The PGA Tour champions learning center

VO>> Welcome to learning center. With PGA tour champions off this week we begin by focusing in on beautiful Austin Texas, cited the WGC dell technologies match play. This is the sixth year that the sixty four player field will be divided into sixteen four player groups, and compete in a round robin format.

OC>> Hello again everyone I'm Vince Giulini. Recently we caught up with three men who played in this event back when it was single elimination. Steve Flesch, Paul Goydos, and two thousand two champion Kevin Sutherland. We listen in as they discuss the mindset of this event and the challenges match play presents. Gamesmanship is certainly a big big part of match play, and one or maybe two disastrous holes may not be the end of the line.

OC>> Wasn’t it like nineteen years ago that you won the match play out it Lacosta, right?

OC>> Yeah Scott McCarron.

OC>> Yeah Scott McCarron in the finals.

OC>> Forty years ago, crazy.

VO>> What do you remember about that week?

VO/OC>> I was not putting well at, the week before and on the tenth hole the second round I decided just to go to the claw

OC>> Sounds like something I would do.

OC>> On the tenth hole at Riviera I just started putting the claw and then I putted with the claw the rest of that round and then I use in the tournament and I used it in three more tournaments and never used it again.

OC>> Really?

OC>> Yeah

OC>> Like that was it. It was a one hit one hit wonder.

OC>> I don't know why I just

OC>> That’s like my go to

OC>> so I remember Tucson, I played in Tucson. Tucson was opposite that event and I went to fitness trailer on Tuesday and people were talking about the match played and I said Kevin Sutherland is going to win. He placed well in San Diego, he putts, he's played well at Torrey pines and then they re-did the course

OC>> right

OC>> and then he's always putted well down there and then I was I was serious but I was also kinda half kidding but the the the valid point. I remember I walked in on they started on Wednesday

OC>> yeah

OC>> We didn’t start until Thursday, I walked in the fitness trail again on Wednesday said Hey your boys in trouble. He’s two down to Duval with two to play

OC>> yeah

OC>> and I want to say you birdied, did you birdie 17?

OC>> I birdied 17 I was gonna say I remember that week

OC>> How do you guys remember that stuff? I can’t remember what I made on the 5th hole today

OC>> I picked him to win

OC>> Okay

OC/VO>> Well that was a yeah, he was being nice but no that's it but one thing I remember about the week was I was two down with two to play to Duval the very first match and I birdied a fifteen footer on seventeen and about a ten footer on eighteen to get to the extra. But I mean the if you miss one of those putts, it’s like we’re not having this conversation

VO>> Do you remember what your seating was gone in?

VO>> sixty two

VO>> sixty two so Duval was what, three

VO>> three

VO>> Good for you, knocking off the top dog

OC>> yeah I mean I I well I played I played great all week

OC>> Do you member who you played besides Scott and Duval?

OC/VO>> I do, I remembered I played Paul McGinley who after the match said to me, he goes Kevin you can win this thing. Which was interesting, I talked to Paul about it since I said I kept telling myself well if he thinks I can win, why can’t I win?

VO>> Well he can't cause you beat him

VO>> I know I kept thinking if he thinks I can, then I should be thinking I can. And the I beat Furyk, Toms, Faxon, McCarron.

VO/OC>> So when you're playing that week and you went to the claw obviously, I think, I I think on the west coast with the with the seaside PO wind out there, the claw is probably not a bad idea.

OC>> Right

OC>> But how do you like, in match play how far was too far to like make a guy putt it, or how close was too close before you’re like that's good

OC>> Okay so, Brad I beat him one up in the semi finals and I hit it long and left an eighteen. I had a bad second side pitch it out to ten feet, missed that. Brad has I mean maybe three feet, and I was honestly thinking about giving it to him.

VO>> It’s Brad Faxon

VO>> It’s Brad Faxon

VO>> You’re burning daylight making him putt it

VO/OC>> Exactly, burning daylight. Let’s just to the next hole, let’s go to the 19th hole and just get this started, and he missed it. But I mean from my perspective I went where's my ball. Cause I had given it to John Wood, and John’s like it’s right here. I mean literally I didn’t know where my ball was. I just assumed I just mentally we’re going to the next hole.

OC>> Yeah, I remember when I did the one time I played, once. I played Olazabal and I had that conundrum I had him hit some short putts because we're up in Arizona greens were better, and I I thought I had to make a make some short putts but I actually asked him after the round, This guy’s got a bunch of Ryder Cups. He beat me on the nineteenth hole and I said did I make you putt anything that maybe I shouldn’t have made you putt. And he said no everything was fine.

