

**PRE-TOURNAMENT INTERVIEW**  
**February 16, 2021**



**XANDER SCHAUFFELE**

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**JOHN BUSH:** We're happy to have Xander Schauffele with us in the virtual interview room here at The Genesis Invitational. Five top-10s finishes in seven starts this season, Xander, including three runner-up finishes. I know you're looking to get back in the winner's circle soon, though, but can you comment on your season up to this point for us?

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Yeah, a lot of good and no wins so far. Overall I'm pretty happy with how I'm playing. It's always exciting to be here at Riviera. I just played nine holes. That's not really about my season, but I'm excited to play here. The course is in incredible shape. I just keep looking forward to the next week basically.

**JOHN BUSH:** This is your fourth start at this event, three top 25 finishes. What is it that you like so much about this golf course?

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** It's on the West Coast, for one. It's just tough. I think if you could name a harder course without any water hazards for the most part, I'd wait and sit here. This course is, for the setup and just having no real OB or hazards kind of anywhere on the property, it plays really difficult, so I think all of us appreciate the challenge.

**JOHN BUSH:** And Xander, before we open it up to questions, two second-place finishes in the FedExCup and also a third-place finish in the FedExCup. Can you talk a little bit about what you think it will take to push you over the top to finally win that this year?

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Can you repeat that one more time, please?

**JOHN BUSH:** I was just saying you finished second in the FedExCup twice and you've also finished third. Just unbelievable consistency. Talk a little bit about what you think it will take to finally get over the hump to win the FedExCup.

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Just I think a little more self belief. I keep putting myself in the situation. I haven't had a whole lot of success on Sundays recently. Overall I think my scoring average on Sunday isn't bad. I think since I've been in contention it's not as good as it normally is. I kind of shoot above my average. So just some mental adjustments and getting comfortable in that position. I think the key to that is just a little more self belief in the process and what I'm doing and we should be good to go.

**Q. Xander, when you look at your finishes here, obviously quality finishes the last three years, but is it something that you just come back and keep kind of getting to know the golf course better in Riviera's case or do you do anything where you look at any numbers and go, wow, I need to think about how I play certain holes this time**

around?

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Yeah, the course is so interesting. It's one of those places where the more you play it, the more comfortable you get. The conditions this year are unbelievable. It's going to be playing very different than the last couple years where it was kind of colder and sort of wet. It's sort of a -- because there isn't a whole lot of trouble on the property in terms of like penalties, you sort of get a little impatient and get aggressive when you shouldn't and you kind of pick up a bogey or double bogey pretty quickly and it's probably the most frustrating way to do it.

So I think patience is big out here. The greens are pure, you've just got to hit it in the right spots, leave yourself below the hole and that will give you the best chance to win.

**Q. Xander, given the fact that Daniel won last week, Jordan Spieth is playing well again, when you look back and think about all of the hype around the class of 2011, the high school class of 2011, does that seem like a long time ago to you?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Yeah, I think so. I mean, I don't feel -- I feel pretty old, I guess. There's a lot more younger guys out here that are playing great golf than myself. I'm 27 now, I think we're all about 27, 28 years old. There's a bunch of guys that are barely able to buy themselves a drink that are winning golf tournaments. I kind of feel old.

**Q. And when you look back and you think of everything the class accomplished, I mean, could you have imagined that when you graduated from high school that there would have been four or five of you that would have done this on the PGA TOUR?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** I think so. I mean, most of the accolades go to Spieth and Justin Thomas. Those two combined sort of, if you look at what they've accomplished together at the ripe age of 27 apiece, or 28, however old they are, it's pretty astonishing. (Audio distortion) and I am coming up slowly trying to catch them I would say and there's a bunch of other guys from our class that are doing well, too.

For the most part, no, I always saw their names when I was in college and growing up, so it's weird to think that we're out here on Tour now, but I mean, back then when I was in high school, to think about it now is not a surprise whatsoever.

**Q. Xander, in Phoenix you said you had to lick your wounds and come back. How long does it take you to get over something like that, if you do, and how do you get over something like that?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** You just take the positives from the week, identify sort of the mistakes that were made and move along. A couple glasses of wine that night and a good night of sleep was all I needed.

Some hurt more than others. That one didn't really hurt. It wasn't that I pissed too many

shots away. I hit a few bad ones coming down the stretch, but for the most part I kind of was hanging tight. And it was a very boring day in a bad way. So it was a good learning experience for me in a final group where sort of the whole group is a little stagnant and like being aware -- awareness is key there. I don't think either Scotty, Jordan or myself were very aware that all of us were a little nervous, we got off to a slow start. Our group collectively shot even par.

