

PRE-TOURNAMENT PRESS CONFERENCE
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WILL ZALATORIS

MODERATOR: We will go ahead and get started, like to welcome Will Zalatoris to the interview room here at the Wyndham Championship.

Will, thank you for joining us. You're making your fourth start here in the event, coming off a T-21 I believe in 2022.

Big question, why don't we start with how you're feeling?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I feel great. I think we really figured out some stuff after Detroit. I played a lot of golf this year. You know, I think it's been a huge learning year where it's a little bit of trial and error, some things have gone well, some things haven't gone according to plan.

But I feel awesome, I feel 100 percent. I think beforehand I didn't really know what 100 percent was and now my speed with my longer clubs are back to what they were back in 2022, which is huge for me. I mean, there's a big advantage to that out here on Tour, really being over 180 ball speed.

I think if you would have put me in this position kind of where I was at this point last year, I definitely would be happy, but by no means I would say satisfied with my play so far this year.

So it was a nice two weeks off, working probably harder than I ever have to get back to the form that I want to play. Things are feeling really good, just so far this year it hasn't clicked, but I know keep my head down, keep working, it's going to click at some point.

MODERATOR: One other question, then we'll open it up for these guys, and I may be going out on a limb, something that's not there, but how much through all this back stuff have you learned about yourself in terms of patience and positive attitude and so forth?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, my wife can tell you I'm not very patient.

You know, I think being able to have the extended time off to make sure that I'm healed and then really learning how my body changes over a two-, three-, four-week span, it's just been a lot of learning this year.

I had a couple nice finishes early on this year and then kind of played -- I don't think I played too much, I think I just wasn't giving myself the amount of time to rest, you know, on the Mondays, Tuesdays that I really should have. It's hard because when you want to work on



things and you need to rest your body, it's kind of a double-edged sword.

But yeah, I think it's definitely, like I said, the gratitude of being back in this position compared to where I was at this point last year in terms of I think this point probably at the end of this month last year was the first time that I was hitting golf balls. The fact that I'm sitting in this position and being able to for sure be in the Playoffs and make a run in the Playoffs, like I said, it's a nice spot to be in, but by no means am I satisfied.

MODERATOR: Sure. I know this is a special place for you to be.

Q. Will, I think you skew on the more aggressive side of things on Tour, especially off the tee. With that being said, what kind of premium are you putting on playing out of the fairway this week and are you hitting fewer drivers out here than other places?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think -- I don't really -- like this week it's kind of hard to be that aggressive off the tee. There's some holes where you can maybe try to get around the corners of doglegs. I think I'm probably hitting five drivers this week. In the past -- I've played a bunch here, even go back to when I was 13 years old playing the AJGA event here, I've done some goofy things like hitting driver off 9 when you can hit 3-iron and a wedge in.

But really it's just trying to run the tables around here. These are some of the best greens we have on Tour, so just give yourself as many looks as you can and get hot with the putter and make a run.

Yeah, it's just one of those places, it's a nice throwback golf course. We don't really get an old Donald Ross like this that often, so it's kind of nice to be in spots where positions are at a premium, but also there's some holes that are just long and straight and you're better off just chipping it up there and if you're in the fairway, great, and if not, you'll take 140 out of the rough as opposed to 180 in the fairway.

Q. Will, can you compare this course a little bit to Old Town where you played a lot in college? Is there a comfort factor in this place?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, you know, I think they're different in the sense that Old Town's very wide open but the greens are very severe, as they are here. Here, it's tree lined, it's very narrow. Old Town, when we were -- that's probably part of the reason why Wake has been one of the longer teams on Tour, or longer teams in college just because we would tee it up and hit it as far as we can.

You know, I think conditions-wise, grass-wise they're the exact same, I think it's just this one is just a little bit more classic in the Donald Ross sense. Even though it's a Perry Maxwell, Old Town restored by Coore and Crenshaw, it's just a little bit different where over there you may be playing some angles into some holes versus here where there's a big premium on hitting fairways.



