PGA TOUR Champions Learning Center

VO: Welcome to Learning Center, I’m Vince Cellini. PGA TOUR Champions is where legends play and among the legends is the dashing one. 15 time PGA TOUR winner, 13 time PGA TOUR Champions Tour winner Fred Couples. He of the buttery swing and crowd appeal. A native of the Seattle area, Fred learned the game at a municipal course and skyrocketed to fame. Recently our Learning Center crew tagged along with Freddie and old friend John Bracken for a little vacation getaway.

VO/OC: I have a big heart for Seattle. I mean when I was 18 years old when I left for college and really never came back. I got my tour card at a young age and I just kept going from there and now I'm…I keep saying sixty but I'm sixty one. Maybe I'd get a spot up here and come or maybe I just rent once in a blue moon but I do I do enjoy it and as you guys spent time with us I mean you're not going to get a better day anywhere in the world and happens to be you know outside Seattle up on the sound. I've known John since we were I want to say nine. Yeah that's probably right. But not really well until maybe a little bit later besides junior tournaments.

VO/OC: Langley High School is in Cascade League with us, okay who was I? You would go over to play Port Townsend right you go play wing point to play Bainbridge high school yes Mike Dudek remember him at Bainbridge? I know yeah… yeah that was Bainbridge that was Wing Point Golf Course on Bainbridge.

OC: Beautiful golf course but the problem is that when you get home till like eight o'clock at night and I had homework to do or my mother had homework to do. I used to get my report card and she'd get mad at me and my brother would say, “Mom you did all his homework you're going getting D’s and C’s not him you can't be mad at him.

OC: Must've been after freshman year of college and we're driving down to Portland to play in what was then called the Payless which was a pro tournament that they let some amateurs in. I pulled over and said I'm tired you gotta drive. He says I don't have my driver's license I mean you never got what how old were you when you really first got…

VO/OC: I was in college I got to college in August at Houston and I went out with the team to go to a bar I really never been in a bar there's a good reason why and they all walked in and they gave their license and I know I.D. and the guy asked me how old I was and I said seventeen. He says well you can't go so Blaine McCallister says here the keys in my car drive it back and I didn’t have enough guts to say Blaine, I don’t have a license or otherwise I would have shown this guy so I found my way back and I picked these guys back at one o'clock and and they didn't have enough to drink but I said Blaine I’m not driving back. I’m not driving back, but that was my first with my team letting them know. John Bracken knew right away I didn't have a license but my team thought wow you don't have a driver's license.

OC: So everybody would just take turns driving him. Yeah. Where we going? This way. [INAUDIBLE], we’re going to Portland, we’re going to Yakima, Metal Springs and tri-cities. Okay so you just get used to picking Fred up on Beacon Hill, [INAUDIBLE] and going in and saying hello to Violet

OC: And now everyone knows from stories with Joe Lacava that in in twenty two years with Joe or twenty three, I drove one time but anyhow those are I mean I known John wow fifty years? Jesus that’s ugly. I’ll watch you swing in a minute your swing is not getting very old. How about that? That’s a half shank folks. Half shank. Now I’m choking but that’s on the green. This is like my Phil Ivey story where Adam Scott and I, seventeenth hole in Vegas and we had him beat he came so I'll tell you what I'll do I'll double the bet, I bet you and Adam both can’t hit this green. It was a nine iron shot. Adam his it up there five can’t make it up five feet from the hole and then this is what I did. Did you hole it? Well, no. To my defense I was fifteen feet from the hole but I was two inches off the green. Seventy five hundred for me seventy five hundred from Adam Scott fifteen large right in the Phil Ivey's pocket and then he looked and said this is why I'm a top gambler. Yes you are. I wasn't nervous to hit the green I was so nervous for Adam and course he hit first but that's true just fifteen grand. I don't know if you'd call it a lesson with John Bracken and he probably taught me more than I taught him but John has been a lifelong friend and he lives up here and I'm having a nice little vacation.

