The PGA tour champions learning center

VO>> Madison Wisconsin, capital city of the Badger state and site of this week's PGA TOUR Champions event. Assembling are some of the best players ages fifty and over participating in the American Family Insurance Championship at University Ridge Golf Course. The tournament host is Steve Stricker a Wisconsin native wearing many hats this season among them Ryder Cup captain but first and foremost this week he is heading up the return of an important event put on hold a year ago. The Am Fam was out of sight but certainly not out of business and we spoke with Stricker about what's ahead in 2021.

OC>> Steve Stricker doing great things as a player but also in leadership in a charitable foundation aspect as well in the American Family Insurance Championship is back and up and running in a must feel really good about that seeing it return.

OC>> Yeah we're extremely excited to be playing this year. We missed out last year because the pandemic but we are so excited to be back. We're going to have I think about five thousand fans are going to be allowed to come and watch so it's better than nothing I guess so yeah golf is back in Madison and the people are excited, the sponsors are excited, American Family Insurance is excited the players are excited to come back.

OC>> Great numbers since its inception. Am Fam raised over ten million dollars and even during COVID and a cancellation, American Family Insurance make sure the three million is set towards charities and that's that's just outstanding Steve.

OC>> Yeah I'm so lucky to have them as a partner American Family Insurance. They were dedicated to the tournament to these charities you know to make sure that these charities are still getting their money's because a lot of these charities need that support from our tournament so the pandemic didn't stop us from giving out a chunk load of money again and like I said you can't do without a great sponsor and they are a wonderful, wonderful people there and great to be partnered with them.

OC>> Tell us about the Steve Stricker American family insurance foundation scholarship fund which goes out to students there each and every year how beneficial that's been.

OC>> Yeah we just started that maybe two, three years ago and we get a bunch of kids writing in telling us their story. My wife is that's her that's her job along with a couple other people from our foundation board that, and I look at him to a little bit, but this is kind of my wife's end of things you know she really gets involved with that and and takes the time to read all these letters that these kids write in and they come right from our area either Rock or Dane County, so it's Rock County where I grew up and Dane County is right where the tournaments being held at so yeah it's a special thing that we're able to do that as well on top of giving to these other charities that we give to a couple of kids every year and provide some monies for their their schooling down the road.

OC>> Aren’t you due a victory in this thing? Kelly stole your thunder didn’t he?

OC/VO>> That's okay yeah, you know it's good to see… I could a spoiled is a little victory if I could just made that little eight footer at the last hole, but that's all right. It was it was great to see him win and people were very excited that he won a hometown boy winning the home town event.

OC>> Everyone's always proud of golf in their area and I know that means a lot to you too, just the Wisconsin area. Is it Edgerton where you grew up?

OC>> Yeah just a half hour down the road from where we're playing the Am Fam event. My parents still live there, still in the same house that I grew up in and so I venture down there occasionally. I played some golf at the course that I grew up on just last week while I was home and yeah it's a special place for me brings back a lot of great childhood memories and to be living in Madison close by and still have that connection to Edgerton, the whole state of Wisconsin is very important to me.

OC>> I’d like to ask you a personal question. You're playing very well on PGA TOUR Champions, great at the Waste Management, but there as a time when you're pushing forty when golf was a little more, was tougher and more challenging then, and I just wonder how getting through that those types of challenges benefited you ultimately as a player and what your advice might be for someone else who may be going through a very similar situation.

 OC/VO>> I tell you what I learned so much more about myself during those rotten times those down times than I ever did about you know when I was playing well. It's easy you know when you're playing well and you're on a roll and things are coming pretty naturally but it's easy to act you know professional, but when you are at the bottom and not playing well you know it brings another level of commitment to the game and you just learn so much about yourself during those down times and you got to dig yourself out I mean no one else can really do it except you and you got to learn what makes you tick especially out on the golf course and learn your tendencies and go to work on trying to fix some of those bad things that you've been doing and ultimately it's a confidence thing you know and what comes first right the confidence or good shots and that's still up for debate even from my end you know? I don't know what came first but I think I started better shots and then the confidence started to come around but yeah that's it this game is a challenge I think everybody goes through it at some point. It's just a game that's very difficult and at some point, you're going to you know struggle with the game you got to find your way out of it.

VO>> Steve Stricker won’t be the only person representing his family in competition this week. Steve's part time caddie and brother in-law Mario Tiziani, who played on the PGA TOUR and is a former Wisconsin State Open Champion, is also in the field. It will be his first career start on PGA TOUR Champions and he's excited to take advantage of a sponsor’s invitation on familiar grounds.

OC>> I think competing is what I'm looking forward to the very most, getting out there seeing some guys that I actually played against will be really exciting.

OC>> You know he's a good player first of all he you know played on TOUR for a year, had a good career at the University of Wisconsin.

OC>> I think that the week will be great. I'll be ready to play I'm feel like I'm a competitive guy and I’ll be prepared.

VO>> Duffy Waldorf has a pair of top ten finishes in the American Family Insurance Championship which includes missing out on a playoff by one stroke the last time the event was played. While the driver is an important component at University Ridge, in this week's “What’s Your Edge?”, Waldorf shows us advantages of the fairway metal essential on this tour.