I love classic golf, golden era golf. We were just sitting there watching the U.S. Senior Women's Open and watching Fox Chapel and watching squared-off greens and squared-off bunkers is pretty fun to look at.

Q. Will, you mentioned the greens being severe. Do you have to like consciously pay attention to your composure if the putts aren't rolling in on a course like this? Can it get frustrating quickly if the putts aren't rolling in?

WILL ZALATORIS: It can be because they're so pure. I mean, they're like putting on carpet, they're so -- this place ever since they've gone to Bermuda, like I said, they're some of the top three greens we play on Tour every year.

I think the thing that's interesting, and I know it's been two years since I've come here, but I think the greens have matured now and they're more -- they're a little bit more receptive, they've kind of flattened out a little bit. There are a few putts that I hit where reminiscing with my caddie and my coach about how I think I hit a putt a foot by and all of a sudden it rolls six, seven feet by. They've kind of matured, they've settled a little bit.

I think it's kind of nice feeling downhill you're not just breathing on it, you can actually be kind of a little more aggressive with it. Like I said, this place condition-wise is top notch that we have. Like I said, the greens, they're perfect.

Q. Are there any comparisons to Pinehurst in terms of similarities?

WILL ZALATORIS: Greens-wise, yes. I would say old Pinehurst, for sure, but since they took out the trees and kind of put in the native areas, that was a huge change for them, kind of going back to when Pinehurst first opened.

But I think now the greens for sure, and I would say probably like 1990s Pinehurst, it would be exceptionally similar.

Q. And then kind of looking ahead to BMW, but in terms of altitude, you've won in Colorado. What are different ways of playing altitude with your approach shots and how does it vary by club?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it depends on what time of day it is. I guess TPI has done some stats where for every 500 feet of elevation, it's one percent, but it also changes based off of how high you hit it and temperature. So there's times when I've played in Denver where I'd have 170 yards and I'd hit gap wedge and I'd just throw it up in the air and it feels like it's never going to come down, but then I could also hit a 9-iron from 104 yards and hit it low and it'll go kind of a similar distance to back home.

But I think the big adjustment that you have is really the temperature throughout the day where in the morning you might -- as opposed to maybe the 10 percent that you would end up getting, it might be closer to six, but you also need to adjust as the day goes on.



Q. And does work with launch monitors help the altitude adjustment?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, being able to check your numbers, like if you have an early morning tee time, seeing where you're kind of starting it and then kind of gauge it as the temperature goes up and then in the afternoon, at least when I've played in Colorado, it's probably always been around 11:00 or 12:00, it'll be right around that 10 percent assuming that you're playing in Denver.

I remember playing on Korn Ferry when we played in Colombia, it was 7500 feet and it felt like you could hit a ball in the air and it was just never going to come down. It's fun playing at elevation just because you can hit gap wedges from 170 yards and then you could also hit something lower and it'll go the same distance back home, so there's a lot of art to it.

Q. Will, how is your back and things? How has that affected your weekly preparation, practice, things like that? And getting back to what John had asked about Old Town, how often did you guys -- I mean, you had Old Town in your backyard, how often did you guys come out here and play?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, the back feels great. I think the one thing that I think my surgeons really did a good job of telling me was that the first year your recovery's going to kind of feel like a stock market where it goes up and down, but the line of best fit is going to hopefully trend up. I think that's where for me, the moments of feeling really good at the start of this year, play six or seven events and then start kind of feeling a little bit of achiness in there and maybe need to get a cortisone shot or something like that. It's a lot of ups and downs and I think I was mentally prepared for it. It gave me the patience that I needed to this first year.

I don't like being patient, I don't like going out and not being in contention like I've played the last three, four months, but it's, like I said, it's also motivated to get my body to where it needs to be and get my golf game back to where it needs to be.

