Champions Learning Center Playoff Preview

OC: Hi again everyone. I'm Vince Cellini and welcome to the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs preview. Over the next hour we'll set you up on the three-event season finale. We'll hear from PGA TOUR Champions winners Phil Mickelson, Darren Clark, Jim Furyk. We'll talk about some of the playoff favorites and will mention a dark horse or two; so who is it? Who will lift the Charles Schwab Cup trophy? Well, we'll get to that, but first let's take a look at this year's playoff venues.

VO: The first of three playoff events is the Dominion Energy Charity Classic at the Country Club of Virginia. The event began in 2016 and since the winners have been Scott McCarron, Bernard Langer, Woody Austin, Miguel Angél Jímenez and Phil Mickelson. Lefty became the third player to win his first two starts on the PGA Tour Champions joining Jim Furyk and Bruce Fleisher. Mickelson's three shot victory is the largest margin of victory in tournament history and he tied the largest come from behind win in tournament history rallying from three strokes back to defeat Mike Weir. We’ll hear from lefty a bit later in the show.

VO: The second event of the playoffs is the Timber Tech Championship in Boca Raton, Florida. It's been played at The Old Course at Broken Sound Club each year since the event began in 2007. Undulating fairways, strategic bunkering, and of course it winds through oaks and pine trees giving it somewhat of a nontraditional Florida layout. Last year the winner had a breakthrough. Darren Clarke took The Timber Tech Championship for his first PGA TOUR Champions title two putting for birdie at the par five 18th for a one stroke victory over Jim Furyk and Bernhard Langer. It was his first win since the 2011 Open Championship at Royal Saint Georges. Clark added more wins this year in the Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalalai, and the Sanford International.

VO: The Charles Schwab Cup Championship is the last three events of the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs and will be played at Phoenix Country Club for the fifth consecutive year. It's the annual final stop at a classic course in the hear of the city where accuracy off the tee is essential. Kevin Sutherland had that formula and is the defending champion. The Sacramento, California native is a two time winner of the Charles Schwab Cup Championship. In 2017, he also won at Phoenix Country Club to earn his first win on PGA TOUR Champions and secure the season ending Charles Schwab Cup. Once again, Sutherland is squarely in the mix.

OC: The question is how can a nice guy be so dangerous? Kevin Sutherland is just that. You are as the playoffs loom you know are you ready to go?

OC: I'm ready go I feel healthy, I had a little bit of a back issue kind in the middle of the season but I feel really healthy right now. You know I've, I feel good about the last five weeks I really do I think that. I'm trying to hit a little bit better. I struggle a little bit the last couple months hitting the ball, but it feels like it’s all kind of coming together right now and I know I need to probably win a tournament. The whole goal is to kind of get yourself in a position at Phoenix, you know before you get to Phoenix and then give yourself a chance there you know. If you happen to win Phoenix you know make sure that's good enough to be able to win the whole thing and so I need to pry you know maybe need to win a tournament before then, but it’s, I I just need to play golf.

 OC: So how did you kind to stay mentally strong through that whole thing that period of really not feeling your best?

OC: You know early on it wasn't that hard just from the golf standpoint was really playing any golf you know, wasn’t playing in tournaments and stuff. I came back in June and it was tough because you you're you're your mind telling you to do one thing and your body is just not able to do it and so it it was a little frustrating…

OC: Can you explain to folks what exactly you were kind of going through?

OC: Well I mean it was just like I was having some sciatic issues in my legs and my foot was kind of numb and so you're trying to make golf swings that you know you can make but the body just wasn't responding and so and and it makes sense but you know that we don't think that way you know we're thinking that we should go to make this work and I just wasn't hitting good shots and so is so is result you mentally get a little bit frustrated and you know and you start losing a little bit confidence and stuff but I'm feeling better. The swing is coming around, I feel about it right now.

OC: Good. So what about the long race this sort of rollover season and how that's been and it's made it kind of interesting I think really.

