PGA TOUR champions learning center

VO>> Hello and welcome to this Masters champions addition of Learning Center. I'm Vince Giulini we have a very special show featuring three past Masters Tournament winners, who will share personal insights and winning strategies on Augusta national. Combined the three men have 113 starts in the masters and own four green jackets. We begin with the course this American jewel of the South.

OC>>Do you think age is a barrier to winning at Augusta or do you think it's an advantage?

OC>> I think I can maybe answer some of that because I'd if the fortune to play with Nicklaus when one in ’86. I was on the last match. He was the age of forty-six and still managed to win the Masters. I thought that was a great thing for us to see from you know from playing with him and marking his card and people said to me were you nervous playing with Jack and then you know like I said yeah I was maybe nervous. I was more nervous about him shooting 65 and me messing up his scorecard.

OC>>Yeah that's a good point. Well, I would say this, it’s a definite advantage to having experience around the golf course because we, all the guys know the pin positions. We know, you know, so many bogeys and birdies we've made and seen on TV. So, there's a distinct advantage if you played there several times in firm conditions or wet conditions and all that kind of stuff. But there's a certain limit I think, you know as you depends how old when you say age. You know, up to, I would say up to the mid-forties maybe even though the fifties it's okay, but then as you get older you gonna lose some distance. And the guys nowadays they hit it so far. And distance is absolutely an advantage, I think, around Augusta. We all know that, you know? The young guys hit nine irons into these pin positions and we’re hitting four or five irons or more, it’s hard to compete. What do you think?

OC>> No, I do, I do agree with you. I think it is an advantage, you know, playing there as often as we have, as many times. All the different conditions. You know, we know where the trouble spots are on the greens. You know the back-left pin on number one, you don’t miss that pin left. It runs all the way down that hill. You’ve got a tough shot. But you know you learn that as you play. So, I think that's right. But you are exactly right as far as Distance is a big factor at Augusta. It's a big factor in the game today.

OC>>Absolutely.

OC>>I think as distance does deteriorate, it does make it harder to compete but, you know, because of the advantage we have, we're still able to kind of hang in there a few years longer. Like all three of us are still trying to play and you could still see some good rounds around there. But it's just a lot harder for us to do it.

 VO/OC>> yeah and it's a lot about angles, isn't it, about, you know, angles coming into the green or missing the green you have an angle to get it up and down or chip it in in like you would on a regular basis. While, if you’re in the wrong angle, you have no chance at all. You’re struggling to make bogey.

OC>> Yeah, I mean when I'm playing there, I'm saying okay this is where I need to miss it because I gotta good chance to get up and down here.

OC>> Its survival isn’t it? It’s trying to stay your head above water.

OC>> It really is. But I know y’all ae the same way, it’s just a fun challenge. It’s just such a great place. And that kinda leads into another thought as far as, you know, coming back to Augusta. Do you guys get the feeling of being young again and being able to compete, just driving down Magnolia Lane?

OC/VO>> I think the memories are there straight away when you get through those front gates. It’s said it's hard to be going down magnolia and then you park your car right next to the pro shop. You can get any closer than that really. So, all of us get good feelings of what you've done over the past in thirty plus years. Always plays a part and I think that gives that little edge to get started and still stay competing I mean, when you’re in the age of sixty.

OC> Yeah, I'm not sure makes me feel young

OC>> You’re always young!

OC/VO>> But, it's fun like you said. It's a challenge and its fun competing you know with the younger guys. Like I was fortunate enough in November, last Masters, to be paired with Rory McIlroy on Saturday and Bryson Dechambeau on Sunday. And you're talking probably two of the longest hitters in the game right now and here I am probably the one of the shortest in the field, for sure, and the contrast is just fascinating in a way, you know? We all try to get in the hole, but it's such a contrast how they do it and how I do it and and yet we know you know the that's the only way we can do it ourselves. I can’t play their game and they don't want to play my game, that’s for sure.

OC>> You don’t want to put their balls back by yours?

OC>> I think Rory made a comment, it was amazing to watch how he got around this course when I out drove him by a thousand yards or something (LAUGHS). Or more.

OC>> But, I agree with you, I think, I don’t know that I do feel any younger, but I do have that, you just feel like, Hey, I’ve won here, so great memories so you have that feeling that you still can play the golf course and compete. I get that when I go back there. One of the things you made me think of but I do enjoy playing with guys that I do know that I don't get to see anymore and also get to meet some young guys that I didn't know. Playing with those guys that is just so much fun. And I will definitely miss that when I quit playing. I miss playing there but I’ll miss playing with the good young players and meeting some new ones.