But Old Town's the best. Charles Frost and Dunlop White have taken great care of us. The whole membership's been awesome to us or to the team.

Actually played on Saturday with some of my old teammates and my old assistant coach and Head Coach Haas watched me hit some balls on Sunday. Some of my best memories from Wake were when we'd go out and play at 4:00, play nine holes and head over to Putter's for dinner. It was just the best playing golden hour. Really, they treated us like members and there was really no time that we were ever not able to play, including Mondays.

Q. (No microphone.)

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think at the start of this year and really once I started kind of



getting into a little bit of trouble after Augusta, I started to really limit the amount of balls that I was hitting and try to really practice effectively, mainly just because I wanted to finish a season. You know, my first year out on Tour, I was the only person that was promoted and so I needed a win to get into the Playoffs, and I didn't win so I was done here, and then in '22 I win my first Playoff event and then I get hurt, and then last year I was out.

I want to make sure that this season, regardless of where I finish, I want to go on the merit of my play.

Q. In seven of the last eight years, 20 under or better has won. I know the weather could change that, but do you like these kind of tests where birdies are going to have to be made?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, especially here because it's not the -- it's a good blend of having four to five holes where you're hitting mid irons in and then from there it's a wedge -- a lot of wedges. But then also, when the greens are this pure, you feel like if you start a putt online, it's going to go in.

So they're good momentum builders and I think it's good for me, too. I love playing in majors, I love the toughness of them. My game was not prepared for them this year, so I think it's a really good thing to go out and play an event where I can go and put up six, seven birdies in a round, something like that. Good for the confidence given all I've had to go through.

Q. You've obviously made quite a few changes to your swing over the last year or two. Do you have a primary swing thought that you use now and if you do, what would that be?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, honestly, I had too many throughout the year. I think the changes that I made early on this season were really effective, but my alignment really got off with kind of the new posture. I'm a little bit more rounded in my back just to alleviate any of the stress that I have on my lower back. So I think week in, week out, one week I'd be too far left, one week being too far right and if I would try to shape a shot, there was always something it felt like. Felt like I was kind of constantly slapping Band-Aids on things.

Now getting back to just the very -- I'm not focusing on anything body motion now or mechanics, it's just get back to the fundamentals. There were times this year when I was trying to hit a fade and I was aiming five yards right of the hole and it's just not going to work.

Getting back to really playing the game. I spent maybe a little bit too much time focusing on the mechanics throughout the season and trying to get to certain positions in my swing to try to fix it, but when you're not aligned in the right spot, it's not going to work.

Just getting back, like I said, to playing the game as opposed to maybe even playing golf swing, if you will. So we spent a lot of time in these two weeks off, I played a lot of golf at home. I didn't really practice where I was spending four, five hours on the range type thing. It



was a lot more go out and play 27 holes or whatever in a cart, or 36 holes, and just get back to shooting scores. Being OK with if I'm hitting shots on the range and I hit one bad one, it's OK, what did I do wrong there, let's fix it on the next one. It's OK, well, I hit this one in the bunker, let's go make up-and-down.

I think throughout this year I was so hyper-focused on certain mechanics that when I would get into a tournament round, I felt if I hit one bad shot, it would kind of kill the momentum.

So getting back to getting in a little bit more flow in my rounds. I felt like throughout this year I've always had like a nine- or 18-hole stretch that's pretty good, but the other 60-whatever holes basically were just kind of marginal. I wasn't that far off, but I was just not -- wasn't doing anything special.

So, like I said, it's just getting back to playing the game. I get times where I would try to start forcing birdies and make some silly bogeys and next thing you know I finish 45th and I'm like, let's get on it next week. Getting out of the mechanics mindset and getting back to playing the game is priority No. 1.

MODERATOR: Will, we appreciate your time as always. Best of luck this week.

WILL ZALATORIS: Thank you. Go Deeks.

