

WILL ZALATORIS

MARK WILLIAMS: Welcome, Will Zalatoris, to the 2020 Bermuda Championship. You've had a wonderful stretch, pretty torrid stretch the last few weeks, three top-10s in your last four starts. I guess just a couple of weeks off. Have you done anything these last couple of weeks just to take your mind off golf and just reflect on what you've been doing lately.

WILL ZALATORIS: You know, I really didn't do a ton the last couple weeks. I played a little bit of golf this past week. I needed a little bit of a break. I played 15 out of 18 weeks or something crazy. Somebody told me that number and I couldn't believe it. It helps when you're playing well because it's definitely not as stressful and not as tiring, but tried to hit the reset button a little bit and just kind of continue what I've been doing.

MARK WILLIAMS: As I mentioned, a few top-10s, U.S. Open, Puntacana and then a T-5 at Shriners Children's Hospital Open. That T-5 just missed out on special temporary membership, but you're a smidge close and hopefully you'll wrap it up this week. Is that in the back of your mind, but I'm sure there's other bigger things in mind for you this week. Just talk us through Bermuda Championship week.

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, you know, of course it's hard not to think about it, but the main thing is I want to keep playing as much as I can and keep building rhythm. You know, the only way how I play the next two weeks is if I top-10. Of course you can sit there and think about three points and what do I have to do to do that, but the reality of is I want to keep on playing out here as much as I possibly can.

Like I said, for me to play the next two weeks, I've got to top-10 this week and top-10 the week after. At the end of the day I've kept the same process of just trying to improve on each week, what I've been doing, and it's paid off so there's no reason to change or start thinking about little things like this finish or that finish or what this could do for me. Every shot's the same and no shot matters more than the next one.

MARK WILLIAMS: Absolutely. I'm guessing this is your first trip to Bermuda. It's obviously your first tournament here. Have you had a chance to look at Port Royal? Have you played 18 or nine or had a chance to check it out, and what's your thoughts on the course?

WILL ZALATORIS: So I got in here Sunday night and the person who did my test missed the A in my first name, so I did not get my test until late last night. It's very nice to get some vitamin D and be outside. I've been stuck in my hotel room for the past 24 hours.

MARK WILLIAMS: That's an unfortunate letter to miss for you.

WILL ZALATORIS: It's gorgeous out, though. I'm looking forward to it, though. Once we get done here, I'm going to head out this afternoon.

MARK WILLIAMS: I'm sure you've been well taken care of at the hotel.

Q. What's up, Will? I wanted to -- kind of with the top-10s and you talked about trying to play your way into the next couple, is there anything from the experience on KFT with Mondaying in and top-25s that's kind of similar that's helped you prepare for this kind of goal in your current stretch in the fall?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, of course. My first year out, I guess not this past year but the year before, Top-25ing, Monday qualifying, where some guys might be in T-28 and just kind of cruising along and just going about their business mean while I'm grinding it out like I've got to win a golf tournament. It's definitely great experience, especially this year on top of all the top-10s that I've had, I mean, I've had to grind out to make all my cuts. I made four on the number this year and I had to birdie the last at least three times I can think off the top of my head just to make the cut. So there's a lot of experience to draw on, especially from the last 18 to 20 months for sure from the Korn Ferry Tour.

Q. If you had to pinpoint something that you kind of think of from the last two years on KFT that you kind of learned out there in an approach to being a pro or in your game or a routine, what's something that would come to mind?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I think it's more of the routine, trying to become a better professional, knowing what days you need to take off at certain times, how to manage my energy and never getting too high or too low. It's a marathon out here.

I've played some crazy amount of tournaments since the restart in June. I think I've only had three or four weeks off, so learning how to manage my energy and basically not let things bother me as much and at the same time don't get too overly excited when things go well.

Q. Definitely. What was it like at the house over the last two weeks? Was Davis there? Were you guys hanging out a bit?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, he was back home. I think we had a week where we overlapped. We played some video games, did absolutely nothing for a couple days and then we both kind of got back at it and got back to our Maridoe grinds.

Q. What video games did you play?

WILL ZALATORIS: A lot of Madden.

Q. Who got the upper hand?

WILL ZALATORIS: We're both terrible. I mean, we throw more picks than we do

touchdowns, we're terrible.

Q. What's the team match-up? Like who are you and who is he?

WILL ZALATORIS: I'm Cowboys, he's the Saints.

Q. And then if you had to pinpoint one like round from the year on just in the return to golf since June, it's kind of your favorite round or something that sticks out, what kind of comes to your mind when I ask that?

WILL ZALATORIS: I would say the second round in San Antonio. I was battling food poisoning the first day and shot 77 and I needed to put a good round together that second day to make the cut. Ended up birdieing the last to shoot 67, made the cut on the number and I ended up shooting I think 12 under on the weekend. I think I was T-62 going into the weekend and finished 5th. You know, those are weeks that I'm honestly I think that week I'm probably the most proud of, even more proud of than the one in Colorado.

