PGA Tour Champions learning center.

>> For the seventh year in a row the best players in the world age fifty and over are coming to omni Tucson national which you may or may not know once hosted a PGA tour event, and what's not to like here spectacular scenery and holes like the dangerous eighteenth with water on the left and right sides of the fairway challenging players right to the very end.

Hello everyone and welcome to learning center I'm Vince Giulini PGA Tour champions began their season at the Mitsubishi electric championship at Hualalai and now after more than four weeks off it's time for the second tour event of the year the Cologuard Classic. The defending champion is sixty three year old Bernard Langer who continues his march toward forty five wins on this tour and took another step by taking the event in Tucson for the first time in five tries.

Last year Langer turned a four shot deficit entering the final round into a two shot win in the Cologuard Classic in his final round eight under sixty five he hit every fairway and had only twenty three putts the win meant Langer added to his streak of consecutive seasons with at least one victory which stands at fourteen in a row.

On learning center we learn from the best and we welcome in the five time Charles Schwab Cup champion and defending Cologuard champion Bernard Langer it's great to see you as always.

>> Thank you Vince, good to be seen.

>> So last year at omni Tucson national a place that you enjoy playing you finally get that notch on your belt I think was the first win in five tries there so what was different in translating your comfort level to taking this all the way home?

>>I finally won that helmet you know they gave this trophy at the Cologaurd Classic exactly. I think it's a very traditional old style golf course kind of narrow and and you know it's right in front of you so driving is key at at that tournament you gotta hit the fairways it's somewhat narrowed at places and then you know putting and the short game is always important but I I drove the ball very well and hit a lot of fairways which put me in a great position to attack the pins.

>> We'll get to that in just a moment I I do want to mention that by winning there you continue your streak of at least one victory in fourteen straight seasons we've talked about this in the past and you have many accomplishments but how proud are you of that particular statistic in that it means such consistency?

>> It's very hard to do. It's it's difficult to win on any tour now in the world because competition is is so tight and so so much all of it and especially you know when you get on the PGA tour champions you have all these 50, 51, 52 year olds it's hard to win in your sixties, no doubt about it because you know you you lose a little bit of distance you lose a little bit of this a little bit of that and you got to try and make it up somewhere else and so to have won on this tour every year I've been out there it is an amazing accomplishment and we'll see how much longer will continue.

>> Alright we want to revisit that performance in Tucson and a brilliant final round really where you hit every fairway and had twenty three putts in the round as well so I was wondering if you could take us through and some of the things that are your check points in particular on driving the ball and some of the things that are necessary to be successful there.

>> yeah you know lets start off maybe with how high do I tee the ball if I have a really tight hole very narrow I sometimes tee it very low so I I barely have it up off the ground is like this and what it seems to happen this I had a little bit lower on the face but it seems to go much straighter. If I want to hit it really really far and down winds I tee it up and and I swing you know hard and swing up on it a bit like Bryson DeChambeau does, obviously he hits it a lot further than I do but that's the the what I do with teeing my average tee ball if I don't have any worries about it hitting it too straight or too far or whatever I just tee it where about half of the ball is above the head. so half of the ball is above the above the top of the head that seems a good height for me and then I personally don't ground the club so I don't put the club on the ground before I take it away because every once in awhile I get stuck in the grass so I actually hover it in the air just like this which helps my grip pressure a little bit and helps me to make this move the take away. So I don't you know sometimes you get stuck, you jerk it away and then it's already bad shot before you even hit it. That makes sense? I just hover it above the ground and from that point on I'm going to hit this one I try and make it a a slow long slow take away with a lot of radius a full turn, finish the backswing before I'd turn through. Just like that.

>>Langer not only broke through to win the Cologuard in 2020 but he did so with his best ever performance here and following his withdrawal from the event the year before with a rib injury, finishing far off the pace the year before that in 2018. His final round included nine birdies through seventeen holes and a two shot victory over Woody Austin it was the fifth time Langer one on PGA tour champions when trailing by at least four shots going into the final round. The Conquistador helmet trophy has gone to the Cologuard classic champion since the event began in 2015 at omni Tucson national that same venue hosted the PGA tour's Tucson open for thirty additions from 1965 to 2006. Trophy winners from the Tucson open including Phil Mickelson, Lee Jansen and Jeff's lumen. Kirk Triplett won the iconic trophy in the tournament's final year. Speaking of Phil Mickelson he won his first of three Tucson opens thirty years ago in 1991 as an ammeter, no ammeter has won on the PGA tour since. This week lefty is set to return to the Arizona desert to try and win for a third time in as many starts on the PGA tour champions. If successful, he would become the first player on any PGA tour sanctioned tour to win in their first three starts. While temperatures in Arizona are expected to be in the low seventies that's the polar opposite from the weather residents in Texas faced last week. These photos of Austin Country Club site of next month's WGC dell technologies match play are courtesy of Austin Texas resident Bob Estes, someone find Tom kite a coat and a hot Cup of coffee. Still to come on PGA tour champions learning center we'll hear from Jerry Kelly on why the Cologuard classic has provided personal satisfaction and sadness, his amazing work there continues.