OC>> Now did you consider that might have been gamesmanship on your part by I mean you hear guys say okay don't don't give them anything or give them everything early cause then you know when there's a Shorty later on right make them putt it because they haven't been making them. But did you guys I mean do you ever go through anything like I've never experienced it personally

OC>> yeah I mean I may not even notice they were doing it to me you know. I play a lot of golf at home with friends and we do have a few guys who will be you know tap in a three footer and be like guess we’re putting them all out today and I'll say you'll you are you're the one thinking about it. You know I think part of that is that if you’re good you'll make it, what difference does it make if you make them putt it or not. I don't really I never understood the concept of you should give one, if it's good then he's gonna to make it so what difference does it make.

OC>> You might miss it

OC>> Well yeah but again it, I understand you know where it's obvious but you know if it's this long and he thinks it should be good well okay I'll make it. Isn’t it the same thing? I never said that

OC>> I know but it is part of your you don't wanna like offend anybody. Maybe I over think that but I think you don’t want to go, I don't know I I

OC>> well you watch the Ryder Cup in a lot of times I heard the stories about the guy will have a short putt and they’ll leave the green and not tell them, and they don’t even watch them putt it. There's some there's some like tactics I think

OC>> Solheim Cup had one of those

OC>> Yeah Solheim

OC>> Do you think that like our Schwab Cup finale at the end of the year could be better served if there's a match play. And I mean there’s only what is there thirty six players? I mean would it be a format where we play two days in their seed and they go to match play. Or is it like you know whatever the top eighteen or whatever I don't know how you how you divide it down

OC>> Like the final four something like that. I don't know if you really want to you know it's tough because you know you don't get the right four guys it makes it harder in golf. Golf just, I think match plays a much better sport but the problem is is that the fans want to watch you know the top two players they don't need to watch me against whoever that's that's always been match plays problem.

OC>> But that's what exciting

OC>> Well it’s exciting inside, I think inside baseball it is exciting. I think for their hard core fans that that that the ratings are going to stay the same it’s for the casual fan that that it gets difficult.

VO>> when learning center returns more from this trio who joined the great distance debate. Their spin on technology, course design and possible adjustments for both. All next

VO>> Welcome back the USGA and the R&A are re-engaging with the golf industry through the distance insights project. A comprehensive review of increased hitting distance in golf. The governing bodies are pursuing this based on the shared belief that further significant increases in hitting distances at the highest level are not only undesirable but will impact the future of the game. Part of this is to protect the integrity of golf courses which could be compromised by the inability to become long enough to keep up with increased distance, perhaps becoming obsolete. Another specific area to ease the jumping distance is a look at equipment specifications for both balls and clubs. The research findings give the opportunity for manufacturers and other stakeholders in golf to offer perspectives that might lead to equipment rules changes, however it is not currently intended to revise overall equipment specifications, in order to produce reductions in hitting distances at all levels of the game. In that light there could be a local rule option specifying use of reduce distance equipment as a choice at all levels of play and among the three proposals sent to manufacturers relating to distance the suggestion of a model local rule that could limit the maximum length for clubs other than putters from forty eight to forty six inches. The bottom line is the debate on distance remains a strong one and with more let's continue our round table discussion with Kevin Sutherland, Paul Goydos, and Steve Flesch.

OC>> we've talked about this in our Tuesday group a lot. Is the ball going too far, does it need to be rolled back, is distance ruining the game. I know your idea about like you don't chase distance, tell us that story

OC/VO>> also you know I think there are there's obviously gray area people but there's generally two types of people. Short hitters and there are long hitters, those are your two categories. And I came to the, quite subconsciously, but I came to the concept that I'm never going to hit it very far so I'm always trying to figure out how to hit it straighter. I'm never trying to figure out how to hit a longer and I think the opposite is true, I think you know Dustin Johnson or Brooks Koepka should never be trying to figure out how to hit it straighter, within reason, they should always try to hit it farther. That’s what Bryson is doing, Bryson’s not trying to hit it straighter, he’s trying to hit it farther and then dealing with the consequences of that. I think that I think when people when when long hitters trying to hit it straight or when short hitters try to hit it long, that's when they disappear. This is that something I learned really early in my career thank you to Jay Haas, know who you are and accept it and then try to do the best you can with that. I've always seen a lot of players who are shorter who are always looking for length when I think they should be looking for straight.

