PGA Tour Champions learning center

OC/VO>> Hello and welcome the PGA tour champions learning center. I'm Vince Giulini one year ago March twelfth to be exact was the day that everything changed in the world of golf. The COVID 19 pandemic stoped the sport in its tracks, as golf and really life itself was put on hold. Let's look back and listen to some of the players talking about the year gone by and a new perspective it's given all of us.

OC/VO>> yeah I clearly remember that you know the Players championship you're know playing one day and then all of a sudden it's over you know and baseball had just canceled and suddenly I think NASCAR may have canceled the now the PGA tour and the Champions Tour everybody you know done like just overnight. It is you know somewhat eerie I think you know thinking back about it just like okay now what do we do? you know but I do know this there's two things that I take away from it is number one is the immense suffering that some people have had you know I think that the the the risks are definitely there and some people have paid dearly in some families have paid dearly for most people the risks are fairly low. You know so with my family I know I've had COVID my wife has had COVID my son in law and my granddaughter all with very little to no symptoms or problems and what has been has been a year of family time together. Which it as Shane Doan is a neighbor said like you know a pandemic shouldn't be so fun you know in the fun being that our families are together and we spend so much time together but not fun in knowing that there's been so much suffering and and the so much going on with businesses and people whose you know who have lost a lot of they've lost their livelihood they've lost family members and you know so it's been a really bizarre I think a very bizarre and and twisted emotionally chaotic time and I think everybody's looking for more normalcy.

OC>> There's been a manual for this it's been find out as you go what to do what not to do and you know the funny thing well I got COVID when I was down in South Africa and in January and the funny thing is people say people ask you where did you get it? you can never really pin point we actually are confident where you got it. So you know having had it in a bad way I can just recommend to people to try as much as possible not to get it. I know that a lot of ways in which you can get it and and and it's different for everybody, everyone there not 2 people who show the same symptoms. You know you have I have heard some horrible stories in South Africa we had people that had been perfectly healthy have gotten it in and died and have had no ailments so I can recommend to you know hopefully the vaccine can do the job and from there we can lead a normal life again.

OC/VO>> It affected me sports wise I guess a little bit the week before our first event I got COVID and so I went through it, relatively mild for me so it was nice, but I missed an event because of it and then just you know I think looking back now I think the one thing I know in New Mexico the one thing that's been available for everybody has been golf. So that would be like basically the only entertainment or sport that's been available and golf is been booming because of it there. I think it's been a huge year for golf I think you know maybe it's something that turns out to get a lot of people into golf new people and sustain that so that could be something good I guess that comes out of it.

VO>> One PGA tour champions player in particular went through a harrowing experience due to COVID 19 to the point where he wondered if he was going to survive. Mark Calcavecchia was a long way from healthy and certainly a long way from home when gripped by the virus. He's come through the other side to share his story and an entirely new perspective on this health challenge facing all of us.

OC>> First you don't think you'll ever get it number one and then I was surprised when I did we were in the middle of Nebraska playing sand hills and dismal river and the prairie club and I had a runny nose my right nostril is running but I don't think anything of it, I thought it was allergies. I had to do the spit test before Sioux falls so that was Thursday in Valentine Nebraska and we're driving to Sioux falls on Sunday and stop for lunch and look at my phone and it came back positive. So we drove the last few hours to Sioux falls and got there, tested again at the on site testing there that was positive again and Brenda was negative the whole time so now you gotta decide what we're gonna do? So we waited that day she tested again on Tuesday and she was still negative but obviously I positive so I can't play. So we just decided to start driving home and took three and a half days four days and each day got worse and worse and worse plus mentally you know I've I've I've got COVID okay am I supposed to start feeling really bad I don't know.

OC>> and you're handling this motor coach that you're driving too?

OC/VO>> Yeah I'm driving the whole time and my backs just screaming at me you know every every bone in my body hurt my neck you know from driving and made a home barely and then it's just like all of all the fender fell off the car. Once I got home and hit the bed then I just I truly felt the full effects of it I lost taste smell had the fever aches and pains.