The Cologuard classic is named after exact sciences noninvasive at home colon cancer screening test it's an event that honors colon cancer survivors last year prior to the pandemic we spoke with one such person who played alongside Cologuard classic host Jerry Kelly in the tournament pro-am.

>> I'm really honored and blessed to be here first as a survivor. Ended up taking a Cologuard got a positive result ultimately having eighteen inches of my colon removed but I'm now almost two years out and clean. The ultimate motivating factor was that we lost my father-in-law of colon cancer six months before I was diagnosed. It was hard on my daughters and my wife because they had just experienced colon cancer equals death so for grandpa to die and then six months later to have your dad diagnosed was that was pretty hard at our house. About eleven years ago I lost my daughter to a pool drain incident. About forty eight hours after she was injured we're laying in her hospital bed and the news on and she said are we going to be on the news, and I said why honey and she said because we just need to make sure that all kids know about this the parents know how dangerous these pool drains are and a year later we formed our Abby’s hope charitable foundation and our mission is to keep kids safe in and around the pool we're continuing her legacy but the advocacy part of my life really kicked into high gear that day and when I was diagnosed I told my wife we need to talk about this. Early detection it's easily curable to easily preventable but you have to get screened.

>> Pleased to spend some time here with Jerry Kelly and Jerry maybe you can help recap the ambassador for Cologuard.

>> Well it's it's crazy story you know I I've known Kevin Conroy the CEO of exact sciences were in the same neighborhood but we're both on the same flight and he unfortunately was going to see a cousin of his who died from colon cancer and it's like you're the CEO of Cologuard and you have a relative who's actually dying from the disease and I'm like we got to get the word out you know. So I just said we put it on my collar and and and let's just go and and it wasn't a monetary thing in anyway we just wanted to get the word out and you know he was touched by how strongly I felt about it. Now just recently we feel that much stronger because we've lost a couple of really good friends Dina you know we lost who was great with Aaron Rodgers playing at at the Cologuard but one of my great friends growing up Rob Andringa we lost him this year after he was also at the Cologuard classic played in the pro-am full of life and this disease took him. He was waiting until he was fifty and at forty eight years old he was diagnosed with stage four so the age has now drop down to forty five and don't take that lightly anybody. When when it's time you need to get checked. It's a it's an awful awful disease but it's extremely preventable and extremely curable if caught early and that is what Cologuard does and you know the the passion that that Kevin has for this company and he knows I have that kind of passion too I mean we just it it's it can save people and and that's that's a really important thing as as the best way I can think of of giving back to all the people who have done so many great things for me but I don't I don't wanna lose another friend.

>> No you're doing great work you know that you know that and I I know you lean on a lot of those folks with us is no longer with us when your times get tough.

>> Yeah I mean that's yeah it just says the chills up I mean these young full life great family and this disease doesn't discriminate it's not just for the older generation at I run across many people in their thirties who of who have said Hey you know I'm a survivor thanks for what you do and it's like, you know you could be my son it it doesn't discriminate you've got to get checked.

>> Want to talk a little golf? You’re fifty four and the won the only major played on PGA tour champions in 2020.

>> Hey it's Kelly slam.

>> Or that or as it is referred to. is a go time this year for you? What do you think?

>> I feel pretty strong right now got to do the weights for the first time in about three years so I I do feel strong I feel ready. Mentally is is where I've got to be I've got to be on that I'm not positive side.

>>When learning center returns we drive the distance debate. Some of the legends of the game offered their opinions on where things are headed in terms of going long.

How long is too long, earlier this month the USGA and the RNA announced that they are re engaging with the golf industry on the distance insights project which aims to help achieve a more sustainable long term future for golf. The distance debate is a hot topic whether you're an amateur or a member of the world golf hall of fame.

>> We haven't scratched the surface you know we talk about long hitting we're in the infancy this is hard for people to understand when you see what's going to happen in X. amount of years time with DeChambeau hits his drive now they gonna carry the ball past him you haven't seen these big football players play golf yet, the only big man that ever played golf was George Bayer we've never seen a big man come. They are coming, but what perturbs me is what is gonna happen with this ball. When they hitting seven irons to par fives I don't know what's going to happen now. They gonna have to and they will as sure as I'm sitting here and I've been saying this for thirty years they will have to cut the ball for professional golf back fifty yards. Now for the amateur leave everything for them let them do what they want do with clubs and balls so they come out and play we need rounds of golf.