 It’s made it really interesting. Considering how many tournaments we play and how close everything is is is just awesome. It makes for…it’s exciting for the players, it’s exciting for people are watching this, the people at the tournaments and I I just think it's gonna be a great finish I really do I think I think when we by time I get to Phoenix is going to be really tight and this can be a lot of fun. Whoever wins this thing to do it over basically two different seasons and to have one big champion, he's gonna have to earn it.

OC: Yeah no question about that. When I think of you, I think of a couple of things. Low scoring and I’ll get to that in a moment, but your playoff victories you know those those long playoffs to get a win and and how important is maybe to work through that to to experience that and perhaps apply that to future events. Has it been beneficial you think?

OC: Yeah I think it's beneficial I think you know it makes you kind of stay in the game a little bit. I've had two long playoffs and in the in the and I will say when that’s strange about both of them, I got there different ways. I feel like with the first one was in Mississippi and I played against Scott Parel. I kind of feel like I let it get away when I got there and so I almost feel like I was adding pressure to myself and that's really bad place to be you know you feel like you're trying to gain something that you already had. The second time around it was almost exact opposite. It was against you know Paul Broadhurst at Phoenix and I make a long putt on the last hole to get into the playoff and so I feel like man I got a lot of momentum and feeling good about this and so I I think what I take from both of those things is that you need to really make sure you're staying in that that mindset of this like, I have something to gain something that I'm playing for and not try to make up for things that happen in the past and and so that’s the gist I take from both of those playoffs and I learned a lot when I played at the Mississippi.

OC: Yeah that's those are great lessons and with going low you have a 59 on this tour 60 and I’ve kind of asked you this before, what's it like to be in that moment and I wonder if some guys maybe not at the elite players but they're almost a little intimidated by what's happening around them. How do you kind of stay in the moment when you're really going low?

OC: “You know, I've said this before, the only way it can be quit is that you you're obviously playing well and you feel good about how you're playing and I feel like I get hungry like I feel like I want more birdies like it's just like…and I think one of the keys is not to be afraid to make a bogey. I think some guys get to that spot enough I'll just make some pars coming in, I'll be fine. And I think that's where you that's the mistake that some guys make because you still need to be aggressive and if you make a bogey, it’s not the end of the world. Don't be afraid of the bogey and as a result, you don't make that many bogeys when you’re not afraid to make them. It’s when you're trying to make pars as we start making bogeys.

OC: “Yeah and with your style it seems to fit wherever you go you're a very accurate player, you’re one of the scoring leaders on TOUR and that must be nice to have a game that really travels to all of these particular places. Does it not or?

OC: Oh no, I feel fortunate but it’s just experience. I mean everybody out here has experience. I mean we’re all in our fifties, by definition we have experience. Seasoned yes okay seasoned yes, very seasoned out here but I just did, I gotta tell you early on in my twenties I didn't really care for putting on Bermuda all that much and…but now I've got a lot better at it and I've gotten used to it and so I think…being able to have a game that travels has to do with how comfortable you are with the grass you’re playing on and over time I've gotten much more used to plan on the Bermudas and stuff. I grew up putting on poana. I know guys who don't putt on poana don’t like putting it, but that's where I grew up on, that’s what I feel comfortable with. I've gotten used to putting on Bermuda greens and that's definitely helped me.

OC: “You won it all before so what what's kind of the approach as you as you get this playoff stretch Kevin?

OC: “Again, I think it's for me, I can't speak for everybody else. My focus is just getting myself in position the week of Phoenix. If I can get myself in a position the week of Phoenix to where I was to win the tournament, you can win the whole thing that's really my goal right now is that is it and I feel like I got a little work to do to do that. You know I got a you know win a tournament or win a couple seconds or couple high finishes to kind of get myself in a position to where a win is good enough.

VO: “The numbers show Kevin Sutherland is always a threat to have the final word come playoff time. Only once has he finished outside the top ten and given his accuracy with the irons and consistent play, will be one to watch again. Turns out nice guys can finish first.

VO: “When this Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs review returns, we will hear from the legend himself, Bernhard Langer discussing why he is once again in the hunt for a sixth Charles Schwab Cup. Darren Clark on changing caddies, his body, and his approach to the game. He's winning and he's happy. Plus Phil Mickelson will be in the playoff mix. Leftie’s plans and his future on PGA TOUR Champions.

