PGA TOUR Champions learning center

VO>> PGA TOUR Champions learning center. More memories made in Michigan last week Warwick Hills has another PGA TOUR Champions winner. The Ally Challenge saw Joe Durant keep it on the rails despite a nail biting finish in Grand Blanc.

OC/VO>> This impressive Michigan golf venue has been the backdrop for professional golf since the late nineteen fifties but this year marked only the fourth time the PGA Tour Champions event has been played here in three previous Ally Challenges the winning score was around fifteen under par so what about this addition.

VO>> Final round at the Ally Challenge at Warwick Hills golf and Country Club in Grand Blanc began with two players tied at fourteen under par in the lead Bernard Langer and Doug Barron. Let's take a look at Langer for birdie at six.

VO>> Had parred the first five holes just on the edge here at six up the slope no problem.

VO>> Joe Durant lurking at thirteen under par when the day began this also for birdie at six.

VO>> Yeah he was already two under at this point in time and just keeping pace with Bernard Langer right there.

VO>> Three under through his first six holes on the day Langer for birdie at the eighth.

VO>> And this is when it looks like Bernard Langer might get hot and try and take things down buries this from thirty feet at the eighth.

VO>> That got him to sixteen under but then Durant had the chance to get to seventeen.

VO>> Yeah twenty feet right behind Langer and what does Durant do right on top of him again putter working for Joe Durant.

VO>> So that got him to seventeen under par the shot of the week maybe a shot of the year on the PGA TOUR Champions Vijay Singh second shot to the par five sixteen.

VO>> Big hard cut three wood back right hole location carried it further back than anyone this week and there you go there’s a two.

VO>> Vaulted himself into the top ten got a thirteen under par with the albatross at sixteen.

VO>> Joe Durant flared his tee shot into the ninth fairway had this for bogey at the eighteenth and that was good enough for the win.

VO>> Yeah he made eighteen exciting but you know what he got it done he made the one he needed to do and that's why you want to have as big of a lead as possible walking up eighteen.

VO/OC>> That his fourth career win on the PGA TOUR Champions Bernhard Langer was bidding to become the oldest winner in the history of the PGA TOUR Champions the age of sixty four and Steven Alker back to back top five finishes after or top ten finishes after he Monday into the Boeing classic a week ago. The putting was just astounding from both Langer and from Joe Durant all week long but Durant has made some adjustments and it paid off.

OC>> He has Langer made more long putts than I’ve seen anyone make in a long time this week but Joe Durant through Brad Faxon and some other friends helping him has gone back to right hand low and his stroke looks smoother and better than I've ever seen it since he's been on PGA TOUR Champions and it really paid off for him.

OC>> And we did as predicted set a new scoring record because

OC>> Yes

OC>> ball in hand for three days players certainly taking advantage of it and so the season continues stepping one step closer to those Charles Schwab Cup playoffs and Joe Durant moving up twenty spots in the standings by virtue of his win here in Michigan.

VO>> With his runner up finish Bernard Langer a five time winner of the Charles Schwab Cup takes over the number one spot jumping past Jerry Kelly and Jim Furyk just five events left in the regular season before the playoffs.

VO>> Speaking of Mister Langer turns out age is just a number on his scorecard. Last Friday on his sixty fourth birthday Langer shot his age for the first time in his career after playing the first ten holes in two under the tour legend birdied six of his last eight holes en route to a six under thirty on the back nine. Langer’s sixty four is the lowest first round score in Ally Challenge history and it matched his lowest round of the season.

VO>> Last year the COVID-19 pandemic shut down much of our world sports included but the Ally Challenge was proudly open for business and PGA TOUR Champions returned here despite the question marks about what to expect the tour has persevered as golf has led the way for overall sports come back.

OC/VO>> It's actually hard to imagine that it's been a full year since we started back in we had no idea what to expect we were really nervous just like our players just like the staff you know everyone was nervous about returning but it ended up being fantastic. You know our sponsors really enjoyed getting back out here uh the sponsor loved uh being able to see it on TV even though they couldn't be here in person the players were thrilled to get back to the playing uh but we were still nervous uh um we we remain nervous today but we feel like we're trying to get back to some normalcy.