OC: Par five little dogleg left water left. You know it's definitely hittable and to, just got to keep it you know right center I trying and usually a little draw, start it a little right, maybe hit a draw or just get it out in the fairway and hit a hybrid to the green. I mean that's beautiful. So I don't know what people are looking for me to critique that because I know nothing about a golf swing but that's how would you rate that shot. It’s a foot in the left rough. A seven? Yeah okay so let's hit another one. Let's see it get, let's see you get it up to nine. I'd like to see John drive down through it more and extend the face through the ball. So John has a very compact good swing. Anytime you don't stay down in there you're going to hit the ball low on the club face so try to extend through ball two inches longer and we’ll just see what happens. For you that's terrible. For me that's terrible. So this is what some people do, they just do that. Go ahead. Does that feel like, put it back down. That's further than I usually get it back. Put it back down. Does this feel any different when I do this for your turn? Yeah. Right. Instead you're a little bit go ahead and fight me you're a little bit there and comes back so your shoulder isn't going back. How about that one? It was beautiful. So there you go. Now you can pick on me a little bit.

OC: He doesn't ever look like his hands are squeezing the club there on softly and like if you remember there was I don't know whether it's Golf magazine or Golf Digest, there was a photo of him at impact, ninety one, ninety two and I believe part of his right hand was off the club and it's you know it's just this is where his pressure point is just the last three fingers around his right hand literally just along for the ride so I tend to most people tend I think when the pressure's on is to give it the death grip whereas, he just, his hands always looks so relaxed and comfortable that it you know occasionally like all you know if you're if you're unsure what club you got I think what I like to see him do when he was younger is hit some clubs full you know now he can hit a little eight iron from one forty but I mean when I was caddying for when he was younger, I would always try and guide him towards hitting something hard because then he I know he's not gonna quit on it.

OC: If I came and played this hole and I wasn't feeling really good and I was a little stiff, I would play completely different. I would probably aim them at the cart path and cut it back in the play and today I feel pretty good so if I hit a good drive here I know I can reach this par five. and how I would do that is I get a little bit more were my eyes go further to the right because I'm not going to trying to cut it I'm just going to try and unload on it and I hit the ball much higher than John but that's right where I was looking. Now see I can bet that's just that's yards further than my first one. And again, it's not a bragging thing it's all feel and that's why I was asking you where I hit them so the more I hit them on the toe, the further they go. A lot of times I hit them in there but if I can get him out on the toe, there's that thing and John mentioned earlier, I am on “An Old Golf World” and Vijay Singh and Phil Mickelson too and we were laughing about it, but my hands right there partly is because I'm trying to explode through the ball and that's how I've always done it so if someone said make sure your hand doesn’t come off the club, I would death grip it and probably wouldn’t hit it nearly as far. But I don't even think about it. Same as Vijay, he just laughs. But I'm gonna try and hit this to the maximum. I'm on vacation and I've hit three the best drives I’ve hit in a year and a half. That one is pounded and I don’t really know what good it's going to do.

VO/OC:Wisteria, you bet. It just was somewhere where when I got my tour card, I lived in Palm Springs and I've stayed in Palm Springs and I moved up the road a little bit to Newport. I've talked about maybe try to get something up here on the water. You know, I always tell my parents that I would end up buying something in Seattle so I have that kind of on my mind and I plenty years I hope knock on wood to live and you know I think there would be an awesome thing to have a family house up here forever. Right here there's four or five homes that are tall, then you get ten or twelve in a row can those be up if they, no. So that road on, it ends, the grey one is the last house. You’ve lived here how many years? I should know this. 4? 3.

OC: [INAUDIBLE] I remodeled and moved in May of 19 so just two years.