VO: “The top of the Charles Schwab Cup standings looks like this entering the playoffs. In fact, a familiar look and name at the top. Bernard Langer finishing one. While Jim Furyk tied for third at the SAS Championship to make a slim margin heading into the three event playoffs. At sixty four, Langer continues to grind. The thought of a sixth Charles Schwab Cup inspires him still.

OC: “I want it bad. I think all of us want it bad. It's been even you know the combined season it's been two years since we celebrated a Schwab Cup winner and I think we all been waiting for that and I would've won it last year if we would've had one but we didn't so I kind of feel it owes me one, but the game doesn't and it's extremely tight race when you think about over two years over two seasons and you have seven or eight guys right there. Anyone of us can do it. So I know it's not going to be easy but I'm gonna try my best to be at the top.

OC: “It's always fun to spend time with Darren Clarke and Darren I always think of you like a pitcher in baseball, you always want to lead the league in wins and you know what, that might happen but not only are you winning but it seems like you're winning and you're happier. All the way from Hawaii to Sioux Falls.

OC” Yeah yeah but it's a it's been obviously a very good year for me you know winning three times so far and you know it's what I always wanted to do you know. Whenever we bought our house down in the Bahamas in 2004 and it was always my plan from them that to play on this TOUR, touch wood, and place myself there and commute in and out of there and you know as we just said they're just before started you know, when a plan comes together, they don't always come together but this one a sort of come down come together so far, so. You know, I pinch myself sometimes because I'm lucky. I'm living in the Bahamas, [INAUDIBLE] by having a beautiful time, going out and playing golf and this year I’m playing nicely.

OC: “Actually yeah we're so happy for your good fortune there too, and Darren it seems like you're more settled in your game at least from the from the outside because you're kind of a tweaker right?

OC: “Yeah…yeah.”

OC: “But you're settled in your game now?

OC: “Well I am. You know I've been working a bit, did a bit of work with a guy called Rob Watts back home in the U. K. when I was over there for The Open and on the Senior Open and then and I've been working with Jason Bail, at [INAUDIBLE] out at Jupiter Hills and little bit of TPI stuff quite a bit of TPI stuff from Lance and Jason's the swing guru and you know it's it's amazing because you know you think as you get older you want to come out here and do a little bit more chilled about it and what have you which to some extent we are but at the same time if you're not working, somebody else is. If you want to win you you've still got to put the hours in. These guys are flat out good. We know there flat out good. If you're not playing well, if you're not putting well, you’re not chipping well, you're not gonna have a chance to win. You know at the end of the day, it appears I am a happy go lucky guy most of the time but the professional golfer inside me still wants to win still want to compete still wants to win so you know I still work my rather large rear off to try and get there.

OC: “That's why we're out here. We’re out here to win no question about it. How much feedback did you get on the the putter plays in Sioux Falls? It was very daring.

OC: “That was one of those scenarios where, I grew up playing links golf in Ireland or links golf in the UK. So putting that distance away from the hole, that’s no biggie. That’s standard. Keep the ball on the ground, use to ground and let the ground do you a favor. I'm not particular, the flag was just above the big ridge of the slope so if you nip a little wedge to the top it’s going to come all the way back down. If you don't nip it in the enough then it goes into the, just past the flag so I spend a percentage shot that I felt comfortable with and I thought right okay well I can pop this. This is because it was right at the front of the green and the first time I had a decent one and regulations based on the second hole. Got up there just a little bit short, came back down to the hole. Second time had driver up there again, little of the stubbornness came in and said I’m going to putt it again and then the third time when I get up there again, people in the crowd were shouting putt it and this guys shouting chip it and this guy is shouting putt it, and this guy is shouting chip it. I reach for the lob wedge. Ay! Then I reach for the putter, ay! But you know I’d hit exactly the same putt twenty minutes ago in regulation play so you know. So it's Americans, American golf for the most part most American people see a lob wedge in the air. Europeans see a little bit more on the ground and I saw that one on the ground and I'm trying to take the spin out and it was just a question do I have my speed right? I had three goes but I got it eventually.