VO>> In last year's November Masters, 63-year-old, Bernhard Langer averaged two hundred fifty yards off the tee. And as he said he played in the same group in the final round as Bryson Dechambeau who averaged three hundred fifteen yards per drive. Langer beat Dechambeau for the week, 3-under par to a 2-under from Bryson. Here’s more from Langer now in What’s Your Edge?

OC/VO>> Alright, here we go again, it’s Masters week, one of my favorite tournaments every year. And last year, well, it was only a few months ago in November. I put a new club in my bag. It was the 4-hybrid from Exotics. It was one of my favorite clubs for that whole week. Especially at the Masters for that golf course I'm not long enough anymore so I'm hitting a lot of three, four, five irons while these long hitters hit, you know, eight, nine irons, whatever they’re hitting. So, it was very important for me to have a four hybrid. It’s twenty-two degrees of loft, or twenty-two and a half because I have a lot of downhill, uphill and sidehill lies to often elevated greens. So, I need to get the ball up in the air and stop it quickly which is very difficult to deal with a three or four iron, let’s face it. One particular shot I remember on Sunday of last year’s Masters. I was playing with Bryson Dechambeau and on the seventh hole I hit it pretty good tee shot, and I had this distance where I needed a long iron or hybrid. So, I used this exact club here, my exotics 4 hybrid. I had the front right pin. So you have to envision, you’re going about a hundred ninety yards up hill into a very small green, elevated up there, and I got a landed soft as quick as they can to make it stay on the green because you go over it's terrible. And that's one of the good things about a hybrid, the ball goes higher, has more spin, lands a little softer. And you can use it out of the fairway, out of the rough, out of fairway bunkers. I even chip with that sometimes. So, you have all those things. I think I'm much better with a hybrid than with a long iron. And on this particular occasion at the 7th hole in Augusta, I hit it to about four feet. Tt was one of my best shots for the week and I made birdie when many other guys made par, a bogey or even worse. I use this club many times that week and I was very happy with it and by the way that led me to talking to Tour Edge and exotics company and I was very positively surprised how good a product they make all through the bag. Not just with hybrids. And here we go, I’m testing the driver. I'm testing the irons and fairway woods and other hybrids. And I'm thrilled to be with them. So, let's see if we can head a nice soft high 4-hybrid here. That's just what it's supposed to do goes up in the air, comes down soft goes a long ways. Everything you wanted to do Try it out. Take care

VO>> the masters is a tournament that leans so heavily on its traditions. And when we come back, stories from the toughest dinner invitation in all of golf, the champions dinner. Lyle, Langer, and Mize shares some of their favorite memories. So, stay with us.

VO>> Searching for one thing that makes masters week so special? Well, you may be searching for quite a while. Beyond the beauty and the golf course, it's the traditions that so closely are tied to this unique event.

OC/VO>> What would be your favorite tradition or traditions of

the Master's tournament? Because there's a number of them.

VO/OC>> The tradition obviously as a winner, speaking from all the winners here, is the dinner on the Tuesday night. I think that has had so many different flavors, from Vijay Singh to Tiger Woods having a cheeseburger. Things like that. I mean, that’s a tradition that you will never forget. I think Vijay Singh got the round of applause at the end of the evening with the, I think it was about 11 courses we had of various Thai food.

OC>> It was good, wasn’t it?

OC>> And we all kinda said then, you know if if you win next year, we'll give another round of applause if you could use that same sort of foods. And the tradition for me, is obviously to wear that green jacket and be involved. Then now we've got the junior section is going, the drive, chip and putt. So, we got other obligations to try and keep going which is great to see the juniors thoroughly enjoying the Masters.

OC>> well that's it. I mean the thing is it is hard to pick one because like you said, the drive chip and putt is just a tremendous tradition that they started and I I love it with the kids being there on Sunday.

OC>> Wish I’d had the same when I was a junior to go and play Augusta.

OC/VO>> I can’t even imagine. I wouldn’t even be able to pull it back if I was them, you know? And the par three is such a great tradition and you know just the the green jacket. I mean there's so much of it, but you know it's hard to pick one but having to pick one I would pick the dinner. I mean, to get to the be there with you know we've all been fortune enough to be there with some of the greats from Herman Keiser, Henry Pickard, Sam Snead. I mean one night at the dinner, Gene Sarazen needed a ride back to his hotel. Hell, I said I’ll take him. Driving the squire back to his hotel. You know it's just it's what we've been able to do.