And I looked at Brooks' group, you had James Hahn who was 7 under through 10 holes, Brooks shot 6 under and you've got Strick there who's steady as ever shooting 4 or 5 under. So you compare the two groups around and you kind of sit there like, well, what group would I rather play in, you know what I mean? I could be playing kind of C-plus golf in a group where guys are making birdies left and right and they're going to sort of drag me along the way versus if you're playing great golf and no one in the group's getting anything going, that could be the difference. It was a really good learning experience for me moving forward.

**Q. Does it get tougher with each week that you have a close call and you don't get the W?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** I mean, no, personally. I think the media will talk about it saying it's getting tougher and dangling it in front of my face, but at the end of the day I look at all the winners out here or this year that have won a lot and repetitive winners and I think the key ingredient is just self belief. Coming down the stretch, just really believe in what you've got and at the end of the day that's kind of all it is. You could be playing incredible golf and if you kind of doubt yourself for a second, it's going to catch you at the wrong time and I think that's kind of what it's been for me.

**Q. Xander, you mentioned that you can kind of stumble upon a bogey or double bogey here with no penalty strokes. It seems like the 10th hole is kind of where that happens for a lot of guys. What's your history like on that hole and what's your approach? Seems like more and more guys are going for it every year. Is that your approach or can you see a scenario in which you'd hang back?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Statistically, I am -- as my dad made aware to me today that I'm not very good from 50 to 125 yards, I would not be laying up on that hole. That would leave me about 50 to 125 yards in. So I will be going for it like I have every other year and kind of rely on getting up and down and a couple good bounces here and there. The 10th is a special hole here, it's a key hole for the tournament and it can kind of either make or break your week.

**Q. So no matter what the pin, you're going for it?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** I will be pulling some sort of furniture out on the tee.

**Q. Xander, we're almost believe it or not a year into the pandemic. Do you recall what you were thinking or what was going through your mind that day at Sawgrass, that**

**Thursday sort of when the world was sort of coming to a halt around us all and you guys were out there playing and then obviously that night it all came crashing down?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** I mean, I don't think anyone was as upset as Hideki shooting 61 or whatever he shot, 63 on -- 63 on Thursday. I saw him in the parking lot, we were staying at the same hotel the next morning when he was flying back to Japan to sort of collect his thoughts. He was in good spirits about it.

To think back to that Sawgrass, it's just an unknown. Everyone's sort of afraid of the unknown. You don't really know what to expect, no one really knew how serious or how, you know, this whole virus was. All of us were a little rattled, I guess. It's a big tournament for us and we were all excited. Everyone's preparing for Sawgrass like it's a major, so everyone's kind of with their teams and in their zones. Then we get pulled off the property and kicked out basically. Well, not kicked out, but we got pulled off and sent back home.

I think everyone was thinking a lot of things. Once news hit, I think reality really set in when we were all quarantining at home and I think that's where all the thoughts started to roll through.

**Q. Forgive me, but did you not have your own COVID issue at some point? I take it it was a mild situation, it wasn't that big of a deal, more of an inconvenience?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Yeah, I got COVID on December 18th. My quarantine was from the 18th to the 28th. I was sick for about three days total. The big thing was fatigue. In Maui, Maui was absolutely brutal for myself. I was out of breath on Thursday. I definitely had, I called them COVID bogeys. I definitely made a fair share of COVID bogeys on Thursday and Friday out there, or COVID mistakes, mental mistakes. It was, yeah, inconvenient. I've had worse flu symptoms in the past, but fortunately I was strong enough to push through it and now I'm totally fine.

**Q. Anybody in your family get it also or were you just -- you were the only unlucky one in your circle there?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** My girl back at home, she got it and then gave it to me and we quarantined together shortly after. It was just the two of us. Fortunately our family members are healthy and safe so far.

**Q. I have two really kind of offbeat questions here, my apologies in advance, but following on the COVID thing, throw out when you're home anywhere around Torrey or what have you, can you think about how much your routine on the road has changed off the golf course, whether you used to go out to dinner with friends or your girl, what you do now, and has it become a way of life or do you actually miss doing what you used to do?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** A couple of my friends joked saying COVID didn't change my life

at all, it actually made it more convenient because there's less traffic due to it.