OC: “No you got it. It was wonderful wonderful to watch and that's who you are. Speaking of who you are and who you work with, Sandy Armors on your bag and not to disparage anybody else ever worked for you at all, but I just wonder about that relationship and how that is factored in..

OC: “Yes Sandy started working for me and almost a year ago to the day. He’s a wonderful man, you know he's been because he'd been a professional golfer himself and you know spend a lot of time out playing on different tours around the world. Caddied for his brother for a very long time and had a very successful spelt with [INAUDIBLE] Brian and you know I was very fortunate that I you know I got a conversation with a [INAUDIBLE] and [INAUDIBLE] said you know I'm winding down a little bit because he knew that I like Sandy and got along with, and asked Sandy please do, and I did and you know he's been a great companion to have on the golf course. Caddies are more than just carrying the clubs you know they got understand and sometimes the players quirkiness should we say and sometimes…

OC: “They have to know how to push the right buttons or say the right thing or not say the right thing.

OC: “Exactly at the right time and Sandy’s gotten to know me. I think the first time I sort of got a little bit pissed, he goes “ooo” but he's gotten to know me and he understands me you know he's brilliant. He’s there in the range with me and he wants nothing but good for me as most caddies do but Sandy is a very genuine man. You know I'm very fortunate to have him on the bag and as well and he’s a great man and he's a wonderful caddie.

OC: “Can I get personal with you here for a moment? Don’t worry, don’t worry. I know you worked to try to manage your weight…that's managable for you so what's the optimum and what is your goal in that regard and how does it affect your play?

OC: “Well I have four [INAUDIBLE]. I've got not bad, I’ve got eh, dodgy, then bad, then I don’t really want to talk about that. That one’s not good and I was verging towards this one this one over here so I think I have to do something. Vijay was on to me, I’ve played quite a few practice rounds with Vijay and Vijay was on, he says you got to try this you got to try this. He ran into a guy called a GMC dealer who owns a company called Hyperbody based out of London so it's like a neoprene suit you put on and it comes to here and here but it's covered in electoral panels so I connect a little battery pack to it, I connect to that, he connects to my phone and we work out via Zoom. He watches me work, so he's controlling the intensity of the suit so I got to be careful I don't use too much bad language with him because he puts the intensity of the suit up all the time but it's very good it's a very you know you have days when your muscles firing, your muscles you got all the stuff going through you so yourself and it's been very good because well you know it's for my own health as I getting too big, and I've always been that way sort of when I when I get too big then I go full wack the other way I'm sort of a little bit about that OCD gets involved and yeah I saw myself and so many of the after the senior British and I thought man this is no good so we're starting to make a change and that’s what I’ve tried to do so today so

OC: “We want you healthy. This is beyond golf. That’s great, that’s great. [CROSS TALK]. All right so the playoffs are ahead here and you know the drill yeah and you're right in the mix here. How excited are you about it what's the approach when we go into the playoffs?

OC: “yeah well I'm going to it's it's obviously very exciting with the position I'm in and if I can manage to win another one of those one of the first two maybe events then maybe I can get myself possibly right there close so and we'll see but going into it with a chance of, if I played really well obviously and then I got them I got a chance I see exciting part. Because we play for, I play golf so that when I'm on the back nine on the Sunday every shot matters and the more is on the line for every shot matters the better it is. That's why I practice, that's why I get up that's why I go to the gym at four thirty in the morning but that's also why I have a few drinks when we have a week off, but it's all part of the whole thing you know that's what that's what I'm trying to do and my golf has been pretty good for the most part this year, had a couple weeks where I haven’t performed but for the most part it's been pretty good so and I hope I can just pick it again before the end of the year.”

VO: “Coming up, the voice of PGA TOUR Champions on golf. World Golf Hall of fame member Lanny Wadkins breaks down the venues and gives us his sleeper picks as well. When the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs preview return.