Q. Absolutely. And then I wanted to ask you, it's a long career ahead of you. In terms of like trying to get special temporary membership this week or play, like what's the sense of urgency? Like is there a balance between urgency and also knowing it's not the end of the world if it doesn't work out, or how do you kind of take that mentally as you prepare?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I mean, you know, special temporary status isn't the be-all, end-all. If you want that to be the end goal, then I could sit here and think I've got eight or nine events basically. You add in maybe a few sponsors exemptions and then the opposite field starts from the Korn Ferry Tour. So it's not the be-all, end-all.

Like I said, I want to keep playing as much as possible, I know I'm playing good. So for me, just keep on doing what we're doing. Of course I want to play the next two weeks, but I know I'll either have to Monday qualify or top-10, or between here -- or Houston and RSM obviously, I'll either have to Monday or top-10. I want to play in my home state especially, that's something that would really mean a lot to me to be able to get in and play there. We'll see what happens. Obviously just keep going about my business and whatever it adds up to, it adds up to.

MARK WILLIAMS: Will, I'm just going to jump in on kind of along Kevin's theme. You've got a long future ahead of you. You'll probably be favored or one of the favorites this week given your past form. But I want to go back to when you were younger, maybe four, five years ago and you were an invite to the Byron Nelson and you had an emergency appendectomy. When you look back now, how did you react to that and do you look forward to where you are now and think, well, that was just a blip in the road, or was it just such a big deal at the time that you didn't get to play in that tournament? How has that sort of educated you in that situation?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, I learned a lot. I've tried to come back too soon, especially that year because I was trying to make that Walker Cup team as well. It hurt obviously not to play in my hometown PGA TOUR event, especially just with how fun that atmosphere always is and having friends and family around.

So if anything, it really kind of added motivation to get back there and compete and play well. And I haven't played well the last two times I've been there, but I know the next chance I get I'll make sure I take advantage of it. It was pretty soul crushing to be 18 and into a PGA TOUR event in your hometown, I was looking forward to it. Obviously it's how things fall, but I learned a lot from it especially. I kind of did a little soul searching after all that and kind of realized at the end of the day it's just golf, it isn't the be-all, end-all.

MARK WILLIAMS: It's a good attitude to have. This week coming into the Bermuda Championship and given your past form, do you feel any sense of extra pressure? There's a lot of people out there saying you're the favorite. There's a lot of people saying he's going to win any time. Do you feel any of that? How do you compartmentalize that and deal with that?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, you know, I don't -- the only pressure I feel is the pressure I put on myself. I know that a lot of people are obviously picking me as favorite because I've been asked a lot of questions just like that.

Hey, it's humbling. It's obviously really nice that people think highly of what I've been doing, and obviously I've been on the right track. You know, it doesn't really bother me. Fortunately I've been able to watch guys like Jordan Spieth and Scottie Scheffler go through the ranks and been friends with those guys literally since we were 9 or 10. So I've seen them go through it and I know how to handle it. And obviously it's fun, it's absolutely a lot of fun. It's a great position to be in.

MARK WILLIAMS: Absolutely. Well, unless Kevin has anything else, we appreciate your time.

Q. I have a couple more. I did want to play off that and having played the Korn Ferry Tour most of the summer and then coming out here for the fall, what would you describe, you know, as the similarities and differences between the two tours in terms of level of play and how close the level of play might be from what you've kind of seen?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, it's just different. You know, I think the biggest difference between the two tours is just the courses. The courses out here are definitely a little more challenging. The level of play obviously, we had 10 guys playing the U.S. Open and I think we had three or four guys make the cut, so that just kind of shows the level of play between the two tours.

You see these guys that come from the Korn Ferry Tour and have gone to the PGA TOUR

and been successful, like Lanto, so it only gives us more confidence once we get into the next level.

Q. Definitely. And then what are kind of your plans for the rest of the fall? Obviously trying to get into as many Tour events as you can, but just in general? Are you going to take any time away from the game?

WILL ZALATORIS: Yeah, when my number's called, I'm coming. Like I said, I'll have to either Monday or top-10 for the next two weeks and then after that we'll see from there.

Q. Kind of a general question, but in terms of thinking about the last couple years and in college, what is the moment I guess in your career when you thought you were ready to be a PGA TOUR player? Like when in your mind you were like, all right, I'm good enough to play on the PGA TOUR?

WILL ZALATORIS: Depends on what day of the week you ask me. I mean, some days I might tell you I'm still not ready to be out here, but yeah, I really think the U.S. Open was huge for me. It's one thing to say you can compete against the best in the world, it's another one to actually do it, so I think that was really huge for me.

Q. What kept you from like getting nervous I guess down the stretch on Sunday? You're right in the top-10. Or did you feel nerves and channel them?

WILL ZALATORIS: No, it was more just fun. You know, I wanted to be there my whole life, so I was finally there. To be nervous and think otherwise of it or be excited and enjoy the experience and I made sure I got to enjoy it.

MARK WILLIAMS: Will, we appreciate you making the time for us. Have a great week this week in Bermuda and enjoy the sunshine now that you're out in it.

WILL ZALATORIS: Thank you.