OC/VO: I'm not really a boating guy but I enjoy that and there is a couple things going on where there were a couple houses down there that I actually didn't make any offers but I looked at, one pretty hard so it's kind of exciting to go back down there. I hadn’t been down there in two years and then John pointed out a couple more that were for sale. I would like to have a place up here. And I usually follow John Bracken because if he says it's the best spot, and then we went on Useless Bay so that somewhere Susan and I can go play golf and Hunter when we're up there, but you know I still like to play golf and I'm at home. I don't need a lot of action. My action is playing with buddies. You know in the last couple years I've gone a little more with eighty seven year old Sam Reeves at the Carmel and I will say this because I think about him now a lot. He's been so good all the tour players but that's something that I kind of enjoy doing but I don't wanna to go play with people in Pine Valley. I don't want to go five hours on a plane to play golf I can get in my car and go about you know a mile to play golf in Newport and then in Palm Springs, I can go one minute in the golf cart so to me that's my fun.

OC: So Fred comes back, we've got a charity tournament here for seven years and he comes back you know after the first year we I go meet him in Vegas and he says okay how do we make it bigger and raise more money? So I said real simple we invite Arnold Palmer and get Arnold Palmer to come. He said well I got that deal done. I said really? Good. How did that happen? And he said well I played in his deal at Letrow and said he likes to reciprocate. He said So I’ll invite him while I’m at Bay Hill and I’ll get him. I said perfect. So I call on the Monday, the day after Bay Hill, I said so how’d it go? He said Oh I bogeyed at seven. I said I saw what you did. How did it go with Arnold and he said you know what I did talk to him I have no idea what I said to him he's the only guy, he said my palms get call clammy, I get so nervous when I'm around him I've got no idea what I said to him but I know I didn't ask him. So I called Lynn Roach and said is he yanking my chain here and he said no he really didn't and so he gives me Doc Giffin’s number, you know and he said call Doc Giffin he’ll be good so I call him and Doc couldn’t have been better and he said well what are your dates and I said what are some dates in July or August Mr. Palmer is available? And he gives me the dates and those are our dates. I call Fred and said well those aren’t. And I said, you know what tough luck, you’re here those dates, these work for Arnold they’re going to work for you. Is that the same year we had Laura Davies come too? Yes. Well, no, tell them that.

OC: Well, she came too well I don't know the exact stories as good as you do, but I got paired with her. She was so nervous she shot a big I don't know what she shot, she didn’t shoot a horrible score, but she was...he thought she was doing her a favor, but she was the bast, she was the best. And Arnold was, I don't know who won that year but no one was following whoever the winner was they were all following Arnold. Arnold put on a show. Now the house you're showing right is Mike Foster, very good friend of my Uncle Pete and when I was 20 I got on the PGA Tour and I didn't have a dime, maybe I had a dime, and Mike Foster sponsored me. Gave me money to get going and then I think by New Orleans, I paid him off and you know if I ever got going bad, I think New Orleans was after Augusta, that I could go back and borrow more money from him, but he's the guy. Foster Marshall in Seattle but Mike Foster gave me a start to get going but that his, he's passed away but that’s his beautiful place right there. I've never been to it.

OC: You know I hope to play on the Champions Tour till I'm sixty five. I know Jay Haas is doing it I don't really have the push to be really competitive, maybe but if I play well I have to push so it it depends on this idea of you know can I go out and compete with the younger guys coming up the Jim Furyks, Ernie Els, the Goosens and when that really stops and I start finishing thirty fifth and fortieth, I mean this and no bad way, but that's not my cup of tea. And it’s not like I’ve won a hundred tournaments. It's just in my brain that when I can't shoot a score and I play really well I don't have any time for the traveling and worrying about a three footer which is always worrisome, but it's just how hard can I practice and play and right now again with the pandemic, you know all we're doing is golfing you know when I'm at home not going to go to Disneyland or go on big trips so I play a little golf and I seem to keep the swing going and is very important for me to play well.

VO: Based on Fred Couple’s recent performance don't expect a retirement announcement to come anytime soon. The Ryder Cup assistant captain has played seventeen times during this wraparound season and while he hasn't won, he has finished in the top ten a dozen times including five of his last six starts. He’ll turn 62 on October third and remains one of the most popular players in the game.

VO: Still to come on PGA Tour Champions Learning Center a new tournament this week, The Ascension Charity Classic. We will hear from some of those competing this week as professional golf returns to the Gateway City.

