

PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW
January 24, 2023



XANDER SCHAUFFELE

MICHAEL BALIKER: We'll go ahead and get started here with Xander Schauffele here at the Farmers Insurance Open.

Xander, I think let's start with last week. Front nine, tied for third at the American Express, just how encouraging was that after having to withdraw from Sentry and posting a good result there?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it's very encouraging. It was a new -- I feel like I'm a veteran out here, but it was a new situation being my first pretty much -- I think my first withdrawal in my entire career.

Yeah, it's cool, it's cool to see my team came together to help me out to get me back into quick playing shape. Got all the scans done, nothing too serious came up. Feel very fortunate. Yeah, it's kind of weird to be really happy with a third-place finish, but with a 10 under on Sunday, pretty happy with it.

MICHAEL BALIKER: I'm sure you'll take another albatross here this week.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes, I would.

MICHAEL BALIKER: But then obviously coming to a place here that you're very comfortable at, just talk a little bit about getting the opportunity to play here at a place you've had a lot of experience.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I've played a lot here. Haven't played exception -- great, I'd say. I've had a high finish here, played well at the U.S. Open, but for the most part still kind of figuring it out.

The course is in great condition. The weather was really bad leading into this week, which I kind of had a feeling it was going to be a nice week for weather, and the rough is up thick. Never had so much anxiety trying to hit a fairway. It's playing really tough, which is sort of I think what everyone wants when you play a tournament.

Q. Xander, how is the back now? Is it completely good or where are you at?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I'd say I'm always going to feel like I'm 100 percent. It's probably a little tired. Didn't do a whole lot of golf since Maui. Even leading up I had the little hiccup at Bahamas is kind of where the whole back thing started. And then Maui was unfortunate, one of my favorite spots of the year and then just not a whole lot of golf.

So it I feel great, but if I had to feel like I was swinging as hard as I could off of every tee, I'd probably get pretty tired soon. It's just like a golf thing. You start playing more golf, you start walking around, you start swinging more, you'll get in the swing of things.

Q. Yeah. So what is the injury itself?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, just muscular. It was just a tight spot there. My team was really quick to diagnose it, assess the scans and MRIs, get the right eyes on it. It's way out of my league or expertise. It's kind of weird when people tell you you're good to go and you kind of just have to say all right, I'm good to go. That happened pretty quickly, which I was really happy about.

Q. When you see last week no rough, this week you've got whatever, how many inches --

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes.

Q. -- any concern about it at all?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No. I already took my fair share of whacks out of the rough the last two days, so I'm beyond fine.

Q. The Saturday finish, we had it last year, you were here, is it a little odd like in your week of preparation and all that to kind of have the Saturday finish and have to change a little bit of mentality of when you start your week and all that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: You know, I forgot it was a Saturday finish last year, I thought this was the first year, so clearly it didn't bother me a whole lot.

I think everyone's dealing with it. If you didn't play last week, then you can kind of get normal preparation coming in on Sunday. Obvious reasons for us doing it, makes perfect sense with Sunday being a big day for football.

Yeah, I think it's totally fine. As I get a little bit older, it's kind of nicer to just get through preparation, get going. When you go to those majors, sometimes you show up four or five days early and guys kind of wear themselves out before the tournament starts. It is nice to kind of have a one-two punch and then just tee off.

Q. J.T. and Rahm talked about kind of shaping the ball here, kind of a left to right ball flight. Do you agree with that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes.

Q. And how important is it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Very. Jon's obviously a very good example of someone that probably shapes it the best left to right off the tee, the furthest and the best. He's played all right here, I think, and he's in descent form I'd say.

J.T.'s also a very good left to right -- shapes it both ways for the most part but favors left to right.

I think before the U.S. Open I really tried to hit a lot of left to right-to-left tee balls and it did help me that week to hit more fairways.

It's weird because the fairways line up sort of straight, the holes are kind of rather straight on the North Course. The holes frame a little differently on the South, but for the most part the wind's always coming off the coast and some of those really hard tee shots you kind of want to ride the wind instead of fighting it. So if you can get your left-to-right ball down, it's definitely a good week for it.

Q. How's it fit your eye, this golf course, in the past?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I naturally draw the ball for the most matter. I'm really happy when I can fade it. I just enjoy playing it, I enjoy the challenge. It's so hard. Like I said, you get pretty anxious on some of those tees. You hit it in the rough on like seven holes in a row and you're two over par, you're like I'm doing all right.

Then you hit it on every fairway, you hit it on every green and you miss every putt, that can also happen. It's just one of those weeks you've just got to wear it out mentally and be better than everyone else mentally.

Q. Do you surf?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I wish. I got really good at golf kind of later in my career here and I think it's because I wasn't surfing earlier in my career, because I was just golfing all the time. It's a tricky one. I think maybe when I stop playing so much golf I'll try and pick up surfing because it just seems like something I'd enjoy doing.

Q. Bear with me on the random questions. So I had a chance to interview Hansen Surfboards, who makes the trophy surfboard for the Farmers Insurance Open. You would be the first true San Diegoan if you won to get the surfboard and potentially just put it in your car and take it home as opposed to having it shipped somewhere.