OC>> Do you get some stories out of him?

OC/VO>>It's just it's just so special that night is. I look forward to it every year. What about you?

VO>> You know it’s funny, during that dinner it's the only time of the year that I ask my colleagues for autographs. I don't do that anywhere else, but everybody seems to be doing it.

OC>> Yeah, passing it around the table.

 OC>> We get the Masters flags and get all the champions to sign it or the dinner menu or things like that and bring some very good the money even for the charities that we represent.

OC>> The dinner is a special night as we said. Any kind of some something special happened at the dinner that y’all can remember? Something special event or?

OC/VO>> One thing that sticks in my mind was was at the end of the evening the last five minutes everybody would turn to sort of, Sam Snead, this is this is your moment. And Sam would get up and he would cough and splutter a bit and then you know it'll rip off about three dirty dirty jokes. Thank god we got walls around us. And that was that was the finishing the evening is about sort of what 9? 920, 930 in the evening. So, it wasn't really stuffy. It was all very relaxed, and we enjoyed it. You know it you know we're all finished by 9:20, 9:30, Sam Snead has done is wonderful jokes and you all laughed and cheered. Then sometimes Gary Player stood up and did his schpeal over these years and it was always nice to listen to.

OC>> Yeah, it’s always a fun even. I remember one time, probably twenty odd years ago, you know the chairman always says a few things and he and he finished his speech, his address to us, like gentlemen, I think the course is in great condition everything is phenomenal, all set for a great week and you know, enjoy and if you have any suggestions let me know. And I think it was Arnold Palmer that got up and stood up and said Mister chairman you know we we noticed that half of the fairways cut away from us, the mowers go this way and the other half it’s into us, so if you land your tee ball on the side of the fairway the right side, that ball just skids and runs and scuttles along thirty, forty, fifty yards often and if you land it into the grain on the other side just a couple of feet over here well stop pretty quick. And I saw the chairman make little notes and he said, well, gentlemen, I think we can take care of that. And sure enough the next day or a day later, all the fairways are now into us. They line up the mowers you know, ten to twelve of them on the green and they mow it towards the tee box. So that ball doesn’t skid anymore, doesn’t run like it used to.

OC>> It’s remained that way, isn’t it?

OC>> It’s remained that way ever since and it’s not going to change. I don’t think.

OC>> It won’t run like it used to, at times, there’s no doubt.

OC>> How about you? What do you recollect?

OC>> You know, there’s special times. I know another time Arnold got up and spoke and anytime Arnold gets up and speaks, it’s just so special when he did it. I remember that one of the funny times I remember was when we had that dessert, I can't remember who the champion was, and Phil said it was after of Russian ballet, what was it?

OC>> Pavlova Cake. It’s the meringue.

OC>> And he said it was named after a Russian ballet dancer.

OC>> That’s right.

OC>> And of course, we think, Phil, come on Phil, you’re just yanking on us again. And sure, enough you know we're going around the room Phil says Hey we can make a wager here I'll bet on remember that. And then the chairman, Billy Payne's settled it. He found out on that yeah, he found out that the Phil was right, so I thought that was pretty funny. Phil was like I told you and it was named after that ballet dancer I thought that was a funny thing that night. It was very good.

OC>> Very surprising in a way. Phil knows a lot of stuff. But you know talking about Phil well what I like about him, whenever he won, what did we get for ice cream? For dessert, sorry, for dessert, we got a bunch of ice cream a huge flood, a pint or half a pint yeah and then all the toppings and things around it. You know initially I think they brought out a smaller portion.

OC>> One of the years, they did. They brought a small one, and Phil said bring everybody another one.

OC>> Phil said, that’s not going to do it. Bring more. That was perfect.

VO>> The Masters club was established in 1952 when Ben Hogan hosted a dinner for all Masters Champions, including Bobby Jones and Clifford Roberts during tournament week. Originally held on Friday, it has become a Tuesday tradition every year at the Masters. Next on Learning Center, valuable course knowledge shared from our three past champions.

VO>> Welcome back to this masters edition of Learning Center, our guests tonight have combined for over three hundred fifty competitive rounds of experience at Augusta National. Each is a fountain of course knowledge and over the years they have generously offered advice to their fellow players.