VO>> How important was that in the grand scheme of things and everything that you’ve accomplished in terms of the feedback and making sure that we did have this path back how big of a task was this for you

VO>> Yeah

VO/OC>> And where do you rank this?

OC>> Oh no I rank it as the number one challenge I've ever experience but it was so important because once we started back and we started here with the Ally Challenge and we followed up with the Bridgestone SENIOR PLAYERS we got those first two events back we showed the other tournaments the other title sponsors that we could do it and their level of hesitation to move forward went away they also wanted to find a way to move forward and to play so we stopped having the cancellation conversations and started having how do we make it work conversations.

OC>> We all love playing golf and getting back to competition I think it was good for everybody I mean not only the players but for the people watching TV and all that so I mean I was thrilled to get back and you know obviously we didn’t have fans at first but it's still fun to play a little golf.

OC/VO>> For me playing here out of all those years I played the Buick Open with a lot of fan support and that it was really strange not having anybody out here it was probably even a little more peaceful for me it was like I didn’t have to have the stress of you know trying to play good for your home town type thing but uh it was really different I think that that that first few weeks for us as a whole on tour it was very strange.

VO/OC>> I think we just paved the way for sports in general to come back and get started again I'm like everybody else just ready to get past everything uh certainly feel you know awful for the people that have uh either passed away from this or been very sick and all the other health issues but as a competitor I mean you were used to doing things a certain way your whole career and we're still not able to do things normal and uh I’ll be glad today when the day comes so we can get back to that.

OC>> Well Jim Furyk not only helped re usher in the PGA TOUR Champions season following the pandemic here at the Ally Challenge but that turns into your first Champions TOUR win so I wonder if you could reflect back a little bit about just what that whole week was like because it was odd playing wise and then you're out here trying to get your victory?

OC>> Yeah you know I guess I had I had played some on the PGA TOUR it resumed a little earlier uh I felt like I'd kinda knocked the rust off kind of got back to playing but it was the first Champions TOUR event that not only I played but you know after the pandemic as you said and it was really no surprise that uh I I had a lot of success at Warwick Hills uh here in my in my PGA TOUR career and so it was no real surprise that I chose this is kind of my first event back it was a course that I feel very comfortable on I had a lot of success and uh was kind of anxious to get that uh Champions TOUR career going so it was a perfect spot to start.

OC>> Did that comfort level and familiarity help you with all the stuff that was kind of going on because nobody really knew I guess what to expect coming back to play?

OC/VO>> No one knew it it was just it was starting for me you know I probably played five or six events on the PGA TOUR starting to play tournaments where there's no fans you don't want that to become the normal if that makes sense so enjoy the fans we enjoy the excitement this event always has a huge following right seventeen is a lot of fun so I didn't get to see it in its limelight I remembered I remembered being in Flint but I don't get to see it last year and we're we're anxious to get the fans back have the fun the excitement at seventeen and throughout the golf course.

VO>> After some time away from the course Retief Goosen competed in last week's Ally Challenge. He’s having a solid year partly due to its two hundred ninety seven yard driving distance average which is one of the tops on TOUR. We caught up with Goose last week Warwick Hills and asked him to share some knowledge for this week's what's your edge?

OC>> Here is a par five at Warwick Hills dogleg left to ride so my main focus is a little fade off the bunk on the left there fade it into the side of the fairway. So my main key on hitting good drives obviously number one is timing you go to time it right uh and number two is you got to hit it in the middle of the club face that's how you get maximum distance so really focus on good timing and a solid strike to get maximum distance.

OC>> Okay. Beauty.

OC>> When I have to really go after one my main focus is still timing obviously you are trying to speed up the swing but you know losing timing is is critical I mean you got to maximize your speed right at the bottom just that couple of feet and uh so for me even if I go after one I still focus on you know not getting quick from the top get to the top and time it all the way down to the bottom of the swing.