VO: “Here's a look at the playoff field by event. The top 72 players open things in Richmond, Virginia. From there, 54 players will advance to Boca Raton and a final field of 36 will decide things in Phoenix at the finale. The first two stops are 54-hole events and then it's 72 holes in Phoenix. The playoffs will be based on a point system and all three playoff events will provide double points based on their purse sizes.

OC: “Well golf hall of fame member Lanny Wadkins hasn't seen it all in the game but you see most of it, I’ll tell yeah that. Part of our Golf Channel Announce Team for the playoffs here and Lenny it's kind of interesting with his role over season and it's got a kind of a different feel would you not say leading up to this?

OC: “It's like it's taking a long time to get there is usually more direct but at the same time I feel like it's more of a proving ground for all those really experienced, quality players to come to the top of the leader board. Cream rises to the top. If you start looking at we've got on the Schwab Cup list top ten, it's all guys that are very capable of getting it done.

OC: “Yeah a lot of the big names for sure and we know about them the front runners but you know in watching this all season long, are there a dark horse or two that you maybe my pin your hopes to? May put a few shillings out on?

OC: “You know the guy I keep watching, I expect him to keep playing well it’s two guys, number one I don't know he's he's kind of right up in the mix even though he hasn’t won is Retief Goosen. I don't understand why he's not winning more out here. Everything about his game looks great. He's not a guy would come like rolling off your tongue, he’s going to win and get it done, but he's been there. He also is lost in a playoff in Phoenix a couple years ago to Jeff Maggert so I think he can get it done. The other guy I like is Rod Pampling. Now Rod is fairly new to the PGA TOUR Champions. He's got a win under his belt, but boy is he in the mix it seems like every week, really good driver of the ball and when I think about the three courses for the playoffs, the one thing that comes to mind is you really got to drive the ball well. Rod drives it long and straight so good combination/.

OC: “Two very good names Lenny, two very good names. It's not the PGA TOUR in terms of bomb and gouge, so how would you describe the style of play and getting it done on PGA TOUR Champions?

OC/VO: “They’re not capable of bomb and gouge, it mostly to have their all in over fifty and you've only got one Phil Mickelson in the field and I mean Goosen and Els are very very long. The other two guys that come to mind but they haven't been getting it done on the greens. Neither one of them. Both of them struggle on the greens. That's why you don't see more wins from either Retief or from Ernie. We got a lot of guys that, you know the Jim Furyks of the world, Steve Strickers hit it straight hit a lot of fairways hit a lot of greens and putt well. You know Furyk doesn't putt as well as he did in his prime, he's even gone back to right hand low, played his entire regular career with left hand low. I keep waiting for to go back quite honestly. The left hand low, it would not surprise me see him jump out one weekend there's Jim Furyk putting left hand low making everything again so yeah. You've got to keep the ball in play no question and being a sprint for the most part. You know three round events you can't afford a misstep. You've got to get out…out of the gate quickly 68, 67 get in the mix because weekends are already on ya.

OC: “No question about it and you've seen tons of golf majors. What are these types of events reveal about any player at any level you know when you play in these types of a big events?

 OC: “Well they’re all competitive. I mean all these guys want to win they're not out there for looks or trying to make a buck at this stage of the game. They wanna win championships and I think that's what makes him all special. They all want to win. They all consider themselves winners you know, I'm talking upper echelon the guys contending the Schwab Cup. That's what it's all about them they want that Schwab Cup on their resume, trophy on their mantle. That's what they're out to do and they know what it's gonna take to get it done, that's win golf tournaments so yeah. That's what, they're focusing on winning they're not focusing on making a check.

OC: “No doubt, all right so the courses let's go through some of them and what they might offer, a breakdown from you. If you could give us a thumbnail. Country Club of Virginia?

OC/VO: “James River cours, one of my all-time favorites. William Flynn design, I grew up in Richmond I played the course since I've been a teenager. Won the Virginia State Open on it, a Richmond City Amateur. I think it's the finest golf course in Virginia. It offers everything we've talked about, you've got a hit in the fairway you've gotta play quality irons, wonderful green complexes just a delightful place to play golf and it's gorgeous right in the trees, everything.”

