

WILL ZALATORIS

JACK RYAN: We would like to welcome Will Zalatoris into the interview room at the 2022 Rocket Mortgage Classic. Will's making his second start in the event, finished 77th last year.

Will, if we can get an opening comment on your return to the Detroit Golf Club.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, thanks for the highlight of the 77th.

Yeah, great to be back. I've gotten to know some really cool people at the event. It's really fun to see already just being on the grounds how much this is already progressing as a tournament. Jason Langwell is one of the best tournament directors that we have out here. He's constantly recruiting guys and coming out to tournaments. And I've kind of had a home away from home with this with heading over to Orchard Lake Country Club the last two years on Monday, and it's a beautiful place and those guys have been super accommodating. So looking forward to coming back this year and obviously improving on my 77th last year.

JACK RYAN: You're in your first full season on the PGA Tour, coming into the week No. 9 on the FedExCup standings. There's a highlight for you. Ten top-10s this season. Excuse me, eight top-10s this season. If we can just get a look back at the season and your goals moving forward into the FedExCup Playoffs.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, obviously I've been really close to getting that first win, knocked on the door a bunch. Just got to keep doing what we're doing. Game's been feeling really good. I think everything has been really starting to click, especially after this week off. We had some really good work at home and fully rested coming up for a pretty good stretch of golf coming up. Looking forward to being a part of my first FedExCup Playoffs and hopefully making a nice run.

Q. This event is so close to the FedExCup Playoffs, your spot is obviously very secure, a lot of guys would maybe take the rest. What brought you here?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, for one, I love the golf course. Like I said, what Jason and his team have done with this event has been amazing. And obviously guys will be resting up for the Playoffs, like you said, but every shot matters, every point matters. I'm 25 years old. If you ever hear me talk about being tired, I think I probably need to get my head checked.

Q. And you've obviously been knocking on the first win for a while. Compared to maybe that first close call to the latest close call, what do you tell yourself to keep you positive that you know that day's coming?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, you know, I think, what have I only played, 53 starts or something like that? The fact that I've been able to contend a lot in that short period of time, so it basically comes out to two full seasons to this point. I'm obviously very pleased with where I'm at, but I've been very close and I get a lot of money for a couple inches obviously. My time's coming, I've just got to stay patient and just let the first one get in the way. There's no reason trying to force the issue because I've been playing some nice golf. So eventually I'll be able to put -- maybe I'm putting too many tournaments at 63 holes together and not playing the full 72 and eventually we'll make a full 72-hole tournament.

Q. You've obviously done exceptionally well at the majors. I'm just wondering, the atmosphere tends to be very different at an event like this. Does that affect you at all mentally? Is it harder to stay sharp? Do you enjoy that higher pressure more or is it a golf tournament's a golf tournament?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I do love the pressure. I've been pretty vocal in the fact that my goal in my career has been to win a major, and obviously it's a weird spot to be in to feel like I've been knocking on the door to win a major and I haven't even won my first PGA Tour event. I mean, I've got enough motivation to come out here every week and try to win a golf tournament. Obviously we've got the best players in the world here playing on course like this, I need to be sharp, I want to be sharp. Not to mention, like I was alluding to earlier, every week could be the difference of you winning a FedExCup and not. Of course I love the pressure of the major championships, I want to have one of those trophies, but every time I tee it up I'm going to be as sharp as I can be and want to win.

Q. Do you ever sit back and allow yourself to think about what you would do with \$18 million?

WILL ZALATORIS: I haven't gotten that far. You know, I haven't -- to be honest, I have not thought about it because I've had such a strange two years to get to this point where last year not being a part of the FedExCup Playoffs and this year being in my first one.

You know, I don't play this game for money Obviously. Like I said, my career goal is to be a PGA Tour winner and a major champion at some point and the money comes with it.