What would winning a trophy surfboard, being from San Diego with a local company on it and a local surf shaper making this custom board for you, what would that mean?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That is a question that's out there.

Q. Sorry.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: No, don't apologize. It would just be a cherry on top. Being from here and getting like a homemade prize and being able to put it in my own car and drive away with it 20 minutes from my house would be amazing. I'm not going to let my brain travel too far to that point, but it would be obviously just a cherry on top.

Q. Obviously you are busy with golf, but if you won, would you potentially ever pick up this board, because it's actually functional and you can actually surf with it?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, like I said, these guys are so good now. I'm 29 and there's so many young kids out here winning majors and doing crazy things on Tour that I feel like I need to up my practice and up my game. So I feel like if I started surfing, I would start playing worse golf immediately. Maybe not, but I feel like that would probably happen just with all the young guys coming out and just running and gunning. So I'll stick to golf and just my one sport for now.

Q. And just your final thoughts on having a surfboard as a trophy?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's cool, yeah. That would be awesome, especially if you can use it.

Q. As the PGA tournament kind of designates and elevates some events and there's some fluidity year to year, how important is it to you as a San Diego golfer to have the Farmers or whatever events here at Torrey be one of those elevated events?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, there's so many things that go into making a tournament an elevated event; the sponsor, the parking, the golf course, if it can support it. It would be amazing. I think it was in the talks a little bit. Obviously this course being owned by the city, the city's involved with it, it's not just like a bunch of members so that makes it a little trickier. I think it would be great for the town, great for the city here. It would really be cool. The area draws a really good field for not being an elevated event. I think it would just draw even more top players.

Q. Is there anything you and Charley can do to get an event elevated? I know it's bigger than that, but is there any behind-the-scenes networking or anything you can do to impact that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I mean, we are just the entertainment. There's only so much we can do, or think we can do at least. I try to stay in my lane a lot of those times, let the bigger boys or adults as I call them try and handle the bigger situations. As long as I can provide some good entertainment along the way, we're in good hands.

Q. Just talk about how special it is getting to play in your hometown course, playing

in front of your friends and family, just really describe all that that means to you.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, being on Tour, it felt -- home games are tricky, trickier because you are in front of fans. As I get older, as I come here more often, I start to feel more comfortable. Sleeping in your own bed is amazing, it's kind of a thing us pros cherish a lot. If you've been on the road you get deja vu looking at the same hotels and areas and fast food joints and things of that nature. So just being in a familiar place, seeing familiar faces just really hits home and I think that's why everyone always enjoys being at home.

Q. Do you have any favorite memories that stick out to you from this course?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I just remember coming out, leaving high school early to come out and play matches at 3:00 p.m., rushing to finish nine holes. It was from the white tees, the rough was down, greens were usually punched, so wasn't the same experience or monster that it is right now. Just feeling really lucky, just like a true San Diego kid just leaving school early to go play golf. If it's not surfing, you're golfing or doing something outdoors. That's kind of awesome.

Q. What impact did maybe the golf community in San Diego kind of impact your career? Like how did that impact your life and career just growing up out here with the caliber of talent out here?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, just a lot of big names to follow. There's been a few guys still playing out from San Diego. A few guys on the Champions Tour from California, not San Diego specifically anymore. It's just a lot of big players out there, big shoes to fill and just trying to be as good as them or beat their records and just try and do more for the community or do as much as they've done. They've done a lot to help all the youth golfers here. It's just a sunny state where everyone's pretty happy for the most part.

Q. Are there any challenges or anything specifically you're looking out for this week?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: The rough, yeah. Pretty much, pretty much every tee shot's pretty intense. So you kind of know what you're dealing with if you miss the fairway and that's kind of it for everyone that's playing.

Q. Xander, does being back home put you more at ease to do well here or are there some distractions you might describe being back home that maybe make things more challenging?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think as I've gotten older it's gotten better. Maybe a little more distracting at first, more nerves. I always want to play well in front of everybody. I just don't care as much as when I was younger, I think. I've kind of become more selfish and kind of worry about what I do. Not that I don't care about the people. I'm not worried about what other people are thinking as much as when I was a younger kid. I think I'm a little more at ease and not so result oriented as when I first got my sponsor exemption out here my first

couple starts. That's probably helped me play a little bit better out here.

Q. When you got back into town, was there anything you wanted in particular to make sure you would go do?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Well, more recently, just get a good night of sleep, which has been a task, I can tell you. Haven't hit up any of the local food spots. I recently just try and get in my new house here. It's been a long time coming, so I'm really looking forward to that.

Q. Why is it a task to get a good night's sleep?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Oh, just, you know, when you're moving, people always joke about when you're doing homes or remodeling a house or doing things like that, it takes your mind off of golf but it puts your focus somewhere else and it's usually a golfer's nightmare and I'm dealing with that and trying to perform at a high level, too. So I'm ready for Wednesday to come.

Q. Were there any disruptions with the new house, burglar alarm accidentally going off or anything like that?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, crazy stuff always happens, you know how it goes.

MICHAEL BALIKER: Xander, thanks for the time.

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Thank you.