OC>> There's a hospital stay involved too?

OC/VO>> Yep and then after four days at home and just not feeling any better my doctor and Brenda my wife decided I should go to the hospital and they didn't do much there other than an EKG and I an IV and finally about five hours later they got me a C. T. scan on my lungs then another hour or two later the doctor finally comes and says well you've got typical COVID lung but luckily my blood oxygen level you know little thing you put on your finger never got below ninety four and they said if it had got to ninety two or less I would have to stay for sure and it's I told Brenda and and my doctor said you need to get me out of here as soon as possible otherwise I mean I get out of here. I felt that bad, but anyway once I got home and and got some steroids and some antibiotics in me and some cough syrup and got a good night of sleep a day and a half later I felt fifty percent better and you know you know as soon as you open your eyes you know you when you wake up you go well I think I feel better. You know this is this is good finally but yeah it was it was pretty harrowing and I know a lot of other friends out here that I have tough tough cases with it my brother spent six days in the hospital the ICU he was pretty close to to the end so it's it's it's the real deal out there trust me.

OC>> Yeah what's the after living through all that seeing what you're seeing with your brother what's what would be your message I guess to someone who maybe is thinking that that that might not be me.

OC/VO>> You know it's everywhere I go you know grocery stores and wherever you know people have masks on so I think everybody is doing a much better job of keeping the mask on and social distancing and and testing and what not. I think that's improved a lot but obviously it this this virus is something like nobody's ever seen before and it gets around fast and people are the amount of new cases every single day is really staggering so we got a hope this vaccine works in this and continue to do a good job with mask and social distancing.

OC>> I'm glad we're sitting here talking and I’m seeing you. Thanks mark.

VO>> When learning center continues we will hear from two past champions of the players starting with Greg Norman who holds the tournament scoring record and 1995 champion Lee Janzen shares his winning strategy on the difficult par for eighteen holes at TPC sawgrass.

Jerry Kelly won the Bridgestone senior players last year the only PGA tour champions major played in 2020 or as he refers to it the Kelly Slam. As a result Kelly earned an exemption into this week's players. He's played in the event twenty two times in his career with his best finish being a solo fourth in 2001. He finished four shots behind Tiger Woods who was better than most that week.

All of the winners of the players are honored with a plaque at the champion circle one of those men is Greg Norman. Twenty seven years ago in the players he opened with a sixty three followed by three straight sixty seven and a record twenty four under par total. Until the best of the rest could only surrender to the shark.

VO>> Making this course like mighty easy.

OC/VO>> When you're a good player you know what the course records are, when you're good player and you have a chance of breaking the course record you don't want to tie with somebody really want to beat them. Fuzzy and I separated ourselves from the field a lot of ways. The two of us was forty two under par that's an impressive golf.

OC/VO>> I was playing at a high level but Greg took his to the next level. You go out and break a record by 4 and then you get beat by 2 so that means Greg broke the record by 8.

OC>> The lead up to it I was with Pete Dye and I said Pete I'm going to go up shoot a record score. I'm gonna go tear it up or something like that and Pete looked to me like yeah right.

VO>> Greg Norman first round at the Players Championship Norman was simply amazing birdies on thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen and seventeen.

VO>> My first round I kicked off with a pretty good round of sixty three and there really wasn't a shot out there that intimidated me.

VO>> Tap in and the scorecard reads 63.

VO/OC>> Sixty three was pretty damn healthy score to kick off the first round and I think you really that becomes the catalyst going into the next day and I pretty much did that and kept my play going on fairly solid for the next three days.

VO>> So Greg Norman with yet another 67 to reach the fifty four hole juncture nineteen under par obliterating previous fifty four hole record.

5th hole final round Greg Norman seven shot lead.

VO/OC>> We were on five over there and five is the long par four. He blew a 2 iron over the jungle over there I mean it was in grass this deep. Greg took this big old wild swing with this sand wedge and it plopped up there.