VO>> Still to come on learning center Nick Saban isn't just inspiring his Alabama football team but also a PGA TOUR Champions winner and U. S. Ryder Cup captain Steve Stricker with some insight on who his captain's picks might be.

VO>> Three and a half months ago in Duluth Georgia Dicky Pride joined exclusive company in becoming the eighteenth man to win on the PGA TOUR Korn Ferry Tour and PGA TOUR Champions. Pride started the final round of the Mitsubishi Electric Classic two shots behind the leaders but fired the low round of the day a sixty seven to win by three. None of that would of happened if he had not first Monday qualified for the event something he had to mentally prepare for.

VO/OC>> I get on the phone with Bob Rotella a sports psychologist that I've known since I was fourteen and we have a thirty to an hour as I'm driving over to go to qualifier why weren't you prepared for what you needed to do obviously you weren’t prepared because you didn’t handle yourself the way you want it and I use that loosely I didn't like go throw clubs or anything I just wasn't mentally where I needed to be and I did a lot of preparation the week of Atlanta and I shot four under in the qualifier which led by two and then I shot a shot one under the first round I'm playing with Stephen Ames and Paul Goydos who I thought what I thought was phenomenal was our group I finished first and they're both tied for second but after the first round I shot one under par I'm furious and my caddie is like you're tied to twelve you're not that bad let's just relax and play and it worked out.

VO>> Pride became the fourteenth open qualifier to win on PGA TOUR Champions he's learned a lot in a short time on this TOUR but says the biggest thing is to trust your game and not over think.

VO/OC>> The big thing about the Champions TOUR is there's no one out here trying to reinvent the wheel you know we all have this is this is our golf game this is what we have so you better figure out how to optimize what you have and if you optimize what you have you'll have an opportunity to win and you know one of my goals this year has been to play more than I practice because I tend to start practicing and picking it apart and trying to get everything right instead of here's the ball and there's the hole let's get it there so I I think it's more than anything trust what you and I mean I've been doing this a long time and you know sporadically we all have trust and belief in our game but to continue to trust your game and that's good enough and you just go play.

VO>> Dicky pride is a huge Alabama football fan a product of that school and this week with no PGA TOUR Champions events scheduled Pride will be able to watch his Crimson Tide take on the Miami hurricanes and perhaps learn something that could help his own game.

VO/OC>> The way coach Saban runs his program is all about the process which is you know taking care of your job on each play that's pretty much what we do out here yeah shot to shot hole to hole we have a game plan for each hole and we try to execute every shot and if something comes up we have a game plan for if something didn't go the way we wanted to know how we're gonna handle that it's just it's it's the same stuff it's be prepared and do your job.

VO>> The Charles Schwab Cup Championship is quickly approaching and one of Pride’s goals is to be in contention for the title but just how far would he go to guarantee a win.

VO/OC>> If you could win the Charles Schwab Cup Championship but you have to wear full Auburn gear would you go for that?

OC>> Oh gosh that would be tough uh if it’s a guarantee I would I would listen I'm not sure I’m not sure I could pull it off because there would be there would be many many repercussions for that but uh I’d listen.

VO>> While Pride is finding his footing Paul Broadhurst tended to lose his due to a bout with vertigo that began back in March. Putting was the worst checking the hole and then the ball sent him spinning same with full shots from the fairway. A five hole stretch of the KitchenAid Senior PGA Championship was the worst but he has since found a treatment to help a return to health.

VO/OC>> It's been better for about what two months now. Self played the last four tournaments where I’ve been sort of vertigo free thankfully um I met a doctor back at the PLAYERS um and he had a check on the wife uh gave me his number and I rang him and he put me on medication and touched wood two weeks later on well hopefully vertigo free so you know it's just now just got to find my game and uh get back to playing how we use too.

VO>> And you have had flashes of that you’ve played very well what is the difference when your top fiving as opposed to maybe when you're not?