OC/VO: “Very good. Now the Old Course Broken Sound.

OC: “You know pretty good straightforward golf course. Been there a long time they’ve grassed it. It is in wonderful condition it's really been improved over the years since we started playing there and I played there in the earlier 2000’s. It's a very good golf course you've got to attack the par fives. You've got to get it done on the par fives there and they've got some they've got two or three shots that are must that you play well coming down the stretch. I think sixteen and I think fifteen. Those two holes right there with water around the greens you better not make the mistake there.

OC: “And Phoenix Country Club. Very unique setting, the setting that it is and you know that one very well.”

OC/VO: “ I do. I won the Phoenix Open 1982 on that golf course. Well in the early ‘70’s, I was runner up three straight years in the Phoenix Open in 72, three and four by a total of two shots. Lost a playoff there my rookie year to Homero Blancas. It's a great driving golf course, you put it in the fairway, you can get it done so you've got to hit fairways and you can attack the hole locations usually with middle and shorter irons so your iron game needs to crisp. The greens are magnificent there now, they they're always in good shape. Look for this going to be low.

OC: “And before I let you go, I think we have to talk about a guy you talk about each and every time you're out here covering the tour and that’s Bernhard Langer. And at sixty four, still on top and just his longevity and the ability to get it done and with all the new names coming in still going out there and getting his.

OC/VO: “Yeah and he's not getting it done with wins, he's getting it done with consistent play. Normally at this stage if he was leading, you would see four, five wins behind Bernhard's name. Right now there's only been one of the wraparound season but he's at the top five every year and I think you can attribute that…he is 64, he's lost length, he doesn't hit is far, his swing is gotten just a touch shorter he hadn't got quite the pop in his step like he used to, but he knows how to work his way around a golf course. He's always prepared, he and Terry hold, nobody works harder to get prepared for each and every week than they do. So he's all over it if you can be prepared as worth something is worth…and the other thing, think about this, Bernhard's been through his whole career I can't think of an injury or accident that he's had that slowed him down so I mean that's a blessing if you’re a player because most golfers have had something go wrong by now.

OC: “Is it time to open him up and see the circuitry or see what's in him?

OC: “I'm not sure what's in there. [CROSSTALK] German engineering. Exactly. Lenny always good to see you.

VO: “Still to come on this Playoffs Preview special, we focus in on a couple of contenders a little further down the Charles Schwab Cup points list. One is a newcomer coming in hot for postseason and the other was a major champion letting his game do the talking. Each hoping to survive their way into the Timber Tech Championship.

VO: “This week's first playoff event will include the top 72 players on the Charles Schwab Cup points list. While the players at the top of the list receive a lot of attention, there is a newcomer to the TOUR who has quickly earned a place among the entrants. He is poised to make a deep run and his name is Steven Alker.

OC: “I’ve played everywhere. I’ve played Europe, I’ve played Australasia, Korn Ferry Tour, PGA TOUR, European Tour. I’ve been everywhere so I’ve just been basically building up for this. I’ve been competition, stayed competing on the Korn Ferry Tour and this is my next chapter if you like and here I am.

VO: “Alker is playing unlimited PGA TOUR Champions status courtesy of his performance in 2020 the Korn Ferry Tour. In his first six starts in the over 50 circuit, he's finished in the top ten in each event.”

I think just focusing on wanting to play here. I think that’s been a big thing for me because its just kept me focused and kind of driven with a mission to play out here and its been a nice start, you know I haven’t gotten full status, but I like the way it’s trending, the way my game has been coming together the last few months.

 VO: “Alker’s average driving distance is in the 280’s which would put him just a few yards ahead of another tour member who has a similar game.”

VO/OC: “If I can compare myself maybe on TOUR like a Jim Furyk. You know a lot of fairways, maybe I’m one of the longer guys, at least top 20 in terms of length so I’ve transitioned from being shorter on the Korn Ferry to maybe one of the longer ones so…just a lot of fairways, tidy short game, I kind of rely on those two things. I’m really just out there doing my stuff, try and enjoy it, we’re entertainers so if I can entertain also then that’s even better.”