OC>> Do y’all have some young guys ever come to you and ask you for advice? And if if they do what do you like to tell them when they come to say Hey you know you won here you got to experience. What do you tell them?

OC/VO>> I've played with a few Scottish pals over the years that have been there for the first time in the they ask questions. And you know I like to say to say to them you know you've obviously got to make sure of when you’re misses are on the right place and I think the little belly wedge is a very useful shot when you're on the edge of the green or just off the green. Like if you go over the back of the 18th. Everybody tries to chip it, or they try to putt it and not very successful. But the little belly wedge I've always found is a kind of secret shot that I've learned, and they can use it in many places, the back of the ninth back in the eighteenth. If you go over the back of the 9th. Even if you missed the green at number eight you go down past it, a little belly wedge. Because it’s very stick fringe. You know what the fringes are like.

OC>> Oh yeah.

OC>> They’re sort of built like this, the fringes, and if you land on the front side it stops dead and if you land on the other side it goes off like a shot. And the fringes are very very difficult to play with and its sticky grass so I've I've always told anybody I'm playing with, work away with your belly wedge quite a lot. It’s a very useful shot to have

OC/VO>> That's interesting. I would never try that. I'm way too nervous to do that. That shows us how good he is. Nothing bothers him, you know, he’s got steady hands. I've had a few German guys, Martin Kaymer or Alex Cejka or some of the younger amateurs that have qualified you know, ask me to play a practice round and and pick my brain. I'm sure we've all experienced that. And that's what was passed on to us from the guys like Gary player and Jack Nicklaus and some of the older gents. Where we're trying to pass it on to the younger generation right?

OC>> What do you tell some of them?

OC>> Well, I, similar to what Sandy said, I think the key is angles for me and the way you leave your second shot. You know, you want to keep it below the hole. I'd rather have a 30-footer up hill than a 10-footer downhill. Or even a 6-footer downhill. You know so you know try and try and keep the the ball below the hole or don’t short side yourself. That’s for me the key around that golf course.

OC>. And you can blow the whole tournament just in the first five holes if you’re not careful, as we all know.

OC>> It’s a very, very much a second shot golf course I've always thought. I mean, you really gotta, I know when you guys won, you’ve really got to be hitting your irons well. I mean you got to put the ball in the right spots on the greens.

OC>> Yeah but it changed dramatically, didn’t it? I mean in the eighties and nineties the fairways were fifty, eighty yards wide and it was all about angles and then they introduced the semi-cut rough and then they planted five thousand trees. You know for instance, 11, that fairway was close to 100 yards wide in the old days, 90 yards. Now it's it's a good tee shot to hit the hit the fairway. So, they've they've taken some angles out. You know number five for instance, in the old days I always tried to keep it left near the trees so I have a better angle into the green well now you have to play right of the bunkers and it's a much tougher angle into that green.

 OC>> And it’s 515 yards or whatever it is.

OC>> Well, that's another story. Yeah but they hit it that much further. How about you? When you uplay with young guys, what do you tell them?

OC/VO>> I’ll tell ya, but I agree with you, it is a much tougher driving course than it used to be. Well you know a lot of the same things here you know as far as keeping below the hole and watch out for some certain areas and you know everything breaks toward Amen corner. Always letting them know the whole property slopes that direction so really be careful that in your putts. But one of the things that I really like to tell them is don't wear yourself out. To me I think it's very easy to come to Augusta for the first time you got the great golf courses we got the great practice range and you just wear yourself out by time Thursday comes around you're already a little fatigued. So I try and tell them pace yourselves don't beat yourself up get some practice in to get away and get some time because it's really easy to over practice at Augusta or any major, over practice and wear yourself out. So that’s one of the things I like to tell them.

OC>> And it’s a very hilly golf course. Physically, more strenuous than most.

OC>> It’s a good walk so you know, I know people that have come there, and they play thirty-six holes on Tuesday and stuff like that I'm thinking guys, uh uh, don’t do that. It’d be better off play eighteen Monday, play nine Tuesday and nine Wednesday in practice and get ready and go. So that's some of the things I like to tell them.

VO>> And that will do it for this edition of Learning Center. As spring has arrived in Georgia and we are about to experience in the words of Jim Nantz, a tradition unlike any other. Special thanks to our Masters panel and thank you for watching. I'm Vince Giulini and we will see you next time.