OC>> Well you've always says what's five or ten more yards going to do for my game. Just so I go from seven to eight I mean or what I mean you kind of right you know round with little shots anyway but some guys I mean there it's not that they're chasing five or ten, they’re chasing twenty five. Now that can get really I mean there's guys I know on our tour who literally or I mean I'm sometimes one of them, going out there on a Tuesday thinking okay is this swing thought going give me an extra you know five or ten. I'm in that middle category I'm not short I'm not long I mean I'm a better than average on this tour but I'm not going to ever launch it like like Vijay and tiger did all those guys. You know DJ that bomb it, Rory up in the air now you you do hit high off the tee.

OC>> I do

OC>> Like I mean if you get the right combination of driver, ball right you could definitely see an extra fifteen if you wanted it.

OC>> If I wanted it, I I don't chase it though I never have you know. I've been I've always launched it in the air with my driver which I which is great if I get the right spin at that with that launch angle I can gain more yards

OC>> But this idea for owning the game, really? I mean I read an article by Peter Krause just a little bit and I didn't agree with what he said most of the book, but he came down the end I mean are we gonna change the ball and all the rules and everything because fifty golf courses might be a little bit obsolete to Dustin Johnson? Is this really a reason to start to start messing with the ball in the game and all this stuff because Augusta National is a little too short now for Dustin Johnson. It just seems completely backwards with what are there ten million golfers, I don’t know how many there are, ten million golfers or twenty million golfers and we're worried about this these twelve guys who are just. I don't I don't really understand the -- one person one, not two, one broke par at Wingfoot. One, and that's too many? you can only eliminate one of them.

OC>> Well I think I think we all would agree I mean I hate to say that back in the day argument but we seem to play way more rough especially on the west coast. I mean I remember playing Torrey pines and I mean it was it was hay. We don't see that as much anymore maybe it's an idea to promote scoring but Wingfoot had rough like this. I mean like you said, one guy broke par, but I mean

OC>> also he had the best chipping and putting week of his career, I bet you could ask him that question. I watched a decent amount of that and he wedged and putted it great.

OC>> You don't think we need to roll back?

OC>> No

OC>> what about you?

OC>> I would be inclined if you do roll it back I I'm not sure why everybody so against two sets of rules. I I don't I I'm not really sure why this is such a bad thing. I was, I have no one has really explain to me why it's bad to have two sets of rules. Yeah it seem like something that could potentially be, I don't think we should roll back the ball to make the game harder for the average player. I really don't I just the concern is growing the game.

OC>> Are the ratings terrible ratings are good, people enjoying it.

OC>> My only thing I think that would be a bigger impact than anything would be leave the ball. I see kids nowadays I mean we all grew up with persimmon head again not back in the day when we started you know how hard it was, but I mean kids nowadays are feet aren't even on the ground there hitting your drivers. I mean you see college kids when they're they're sending it. I think rather than mess with the ball maybe maybe for us like you say what's so bad about us a second set of rules. But maybe in professional golf the Max driver size can be three eighty, three sixty whatever.

OC>> It would definitely affect it.

OC>> It would affect it I mean not three woods now go three hundred yards.

OC>> Having said that the twelfth hole at Augusta is the whole that scares the ba-Jesus out of everybody who plays golf. It’s 155 yards with a green flatter than a pancake

OC>> You always gotta kill the buzz.

OC>> There's again, we talk about how you know about how distances but the whole that so maybe there's an architectural issue here.

OC>> That’s what Webb Simpson alluded to

OC>> So at the twelfth hole at Augusta you have to pick your poison, you either hit it far enough to hit it to the back right pin either got it a far enough to get the back right pin but if you don't stay on the line the left bunkers bad and you’re in the water. If you choose to hit the ball shorter distance of the left front but don't hit, you have to hit the right distance and the right line. On the vast majority of golf courses if you get one of them right here okay on that particular hole you have to get a both right or you can't play the hole. It doesn't matter how long it is.

OC>> and then the next hole they’re hitting it over the trees and hitting nine irons and wedges on the green. That’s where I think the ruling body see the bigger problem. They're turning fives into fours or threes

OC>> The ball wants to go far. They build golf courses that make you have to control how far it's going it's tough the ball doesn't want to be controlled.

OC>> There's another way of doing it the tour players all of sudden, that ball, you know you have to control your distance better the tour players are gonna start asking for balls with more spin, which is going to bring the ball back.

VO>> Coming up next on learning center more of our fireside chat with the gentleman. The trio discussing white playing with the same group can be beneficial, but before we go to break some on course advice from Ken Duke in this week's what's your edge?