OC>> I'm here to talk to you about hitting a fairway wood, a two-way wood really this is. They can be three on it with the loft, it has… it's a really powerful club because it gives you the benefits of a driver with this the driver distance I can get out there with the driver but you get a lot more control because of the loft and the design of the club. This particular club here, this Exotics, it's a 721, it's their new model that has this ridge back design which really helps stabilize the face and this diamond face really gives you the pop off the club, the ball just jumps right off it. One of the reasons I like to use this club instead of a driver a lot of times you get a lot more leeway with your shots. You get a lot more control the driver you tend to tee the ball up very high and try to catch it on the upswing and hit it as hard as you can. An iron, I'm going to tee it up on a tee though. Off the tee, I’m going to tee it up pretty low because I'm gonna catch that iron shot on the down swing gets the spin the ball goes up in the air that's the way you want to play that shot. With this club because I'm catching it right at the bottom of the swing potentially on the upswing, I'll tee it up just a touch higher but nowhere near the height that I would with a driver. As far as how I'm gonna hit it, it's kind of a… this isn’t a hybrid but it's like a hybrid way of hitting it, it’s not… I’m using closer to my normal swing so I’m catching it right at the bottom it gives me maximum control but with this club design I'm still going to get a great distance. Let's give it a… we'll give it a go.

OC>> You can use this club anytime you’ve got that layup hole, it’s narrow, but this club will give you the control you can go ahead and still knock down there probably get that nice short approach to the green.

OV>> Still ahead on Learning Center more from Madison courtesy of favorite son Jerry Kelly who shows us what life is like away from the golf course. It's an all access look as learning center continues.

 VO>> Last Sunday in Des Moines, Iowa, Stephen Ames won for the second time in his PGA TOUR Champions career. He started the final round seven shots behind the leader Tim Herron, but made an early charge with a front nine four under thirty two capped off by this birdie at the par three ninth. Ames went on to shoot a final round sixty seven and win by one. The victory giving Ames some confidence going into the rest of the season.

OC>> It gives me a little bit of breathing room because I like to play while I'm always tried playing well that's always my goal and this is kind of after the last couple weeks the way I've been playing this is kind of nothings in the door much more for me right now so it's I'm happy very happy.

 Ames had just a single bogey in his final round five under 67 finishing one better than Mike Weir who closed with a final round 69. Second round leader Tim Herron struggled with a closing 76. Our Bob Papa and Lanny Wadkins wrap up the Principal Charity Classic.

OC>> Vince it wasn't the normal finish you would see in Des Moines at the Principal Charity Classic where a lot of birdies are being made down the stretch. Tim Herron started the final round with a four shot lead, but Stephen Ames was rock steady picks up his second win on the PGA TOUR Champions and Lanny, for a lot of the 2020 season that was played, Stephen Ames was in no man's land even up until the fall but he kind of started to turn his game around. What has been some of the keys to him getting back to playing better golf?

OC>> Well number one he's always had a terrific golf swing. One of the best swings on PGA TOUR Champions. When he acquired Peter Jacobsen's caddie earlier this year it was kind of a change in mindset for him, to get more aggressive in his play. I think they really dissected what they wanted to do on the golf course more and he helped him with his putting. He's worked on his putting very, very hard. It's always been the one thing this held Stephen back. A former Players Champion so he's very capable of winning and getting the job done but to all his hard work paying off it is good to see Stephen win.

OC>> What about the learning experience for Tim Herron? He started the day with a four shot lead, but Lanny, you could see early nerves were a factor especially with his putting stroke.

OC>> No question nerves got the best of him there today. Maybe he'll learn from this. This is his first top ten finish on PGA TOUR Champions so maybe something to build off.

OC>> Stephen Ames picks up his second win on the PGA TOUR Champions and he's got that in his back pocket as he heads to Madison for the American Family Insurance Championship as we sent it back to back to Vince.

 VO>> Thank you Bob and Lanny. The Charles Schwab Cup Standings look like this. Bernard Langer continues to lead just ahead of Ernie Els. Mike Weir is on the come. His second place finish in Des Moines moves Weirs up three places to sixth overall. Jim Furyk inches into the top ten.

VO>> Fred Couples had an old friend back on the bag last week at Des Moines. Joe LaCava, who spent the last decade caddying for Tiger Woods, but Joe and Fred fell right back into their routine. With Tiger recovering from injuries in a February car accident, LaCava filled in for this week only. Couples finished tied for sixth, but ahead of the tournament, the duo knew it would be just like old times, fun included.

OC/VO>> It's great to be with Fred. I consider him one of my best friends of all time. You know kind enough to take care of me for twenty years. Been great to my kids. We called my son today, we had a nice conversation with him so kind like a family reunion of sorts.

OC/VO>> Everyone's excited. Suzanne, Tiger is loving it. he's probably, I'm supposed to give him a little text tonight to let him know how I did, he knows how Joe is going to do.

VO>> The difference between this boss and your other boss?

OC/CO>> Well my other boss actually already text Fred to say hey, how about a little time on the putting green. That tells you all you need to know.