VO>> Well he could scarcely do better.

OC/VO>> I’m thinking well this is good I am going to cut into this lead. Then he knocked it in the hole. I walked up to him he said don't say anything it has been like this all week. I said right I'm in for the ride we'll just have a good time.

VO/OC>> Fuzzy he was one of the easiest and best guys to play golf with, because Fuzzy didn't have any jealousy or animosity I was matching him I wasn’t allowing him to get any closer to 4. Give credit where credit is due and Fuzzy was brilliant at that and at the same time I was brilliant. I remember walking off sixteen green going to seventeen tee I didn't even want to look at the green I wanted to just focus on my feet where I was going I knew a lot of things could go really bad with one swing. Fortunately for me I execute great shot and you know Fuzzy I think he gave me some little slap on the butt. Walked up towards the bag and said great shot. When I walked off seventeen I said I pretty much had it wrapped up. I made a birdie there and that was it.

VO>> if he plays the 18th in par he will have his 3rd consecutive sixty seven at twenty four under sixty four. To put in perspective Greg Norman tied the seventy two hole record forty nine holes, broke the record in fifty two holes.

Words barley adequate to do justice to what greg norman is doing to this golf course

OC>> Commissioner Beman was standing right beside me he said my god Fuz you got to do something. I said well hell that's easy enough Dean don't worry.

VO/OC>> I could see him out the corner of my eye come walking up towards me and he said wait wait wait you know that's quintessential Fuzzy.

OC/VO>> Took my towel grabbed his hat and patted him down because he was hot. Wiping him down the boy was hot , he was hot.

OC/VO>> There's certain things that happened during that golf tournament was special to me, look back and go wow that's that was special a moment.

VO>> There was a time when Greg Norman sat atop the golf world as the undisputed best. Norman's won the Open twice eight times a runner up in majors only Tiger Woods held number one for a longer stretch. He didn't just win on tour but also around the globe and was a lock for the world golf hall of fame class of 2001 his business success is just as impressive. What about the year after Norman lit up Ponte Vedra in 1995 Lee Jansen survived a much meaner sawgrass and he'll join us next on learning center to explain how he did it and how to strike it down the finishing hole with the tournament on the line.

VO>> If Greg Norman's 1994 players victory was a run away Lee Jensen won at the wire the year after. In firm and fast conditions with brisk winds Jansen used a steady hand to fashion a one under seventy one in the final round and post a five under par total nineteen shots higher than a shark win. Included was a key strategy off the tee on the seventy second hole with more here’s what's your edge.

OC>> The year was 1995 and Lee Jansen was your Players champion and we're going gonna take a little walk down memory lane here Lee if you don't mind. So that particular year you're winning score was five under two eighty three comes the year after Greg Norman had it set a record there twenty four under in his total 264 that's that's kind of a big difference what were the conditions like for for Greg as opposed to do you winning?

OC/VO>> Well a lot of over seed so the course had been watered a lot. Pete Dye course is meant to be played fast because the trouble is on the perimeter or right around the fairways around the greens and he wants you to be very exact. When it's wet you can pretty much hit it anywhere in the ball is going to stop in the fairway and then also your shot in the green the ball is going to stop. So you can be a lot more aggressive when it is fast and hard which the following year 1995 the course, very little rough, very little over seed, fast and we had some wind so the course played very tough so it's completely different conditions were you had an aggressive set up where you can go at the pin and if you missed it left or right five yard you still hit the green you have a fifteen footer. When it is really fast you have to be very exact where you landed it because balls and hit and bounce and roll a lot and the greens are small with a little undulation here and there so a much smaller target to hit it in.

OC>> yeah so I would think for you for one year to the next tell me about the mental grind of that particular week for you.