For the most part I'd say being here or, for example, like my family's not allowed out here, so that sucks. My girl's not allowed out here, that sucks. But for the most part I take golf pretty seriously just like everyone else out here. I think we have our small teams and we do our team dinners every once in a while, and you have your occasional spots that you like, but for the most part I keep it very low key. It's tournament week, I'm not trying to do anything crazy except prepare and practice and get ready.

So out here, besides the fans, in terms of preparation I don't think much has changed. You've got to give yourself more time for testing. Since I got COVID I'm kind of back to normal and pick up my things since I have the antibodies. Overall it hasn't been that big of a deal, just minus the fans, of course, which is a big deal. I don't remember what your second question was.

**Q. I haven't made it up yet, but I'm getting ready to.**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Okay, perfect.

**Q. With your own experience, if someone asked you do you like the new FedExCup finish format, the TOUR Championship format, do you like it or no? Were you in favor of it before? Do you like it now?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Wow, look at you, rattling the cage here.

It's weird. I think typically you'd have the same winner at times. I was the first of its kind, I guess, with the new rule where Dustin won the whole thing and I ended up kind of being the low man that week finishing third.

I understand why everyone does it. I think it would still -- the problem is when Tiger won and Justin Rose finished and won the FedExCup. Rose is a very big name in our game, but everyone knows who Tiger Woods is, so attention was taken away and sponsors get upset. So I understand the whole mix up with the whole thing, but I think it wouldn't be that hard to run up a parallel tournament besides because Official World Golf Ranking gave me a win at East Lake when I checked last.

So it's a weird deal. It's identified on Official World Golf Ranking and then on the PGA TOUR it's not. I just play golf for a living, I just try to be good at one thing. You guys ask plenty of questions and I've got an agent and a manager who can try and manage everything else. I'm just kind of stuck in the middle and I just try my best.

**Q. One more funny question then.**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Fire away.

**Q. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word USGA?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** I mean, U.S. Open, honestly, that comes to mind. Tough, I guess. Tough can take on several meanings, you know what I mean, but just tough I'd say. U.S. Open and tough are really the two things that popped in. You're not going to get anything out of me, Dougie.

**Q. Thanks again, Xander. Just another sort of offbeat one for you. I'm just sort of curious, I realize you guys have your own thing going on, but a fairly prominent player, Rickie Fowler, has been struggling here for a while. Are you surprised? Have you noticed anything? And kind of hard to believe, but at this point he's not in the Masters.**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** I did not know that. I kind of know Rickie better now just from being out here. Something I always sort of try to model after Rickie was sort of his attitude, growing up, watching him on TV. You see him on the range, you see him out here, you would never even guess that he hasn't been playing great golf in the last couple years. I think his attitude is one sort of for kids to model after.

It is surprising that news you just told me that he's not in the Masters. I also, I don't know if he can -- if he wins this week, then he'll probably get in, or next week or whenever.

You know, Butch was his old coach, he kind of stopped traveling as much. He's working with John Tillery now, who's a great guy, good coach. I think he kind of got caught in between a big swing change and kind of finding his own swing again. Rickie's a dangerous golfer. He rides the wave. When he's playing good golf, birdies come in bunches.

And he's older than me. He always jokes about being the old man, you know what I mean, being 30 or whatnot, but he's super young, in his prime. He definitely hasn't even touched his prime. This is sort of a temporary thing. Like I spoke about Jordan, Jordan's great, great for the game. When Rickie Fowler's playing well, it's also good for our game. I'm big fans of both.

**Q. I'm just wondering those two examples -- you mentioned Jordan, too -- are a cautionary tale. Do you take that into your own mind to say, hey, there's going to be some down times possibly?**

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Golf is brutal, you know. It's a perfectionist's game. We're constantly chasing. It's easy to go down sort of a weird path, and when everyone's there and everyone thinks it's the correct path, it could be, but if it's not the correct path for you and how your body works and your swing works and how your mind works.

So whenever we feel really close to kind of figuring things out, we kind of make the wrong mistake and go the opposite direction. So it's not surprising, you know what I mean? I think there's always low points and high points in everyone's game. Unfortunately they've kind of

gone to their lower side, but the good thing is that they've both played incredible golf and they've both been top players in the world. It's not really -- everyone's kind of talking about it and how worried they are about the state of their games, but as a fellow player out here, I'm not really concerned for them because I know they can kind of get it back pretty quickly. I think Jordan Spieth is a good example of sort of him talking about how he's figuring it out and before you know it he's in contention last week, the last two weeks. It does come back quickly when it comes.

**JOHN BUSH:** Xander, thank you for your time and best of luck this week.

**XANDER SCHAUFFELE:** Thanks, John. Thanks, guys.