Q. It's your second year on the tour. Compared to last year to this year, given everything that's going on with the state of golf and the other tour and it's kind of the narrative that's out there, every week you're on tour, players are getting asked about it. Is it as much fun being on the PGA Tour with that all going on in the background?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I'm a Player Advisory Council member, so we talk about it internally a lot. It's a wild time for the PGA Tour and I guess golf as a whole, but the changes that I think are going to happen and everything that's going to come down the road is only going to make us stronger.

And we are the best tour. Every week we're playing the best courses on the planet. I just feel that if -- I just -- a lot of what's happened with LIV in my opinion, it's been a lot of rumors and not a lot of hard facts of this guy might be going, this guy might be going and if anything it's been a distraction with what's coming with the PGA Tour and the changes that will happen down the road, obviously changing our schedule from January to August and kind of restructuring the fall.

I just think that just let time come and let everything kind of settle and it will be very clear, but right now with all the changes and how everything has been just so wild and a lot of hearsay, I think that we just need to let the dust settle if you will and we'll be just fine.

Q. Will, obviously you said you had some 63-hole events where you feel like you put it together. My understanding is 54 is enough for certain people. Tiger said at St. Andrews he just doesn't understand how a competitor can go do that. Do you understand it? Are you confused by why some of the younger guys have gone there, a few of them?

WILL ZALATORIS: Everyone can make their own decisions. I think that you're seeing a lot of older guys go, which that's their decisions. I've got nothing but respect for the guys that have gone, that's their choice. That's none of my business whatsoever.

The younger guys going, again, it's still their decision. Whether I agree with it or not, they don't tell me how to live my life and I don't tell them how to live theirs. Do I agree with it? Obviously not. I've been very vocal about being very pro PGA Tour.

I think the biggest thing that I would say is not even in regards to the amount of holes that are played, but I would say that any person on these grounds could have Mondayed in yesterday and won this golf tournament and over there it's the same 48 guys playing over and over and over. You know, this is a pure meritocracy and I'm sure you could argue there's a meritocracy to being part of LIV, but that's their decision for you to play there. They're the ones offering you the money to play here. Here it's earned and I think that's the biggest difference and I think that's something that right now with no World Golf Ranking points, I think that's why a lot of the top guys don't have a lot of interest, because we want to be part of majors, we want to win major championships. If there's no World Golf Ranking points, now all of a sudden your sponsorship money goes down. On top of that, if you haven't won a major you're probably not going to be able to get into those majors. If you gave me all the money in the world tomorrow, I'd still be doing the exact same thing. Like I said, I've wanted to win a major my entire life and I've wanted to play out here.

Q. For the time being, a lot of these guys will be eligible for probably next year's majors. There's a lot of talk about majors making their own decisions. Do you have an opinion on that, whether you think the majors should cut off the LIV guys?

WILL ZALATORIS: No, I don't. Like I said, the decision's not really in the majors -- it's really not their decision in my opinion. It's more the official World Golf Ranking.

Yeah, there are guys that have gone and have won their tournaments, that's up to them in terms of the guys that have won their tournaments and their eligibility. But on the official World Golf Ranking, if you don't play office World Golf Ranking events, you're not going to be in the majors. You've probably got probably how many guys that are past champions that are I guess you could say in their prime that have gone over, it's a small handful. But if you're looking at the top-50 or 60 that get into the majors, if you don't play those events, you're not going to have a top 50 or 60 ranking. That right there, I know that the saying has been they made their bed, but that's what it is.

Q. Do you think they should be eligible for World Golf Ranking points?

WILL ZALATORIS: That's not my decision. I don't really know. I don't have the facts in front of me of what the changes for the official World Golf Ranking are going to be. I do know the gist of it, but I don't want to misspeak.

You know, like I said, over here on the PGA Tour, you could have Mondayed in yesterday and you could have won this golf tournament. Over there you can't enter it unless they offer you something to come. It's just a very -- it's very different. Whether it should be official World Golf Ranking or not, I honestly, I don't know. That's not for me to decide, either. By the way, it's not going to affect me, either.

JACK RYAN: Thank you very much for your time, Will. Best of luck this week.

WILL ZALATORIS: Thanks.