VO: “ If Steven’s hot play continues, he'll earn a spot inside the top 54 of the Charles Schwab Cup points list which would get him into the field in the Timber Tech Championship. This much is true. Given his play, Alker is no longer a PGA TOUR Champions secret.”

VO: “Take a bow, Stephen Dodd the Senior Open Champion. A major at last what a performance, exceptional from the Welshman.”

VO: “There are late bloomers and there are late late bloomers. Stephen Dodd is a player who broke through earlier this year on PGA TOUR Champions and is hoping to make a run in the playoffs. At age 55 Dodd was magnificent making his first win a major championship.”

OC/VO: “Some start young some start late. We’re all different I suppose.”

 VO: “From 2016 to this year’s Senior Open, Dodd’s only starts in PGA TOUR Champions sanctioned events were major championships but now with the win in the Senior Open, Dodd has earned the right to play on the PGA TOUR Champions full time, something he's been taking full advantage of.”

OC: “This is a big opportunity for me to come over and play here in the US so the challenges ahead are going to be tough but I’ll look forward to it and grasp it with both hands.”

OC: “What are you looking forward to on this sort of stretch?”

OC: “Just playing, the continuity of playing week in and week out. That’s what I’m looking forward to. A lot of stop starting in Europe for the season so it’ll be nice to play week in week out, knowing that I’m playing week in week out.”

VO: “ Dodd will have some work to do to make it into the top 54 of the Charles Schwab Cup points list and earn a spot into the second playoff event, the Time Tech Championship. However next year he expects to enter the playoffs with a better position as he plans to play a full schedule in the U. S. and we all look forward to that.”

VO: “Coming up next, Phil Mickelson a multiple winner this season on PGA TOUR Champions was also an assistant captain for the United States in last month's Ryder Cup. When we return you'll hear why he thinks the U.S. had such a dominant win at Whistling Straits.

VO: “Phil Mickelson has made four starts on his PGA TOUR Champions career. He's won three of them, one of which is this week's Dominion Energy Charity Classic. In his other tournaments, he won the Charles Schwab Cup Series at Ozarks National, finished tied for 20th in the Color Guard Classic and added another victory earlier this month in the Constellation Furyk and Friends. Mickelson has had a busy year with winning the PGA Championship competing on the PGA TOUR and being an assistant captain for the U.S. Ryder Cup team. Phil spoke to me about a variety of topics including the challenge of maintaining peak form from beginning to the end of the year.

OC: “ It's interesting Vince how throughout the year like it's hard to maintain the level of let's say speed and physical strength right because in the off season when you spend two or three months and you really work on building up strength and speed and you get there early in the year it starts to… you’re hitting the ball far and it's coming together but towards the end of the year as you're traveling and it's harder to keep those workouts up the ball speed things will fall off a little bit so that's kind of where I'm at now like I'm not hitting it as hard or as far as I usually do by four, five miles an hour slower ball speed and I need to get back in the gym and keep that going that's the challenge but you just have to put in the work. Like if put in the work you can make it happen.”

OC/VO: “For the first time since 1995, you weren't a player an active player for the Ryder Cup and I was wondering what that experience was like for you? Was it difficult to transition out of that and what did you find your role being for this great win?”

VO/OC: “I really enjoyed experiencing the Ryder Cup and being a part of the team and not having the pressure and anxiety as a player, like that's always the most stressful week for me because you want us to do well and you have so much more on our plate then just your game right? You’re working with partners, you’re working with strategies and you're working with captains and that there's so much more that goes into that that I don't have that stress and it allowed me to really enjoy it and some of the best moments were being in the Captain's Room with the other guys that I have played so much golf with that I've played for, you know Fred Couples and Davis Love and Steve Stricker and Zach Johnson, Jim Furyk, these guys that are some of the best guys in golf and I got a chance to be with them in the Captain's Room talking over a lot of the the strategies things we've done well in the past, things we done poorly in the past, and how we can best support these players that we have on our team to succeed right to give them the best opportunity to succeed.” We have great players but how can we support them so that they're able to be at their best.”

