hard to play at home and I'm going to try, like everything else, make it a positive and maybe this is sort of the kickstart I need, kick in the head I need to sort of have no one there, no distractions and take advantage of the fact that it will just be really quiet and it's just myself on the golf course and my caddie and everyone else instead of seeing everyone that I know and familiar faces. Like I said, I haven't had much success here and I'm looking forward to changing that, and if it's my first time without fans, then so be it.

Q. Just curious, what's your level of satisfaction with this run that you're on where you're pretty much in auto top 10, top 25 week in and week out, but the wins haven't come like they came early in your career. How do you kind of weigh those? What's your level of satisfaction when you have had such a strong streak of results?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's tricky. The better you play, the higher your expectations go. Winning is the ultimate goal. I think winning would be very satisfying. There are such things as better top-10s than others and vice versa. So I think to me mentally, I'm not super satisfied with everything that I've done. It's nice to be playing consistent golf. I wanted to do that a couple years ago and now I'm doing it, but it's not really everything I've dreamed of. Like I said, everyone talks about winning. It kind of just dangles right there in front of your face and everyone's chasing the same thing, so it's only going to get harder and harder to win out here and I'm just trying to stay more and more patient.

Q. Xander, you mentioned the U.S. Open setup. Specifically how is this course going to be different when you play the U.S. Open in June?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think there will be smaller fairways, maybe firmer. Greens will be different, firmer, and I would just say the mow lines. I think they can kind of trick up the pins a little if they really want to, but for the most part, typical U.S. Opens are really firm greens, smaller fairways and thicker rough. It's kind of been their go-to move and I don't see why they would do otherwise.

During 2008 when I was watching it here, it was very thick rough. They had just let it go. If you're playing on a casual weekend with your buddies, you're going to have a pretty fun time searching for your ball just 10 feet off the fairway.

Q. And how do you play it differently? Do you take different clubs off the tee maybe on different holes because of the mow lines?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I don't know. I think I'll figure that out when I get to that stage, but more for the most part it just makes it tougher. You can't get away with anything, which is why U.S. Opens are so difficult to win. You have to be better than everyone else and be on top of your mental game more than anyone else. I think when it gets kind of tricky and tough is sort of when I like to sort of buckle down and put my head down and kind of get to work. Maybe I need to keep that mindset for this week here instead of sort of being relaxed in my hometown here and sort of treat it as if it was a U.S. Open. Maybe that's something I need to think about.

Q. Marc Leishman earlier today said that the thing he's looking for when he's kind of keeping one eye towards June are the breaks on the greens; not so much the speed but just the breaks, being a seaside course. If you were giving advice to a player who maybe hasn't played here a lot and is trying to prepare mentally for the U.S. Open here, would you give similar advice or is there something else you would say to keep your eye on?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: He said different than this week or a normal week at the U.S. Open?

Q. He's saying that the breaks, that he's just trying to get the breaks on the green for the U.S. Open. He said the speed may change, but he thinks the breaks will be pretty similar.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, with more firm and a speed change, the greens are sneaky. You don't really realize how undulated some of the greens are, so I would have to agree with Leishman. If they're rolling a 10 now, at U.S. Open time they're going to be firm and 13.

If you had a really good putting week this week and you sort of saw all your lines really well, come June I think those lines might be a little different because you're going to be hitting the ball a little softer, it's going to be taking a little more break, it's going to be on the ground a little longer. So I would have to agree with Marc saying that figuring out your lines for June would probably be the most important thing.

JACK RYAN: Xander, those are all the questions we have. We appreciate your time and best of luck this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thanks, Jack. Thanks, guys.