>> The game has changed dramatically over twenty year time frame and the guys that are playing on tour right now I had never played with the old equipment. A lot of them have never hit a wooden wood I mean I think it's an antique and I guess to some degree it is. They've never played with a ball that spun nearly as much as the balls that we played with back in the eighties and nineties. You know it's a different game in the guys have learned how to handle that. I'm not really sure that there is a place for an average hitter out on the PGA tour anymore I I think it's basically long drive contest with guys that can really wedge and putt it.

>> The longest hitters have really always dominated right always and right now technologies allowed the the club head speed to get up over the 114, 116, 118 mark when you start doing that you get that exponential power out of the golf ball out of the game. You know I think it's not going to go away I think there's going to be the powers in institutionally are probably sitting back now how do you arrest a Bryson DeChambeau or another wave of ten fifteen twenty Bryson DeChambeau’s. That will happen and you know what Bryson is done is completely changed the way everybody looks at the game there's no question about it, I congratulate him on doing it at the same time is taken the the art of the game of golf away. There is an art to playing a golf course there is an art to positioning a golf ball, yeah there's not much out just smashing it out that 360, 370 close to 400 and getting it close as you can to the to the to the green. There is an art to position the ball out there 310, 320 put in the right position on the fairway to get the right shot to the that hole location. So sixty two degree sand wedges makes life a little bit easier to out of heavy rough when you are only sixty seventy yards from the green.

>> In examining average driving distance by decades there's been a steady climb the PGA tour average given the increased physicality of players and certainly modern technology. In 2020 tour players average just under 300 yards off the tee. Remember that's an average with bombers like Bryson DeChambeau, Rory McIlroy and Cameron champ well past that number in 2021. There is more to come on PGA tour champions learning center including U. S. Ryder Cup captain Steve Stricker with some inspiring play in Scottsdale hanging with players half his age.

 Saturday during golf channel's coverage of the Cologuard classic it's the celebrity charity challenge a nine hole skins game which will raise money for Colo rectal cancer advocacy groups some of the schedule participants include Major League Baseball hall of fame catcher Ivan Pudge Rodriguez hall of fame NFL running back Marcus Allen and the Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Larry fitzgerald.

No one has shot a better fifty four hole score at this week's Cologaurd classic then Tom Lehman. In 2017 the sixty year old began the final round three shots behind Steve Stricker, but a Sunday sixty six help Lehman win by one stroke and finishes twenty under par. Lehman shares another special connection to the Cologuard classic, the Scottsdale Arizona resident is a brand ambassador for the fight colorectal cancer organization in October 2019 Lehman travel to Washington DC to gain support for advancing the removing barriers to colorectal cancer screening act. The five time PGA tour winner is a twenty four year colon cancer survivor.

Meanwhile Tom Brady wasn't the only athlete turning back the clock on Superbowl Sunday, U. S. Ryder Cup captain Steve Stricker put on a show that day as well at the waste management Phoenix open. At fifty three years old he was attempting to become the oldest winner in PGA tour history. He hit all eighteen greens in the final round and carded six birdies to shoot sixty seven and finished tied for fourth. One year ago prior to the pandemic we caught up with one of the great putters in the game in what's your edge.

>> Steve if you really take us through some some of your keys in particular you're you're kind of vertical with the putter to and your your left hand dominant I and we always talk about speed in line with you yeah well.

>> and and you know to be a good putter you need both of them you know you need you need good speed and you need to pick the proper line and so it's really about being a good greens reader you know and then trying to commit to the line that you pick and most times I don't really worry about speed I've done enough practice you know out on the course on the putting green that I'm just you know play in my feel you know and and doing doing what I've learned and and and what I practice for the week leading up to it but you're right I am I am I am a little more upright I one of the things I've been working out lately is my ball position where it is in my stance and how far away I'm I am from the ball so I've been getting a little closer to it lately trying to get my hands a little bit closer to my body and then again like you said making making the stroke with my left hand. If you if I make this Vince you are coming with me. just talk when you are hitting it a yeah it's going to take it over yeah going through my routine. You know but you know it's about set up and I've been I haven’t been putting great of late but you know I'd start to get back to some of the key things that I've done over the years and and I look back at old Ryder Cup tapes tell you the truth when I know I was playing well trying to get in that set up position like I was before.

>> Well we're all excited about it very much so and this is a great primer.

>> yeah thank you very much.

>> The best of luck okay thank you.

With a steady hand in a solid performance in Scottsdale in the books the celebration continues for Steve Stricker who turns fifty four this week meaning the only number that matters is the one on the scorecard. That's our show for this week I'm Vince Giulini thank you for watching and we will see you next week with an all new learning center.