VO: Since Tim Petrovic start his sophomore year on PGA TOUR Champions, he has been one of the most consistent players on this tour. He has nine runner up finishes and has ended the year inside the top twenty five in the Charles Schwab Cup Standings each season. He's a threat to win each and every week and physically looks very much like his PGA TOUR days so who better to give some advice on tempo than Petro in this week's ‘What's Your Edge?”

OC: Today, I've got the new TOUR edge at 721 mile driver for this year and it has the new diamond face technology and I'm gonna hit a few drives for you. So today I'm gonna talk about tempo and rhythm with driver. I think because I'm tall and I have long arms I’ve always been blessed with a smooth tempo and a smooth rhythm. So I’m going to hit a smooth one for ya and I'm gonna hit a hard one and see if you can tell the difference. That was probably about seventy percent and it cut about one yard so I was pretty happy with that. So this one I'm gonna hit a full maybe ninety percent, see if you can tell the difference. It was pretty good wow you can really feel the ball jumping off this face with this diamond face, but I think obviously the second was a little bit harder, I don't think harder when I try to hit the ball further I think how fast can I get the club to move. Not how hard can I swing, but how fast can I get the club to move?

OC: Hi I’m Rocco Mediate, I’m gonna show you what's in my bag. Obviously clubs. More importantly in the bag or actually on the bag. My daughter Francesca makes me a little trinkets and the clubs I play at Calusa Pines in Naples, Laurel Valley at home in Ligonier, PA, Hazeltine is not on there, Silver Leaf where I play in Scottsdale, nice so that's my outside stuff. Nothing else, usually I have other stuff on this bag. So in the bag, wallet, cigars, lots of ball markers, I mark with pennies or dimes I use a dime because I actually care about I really don't care about my guys I’m playing, I do a little bit, so instead of a quarter all the time, I use a dime when I might be in somebody's line, courtesy. What's in here that's it that's it. Lanyard with glasses on them. Things to fix your club, wrench, what's in this side? Hold on. Nothings in the side. Usually Martin keeps his yardage book on the side, but he actually is using it now and studying which is unbelievable. Range finder has to be on because we can't use as a determine because god forbid that would not make sense. That's it. That's about all I carry. I don't carry, he does but all we all always I've carried not a tour bag, well I've carried a carry bag since two thousand ten I quit all that big bag stuff because it's too heavy for that matter. Towel, that's about it, I usually have Jan & king but I’ll have those tomorrow. That's it Little Valley head cover, inclusive lines, artisan wedges Ping, I got it all. Ready to go.

VO: Still to come, we’ll celebrate a return to golf at historic Norwood Hills Country Club in St Louis. This amazing sports town hosting PGA TOUR Champions in the inaugural Ascension Charity Classic. Some of our players offer a preview.

VO: This week, PGA TOUR Champions is in Saint Louis, Missouri and the city will host the Ascension Charity Classic on the west course at Norwood Hills Country Club which has an elite history of hosting events including the 1948 PGA Championship won by Ben Hogan. This week some of the game's most legendary players are looking forward to making their mark in the shadow of the famous arch.

OC: I'm really looking for Saint Louis, you know I think the last time I was there maybe was a World Golf Championship a long time ago. I have a good friend of mine, Doug Armstrong is a GM of the St. Louis Blues so I haven’t seen Doug in a long time so we'll get to maybe play some golf early in the week and have a bite to eat and a beer or something but they are looking forward to, I’ve heard good things about the golf course. He's told me it's pretty good so looking forward to that.

OC: Well St. Louis has always been a great golf city for major championships or big events so it's great that the Champions Tour is there and I'm excited to play.

OC: It's always great fun to go to a new venue and to a new city and be in a new tournament. It's like you know new experience altogether and when you've played around to tours for as long as I have, it's very exciting to just see a new place and enjoy that whatever it is.

VO: This week's Ascension Charity Classic can be seen on Golf Channel with first round coverage beginning Friday at 3:30 PM eastern. That will do it for this week's Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini and we will see you next time.