VO>> Of course it's not all carefree on this TOUR due to the wear and tear that comes with years of swinging the club. Serious injuries can crop up. Steve Flesch had disks in his neck repaired late in 2018. Today, it's maintenance. In this week's warm up, Steve Flesch shows us how he minimizes the risk of injury.

OC>> About a year ago, I had shoulder surgery so there's constant maintenance to try get that strength back for me. I do a few exercises in the room but what I really do to warm up on the range is just some band exercises. Let me show you what I do and that way I'll help you loosen up a little more efficiently maybe and get in gain a little bit more strength while you play golf. So I just take a simple exercise band okay my bag here I kind of rigged it up, but I'm basically just trying to loosen this part of my shoulder by what by just a little is it resistance work to trying get some blood flow in there and I start by just tucking my right elbow on the side, I had right shoulder surgery third time but then I just go back and forth not a lot of weight just soft resistance just to warm up that area get a little blood flow going to it. I do about three sets of ten, it doesn't like it doesn't have to be a lot of resistance it's more form than it is the weight. Then when I do a few of those I stand with about here with it at shoulder height and I go back this way not a lot of weight again just trying to get the shoulder socket loosened up quite a bit. It really helps kind of loosen everything up without putting a lot of strain on it naturally all I'm trying to do. And the last one I do is I stand this way go the opposite way with the band. I go across my body this way. Hits the other side of the area were my shoulder was repaired and it loosens up everything really nicely, not a lot of weight just movement. Then I go through and do a few like double swing, double club swing drills loosen up my hamstrings quite, a bit pelvic area just want to give your body a chance to kind of get moving and as we get older it takes a little bit longer to do that so make sure you don't skimp on the exercise before you play and I think you play a lot better golf.

VO>> Up next the 2019 American Family Insurance Championship gives us a spin around Madison, Wisconsin. Now this is something the other tour guides will tell you.

VO>> Jerry Kelly won the 2019 American Family Insurance Championship in style and as usual didn't hold back his feelings. He's been quite a force on PGA Tour Champions and that win in his hometown is a big reason why. What is life like in Madison Wisconsin Kelly away from the course? Well, Jerry gives us a tour so hold on tight.

OC>> Hi welcome to my town Madison, Wisconsin. We’ve got some special things planned for you so we're gonna start out right here. It’s a surprise though. I told you it's a surprise. T

OC>> Wait till you guys see this. This is a real Wisconsin treat. This is one of my favorite places. You’re gonna have to come to Wisconsin to try this because you’re not gonna get it anywhere else.

OC/VO>> Well thanks again for coming out. The Brew was founded back in 1993 by married couple Dane and Deb Carry. There are 7500 breweries in the country right now we’re the 16th largest craft brewery, 25th largest brewery over all and we only sell in Wisconsin as you know. So the beer will sit in here from anywhere from two to six weeks and we will ship it around the brewery here all this piping, we have six miles of stainless steel pipe

OC>> Any chance you can run one of these pipes straight to my house?

OC/VO>>We’ll do what we can. We’ll do what we can. We fill about almost four hundred cans a minute on the can line when it’s running. We do about three hundred bottles a minute on the bottle line. We will fill about a million bottles a week here on our bottling line.

OC>> Drew I really appreciate it.

OC>> Thanks so much, we really appreciate it.

OC>> The pleasure is all mine.

OC>> Home away from home. Sardine’s is my cheers. It is my favorite place in Madison. Phil's brother my best friend.

OC>> We’re trying to prep for dinner and apparently…

OC>> I know, don’t tell everybody. They think I know how to cook.

VO/OC>> You know it makes me a better golfer every time that I cook with them. It's that attention to detail that all the all the best people have.

OC>> You know what? That's a mess right there it's kind of like a really bad wedge game. I can relate.

 OC>> Yeah, yeah. I know, I know I'm running behind. I’m going to get the meat right now. All right, I’ll see you soon, all right. Bye.

OC>> what do we’ve got for age?

OC>> This one's been aged for about thirty five days. It’s our Ribeye.

OC>> Plenty fatty, now we’re talking. All right, three of those babies.

OC/VO>> It gets really hot. This is a surprise, this is a huge one so I wanted this group to be the first to taste the new Callie Orchard. So I became an ambassador for these guys a few years ago. The product is finally coming. Cheers.

OC>> I hope you enjoyed the tour of my hometown of Madison, Wisconsin, but it's not finished until you get to a Badger game. Let’s go!

OC>> You gotta get a Kiwanies brought. It’s just a ritual I'm sorry I can't go in there until I get one.

OC/VO>> Can we get a couple brought please. Cheers, there you go. The brought ritual. Thank you. I think I could play. Played baseball with my son. He’s a mountain now.

OC>> I kind of get the chills. It’s pretty cool. I really tell people I didn't go to college here because I spent most of my college years here in high school. Come on come on, Badgers number one.

 VO>> Special thanks to J. K. for letting us tag along in this tour of Madison. This is the first of back to back events in which Kelly will defend. After this week, he defends his major championship victory at Firestone in the Bridgestone Senior Players. This is been PGA TOUR Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Giulini, thanks for watching.