VO/OC>> Uh I don’t know I mean I’ve struggled this year from March onwards with the vertigo so I had a spell of about six or seven tournaments when you know I was playing with it or trying to um but you know the U. S. Open I was sort of vertigo free the Senior Open I played well I played well the week after at a tournament on the Legends Tour in Europe which I won uh last week in uh Seattle was a bit of a struggle over the weekend I took two weeks off had a break came back and obviously the game wasn’t quite there but it’s close you know just have to keep working and uh now I'm my balance is better and uh you know gives me a chance at least of making a decent swing at it.

VO>> And that's helpful now as we really hit the stretch drive as we get in close to the playoffs so the timing for that is good.

VO/OC>> Yeah I mean you know there's a good run of tournaments which I’ve I’ve you know courses that I've played well on this one especially uh Pebble is a few weeks time Sioux falls again I'll finish top ten a couple of times there uh Phoenix the last one the Schwab Cup you know got beat in a playoff last year so yeah there’s some there’s some tournaments I'm looking forward to so it’s just down to me now to put the hard working in and I get the swing groove for that.

VO>> Is there more urgency because of the playoffs and to get better position or is it more like so many first time winners this is wide open you get more of a confidence because it's like why not me?

VO/OC>> Yeah I mean there is so many guys out here that can win nowadays you know the standard certainly's has gone up big times in the past three years no question uh you know some of what I call the superstars turning up the Elses and the Furkys and the Goosens so you know the levels gonna up and you know it’s up to the the guys like myself to up our level as well uh you know everybody wants to do well out here uh the Schwab Cup is always an aim I’m fairly comfortable at the moment but I you know all the I'm still trying to finish top twenty in if I can I’m what twenty fifth at the moment so I need a few good results uh you know the season's been tough you know I had a tough run of a couple of months well struggled uh so you know looking for some good results in the near future.

VO>> Still to come on learning center we will hear from U. S. Ryder Cup captain Steve Stricker on what he's looking for in his six captain's picks.

VO>> This week is the final event of the season on the PGA TOUR the TOUR Championship at East Lake golf club in Atlanta Georgia with the first six players on the U. S. Ryder Cup team locked in PGA TOUR Champions winner and captain of the U. S. squad Steve Stricker we'll have one final week to observe and assess before filling out his team with six captain's picks. Americans have dropped seven of the last nine competitions but no pressure Strick.

OC>> I'm gonna lean heavily on the assistant captains and those six players that have earned their way on the team to to round out the rest of the team uh who's gonna partner well with those top six guys that uh made it uh you know who fits in the team dynamics really well uh I believe we need unity we we don't wanna have uh guys you know that aren't on the same page you know we want we want everybody to get along I think we need to get along for this one week out of the year and uh yes all look at that heavily to add to make out the rest of the team.

VO/OC>> I think length is going to be a huge factor there you know it's it's a a links looking course but it doesn't play linksy at all you know you still have to play it through the air there Pete Dye was a master at having visually intimidating shots but if you do your homework you know that their space out there and there's space on the greens to hit it it's in some locations but some other times you really have to step up there and hit a great shot then and uh visually it's can be quite intimidating.

VO>> Davis Love the third will join Stricker in Wisconsin as one of his assistant captains. He comes with strong credentials Love is a veteran of six Ryder cups as a player he's also a two time captain leading the U. S. to a win at Hazeltine in twenty sixteen Love has a lot of respect and admiration for Stricker’s leadership.

VO/OC>> I think Steven are both very similar in that we get very emotional we don't want to be the bad guy we don't want to uh hold guys down or tell them what to do but when it comes time he's a very good at it he did a great job in seventeen of having some team meetings and and setting the tone for the week um at the President’s Cup so I've seen that over three years now he's he's a great leader and the guys love them um obviously the guys that have been around him like me and Jim and Zack um we really respect the way he handles things he is very quiet about it don't make it about Steven and Nicky makes it about the team and um he's he's a great captain and this is gonna be a fun Ryder Cup.

VO>> As we close up this show Happy Birthday to the European Ryder Cup captain Padraig Harrington who is now fifty and immediately eligible for the PGA Champions. He could make his debut on this TOUR in October following the Ryder Cup. That will do it for this week I’m Vince Cellini and we'll see you next time on PGA TOUR Champions Learning Center.