OC>> I'm here to do shoes a new C. seven twenty one tour edge exotic driver. They've created a lot bigger sweet spot and as you know we all need that in this game of golf. We'll show you a couple of different T. heights here to show you how to hit this driver this morning. Obviously the one that's lower it's a lower ball flight you want to keep the ball down in the wind and a lot of times I choke up on the club to keep it down. This is a ten and a half degree driver with that bigger sweet spot is still gonna get that ball up in the air that you need to and get that penetrating flights which we all need. Let me show you a demonstration. And obviously on a calm day we have a little bit higher if you wanna get the ball up in there and and let it just sail, because that's the technology these days we can do that too. Hopefully these two demonstrations will help you, I know it's gonna help me in my game as well.

VO>> Early in the week of an event tour players partake in Tuesday games, the day before the pro ams begin. Usually these groups include players who are friends and comfortable in practicing and we hear, wagering with one another our panel of Kevin Sutherland, Paul Goydos, and Steve Flecsh are regulars in a Tuesday game, but it seems there's more going on than just individual practice.

OC/VO>> I know Tuesdays are big for us and and as the season goes on you know we we sometimes some guys are in town some aren’t, but you know I think we get a lot out of our Tuesday games because we chat about the golf courses and different shots and reminisce on what's going on in the past weeks. But what do you get most out of our Tuesday games?

VO/OC>> Yeah I think when you play with the same guys and get to know them that well and they’re really different type players, you get a better feel of how the golf course is playing in a sense. I what Kevin I play the team event I can almost club him he can't club me but I can almost club Kevin, and I think I could probably club you on a lot of holes now. And that helps me kind of understand how the golf course you know that's what I'm trying to figure out the practice round how’s golf course playing, what's going on. And I think the way we approach also your knowledge about the equipment is is stunning quite frankly. Kevin's consistency with his game is it's I don't know it's unnatural.

OC>> Well I was gonna say all I realize on Tuesday is that I'm not nearest Kevin is.

OC>> It’s unnatural.

OC>> He makes it look very easy.

OC>> that goes back to the the anonymous part, yeah and then I have my play with a lot of feel and touch and flighting in the ball. I think I think there's a there's ability to learn off of all three of us to someplace I do to some extent. I get a lot out of it from playing with you two and frankly I've learned a lot.

OC>> Thank you

OC>> but I have

OC>> the same thing goes the other way I mean I'm watching you play you know and you know I’m hitting 9 iron and you’re hitting 7 iron. There is a lot to learn from that though there really is. That that you know --

OC>> we came out here, we came out a couple years ago and Kevin started hitting little shots. You know I’m hitting 8 iron he’s hitting on this 8 iron and I said Kevin if you start hitting little shots, I'm quitting. I'm not it's not fair. This is the only one thing I can do and if you could do that too it's not fair right

OC>> but I practice, I go home I go you know I try to you know hit the little shot practice the little shot and I think when I'm swinging better at it I can do it. You do it amazingly well all the time and you do a great job of making it look like it's the same swing as a ball that goes -- you could hit a 7 iron 130 and a 7 iron 160 and to me it's like the same swing, I don't know how you like --

OC>> It goes back to gamesmanship thing I guess

OC>> but the interesting thing is we have this discussion all the time. If it's an eight iron shot you're always looking for a way to hit a seven or a six

OC>> I'm always trying to get the longest club I can

OC>> Kevin's probably just going to hit the 8 iron because that's the most sensible and I'm trying to figure out if I can power a nine

OC/VO>> but that goes with it as well or different ways of playing, what I mean by the group you know if we all played the exact same way you wouldn't get that. You wouldn't learn that you wouldn't get out of that bracket, we all play differently. And I think that's that that that's a big help out there, and I think that's that it makes it a lot more interesting. It is Tuesday it's a rough day.

VO/OC>> I've always thought like Bernhardt I mean the guy's got a virtual pot luck of clubs in his bag. He's got four different, five different sets of irons 8 iron from this set, 7 iron from this set, but he knows it right. He knows like I've had this seven iron for six years I've had this eight or for you know five he knows what's in there. A lot of times I've tinkered so much that Hey I'm I'm learning as I go here it's the first or second round of the tournament so I'm envious of where you are very kind of you know conservatives and set in your ways. You know about it but then again boredom would set in if I if I was like that. And you’re kind of you're looking but you always you got to know that it's outperforming what’s in your bag. I kind of give the flyers a shot sometimes.

OC>> I had to go the other way if it's not seeing, so I don't see something like, I'll play I'll try something and I'll do it all way up until the tournament starts and then I’ll go back to the old one.

OC>> Cause you know

OC>> Cause I know

VO>> That will do it for this edition of PGA tour champions learning center. A special thanks to Paul Goydos, Kevin Sutherland, and Steve Flesch for letting us listen in on their conversation. We hope you found it enlightening, sort of a look into the minds of the pros. I'm Vince instilling thank you for watching.