OC>> Right well the first two days the wind was up more than the weekend it was very tough I remember the first day that ends I think that the first two days were similar wind but it was very fifteen twenty maybe so it was you know two three club wind here and there. The holes don't go straight back and forth so it's not like you're always playing straight down wind or straight in the win a lot of holes crosswind some holes are in so you have a lot of different ones to deal with all day long so you have the shape different shots all day long trying to figure out how to get the ball to stop where you want it so it's not like you just go and play one type of shot in the wind. And then your short game needs to be there because you're just not gonna hit all the greens when the conditions are like that so you need to miss in the right spot give yourself a chance to get up and down and putt well make a lot of six, eight footers.

VO>> Yeah I can imagine on Sunday coming down the stretch and you know sixteen, seventeen, eighteen. Seventeen gets a lot of attention obviously because of well that it's famous one of the most famous holes in golf.

VO>> When I'm on the range before my round I look at the wind and I say what's the wind gonna to be on seventeen when I get there and I hit a handful of balls as though I'm playing the seventeenth hole with that in mind. There's rarely that I'd play a hole like that on the range ahead of time, maybe twelve at Augusta is another hole I might do that were I actually I'm worried about what the wind's gonna to be on that hole even though it is seventeen holes away I I want to be I already have it in my mind what I want to do before I ever get there and then of course it's a long walk from sixteen all the way around. You can't help but stare at the green so there's a lot going on there it is not, you think okay it's just a wedge or a nine iron these pros can hit it you know they hit it in the middle of the green right? Well it's it's a lot different when missing the green means your hitting it again from where you are or well you go to the ball drop which is no bargain.

VO>> Sure I wondered if there was as much strategy is it was a mystique but it apparently it is if you're thinking about it before your round. All right so let's get to eighteen you get through seventeen and then your particular Sunday in 95 it's important because there's water left and you you pull three wood off the tee and it is important not to go left. So tell me about your strategy on the final hole trying to take home?

VO/OC>> Right so the hole bends around the lake for us in 1995 the way the hole was, we nobody could hit it far enough that you can carry the lake. They they now do that I watch them play the Players Championship now on TV and the stretch Rickie Fowler had the year he won and they're just driving over the corner of the lake and have the wedge in that's crazy. The reason why I hit three wood in 95 we had a southeast wind so it was right to left and behind us a driver would have had a chance of going through the fairway unless I want to challenge lake more which really I didn't don’t need to do if I have a one shot lead or two shot lead. So three would give me the widest target they had that's why I picked it. Also I knew that I could control my three wood the shape of it with the down wind right to left I draw the ball so the ball was going to ride the winds so I was going to get plenty of distance out of it using the three wood. So the important thing is now, don't overdraw it don't hook it. The hole is very demanding so you just can't hit it out to the right and expect to be able to have a chance to knock it on the green making easy par so it's a very important hit a good tee shot.

OC>> So take us through and let's recreate that particular shot that particular day.

OC>> I know pretty much what my swing thought was back then because I I would if I missed that I might hook it or block it so it might path was in to out. So my concern would be okay what do I need to do to make sure I don't over hook it and that's I got to rotate so tempo and rotate so I'm I'm sure my thoughts were keep my head still, make a good turn and then you know and don't be in a rush so my tempo was important but I was also making sure my left hip hip cleared and my hands were in front of the ball so that to me that's going to keep the face from over rotating, but my natural tendency was to be a little in out so it was going to draw. So I got on the left side of the box and aimed it down the right and trusted that if I did that the ball would start down the right side draw with the wind.

OC>> All right let's let's give it a shot here we have a similar wind.

OC>> yeah right now on the range this is perfect. Course this is a whole what twenty five years later equipment had changed I've changed.

OC>> Well you're good to go.

OC>> Yeah I would actually I need to do that some more.

OC>> You're good to go right there. all right Lee never goes away it's like riding a bike thanks for the info.

OC>> Yeah I think I'm gonna use that now.

OC>> Well good glad we could help you here on Learning Center.

OC>> All right somebody had to learn.

VO>> And that is our show. Players thank you all for joining us I'm Vince Giulini and we will see you next time here on PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.