OC: “Was there a moment there where you, maybe behind the scenes where you saw these guys come together you thought well they're gonna be okay this is gonna to work because you can recognize that kind of performance at Ryder Cup.”

OC: “There were a number of moments where guys under it was communicated to the lot of players and they understood that it's best if I play in this format with this person and tee off on this hole or why so and so for the greater good needs to do that so I can still thrive in this area where I'm at my best or what have you and see when you get those guys that under kind of cool get the big picture like that and are excited to be there and want to want to do whatever they can to have the team succeed and so forth, well that that's when you kind of know you’re going to have a successful week or play your best because everybody's supporting.”

OC: “Also just about being around the younger guys now, what do you would do you take out of that when you're around some of the younger players. I mean we all say we want to kind of take some of that youth away from it but does it remind you of it maybe a younger Phil Mickelson?”

 OC: “So I learned a lot watching them play and speaking and spending time with a lot of their support system so guys and help them with their fitness, guys and help them with their nutrition, guys that help them with their focus or with their preparation or practice or golf swings, and so I had a chance spend time, ask a lot of questions with those guys and I'm gonna do a couple things differently, I’m going to implore at or higher or work with some new people that help me in areas that I could use some improvement and I also had a chance to see from 30,000 feet, outside looking in why these guys are so good and what it looks like and maybe what are some of the things that I can do in my own game to continue to improve and try to compete at the highest level more often than just winning a random Major Champion here and there.”

VO: “As the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs Preview continues, the President of the TOUR joins us, deliberating. We’ll discuss the current state of the TOUR, the wraparound season, and what makes the sprint to the Charles Schwab Cup so exciting.”

VO: “The playoffs were canceled by the pandemic last year and since the 2020 and 2021 seasons were combined into a wraparound season, soon another name will join this list and given the long journey the race is a good one. Unfortunately, 2019 winner Scott McCarron is out for the rest of the season following surgery.”

OC: “Spending some time with PGA TOUR Champions president, Miller Brady and Miller I don't think anyone really knew how the whole carryover season was going to play out but as it turns out many pretty interesting didn't it, particularly for the Schwab Cup race.

OC: “No one knew. You, me, I don't think anyone knew. It’s turned out to be fantastic, exceeded our expectations and the race is as tight as it's been a really long time.”

OC: “Yeah so it in a way it allowed guys to kind of run a marathon you know and if you fell behind a little bit you felt like you had time to make it up so many guys really once they embrace that I think it really took off with the fellas.”

OC: “Yeah no, I think that's right I mean because these guys need a little bit of a break throughout this extended season. They're not gonna play every single week but they played a lot and it's coming down to the wire here.”

OC: “So with so many first-time winners, what does that say about A, the tour and B, opportunity here?”

OC/VO: “Well I would say a couple things one the first time winners. I think the first thing that tells us is how darn competitive this tour is right now when you look across you know it's not only the named of players that are coming out, it's the other rookies as well. The winners Cameron Beckman, Brett Quigley who won early in this season, it's tremendous right now.”

VO/OC: “Yeah guys like Dicky Pride…[CROSSTALK] Dicky Pride wins playing well. KJ Choi, but anyways you can go on and on with the first timers.

VO/OC: “And the Hall of Famers are winning too.”

VO/OC: “That that's true, that's absolutely true. So with the return of old events back on the schedule and some new events, I just want to get a general overview of how the schedule played out for you throughout the season?”

OC: “Well you know when we first embarked into the return to golf, coming through COVID, starting back up, we didn't know what we were going to face. We didn't know how many events we were gonna be able to play throughout that throughout last year and going into this year, knowing we had some new events on our schedule there still that uncertainty was out there. The events have been fantastic. The support for the events been fantastic. The two new events that we played have been off the charts good. We're excited that every new event that's on this tour is a really really good golf tournament now.”

OC: “There was no question about that. So for fans if you could explain to them the Charles Schwab Cup playoffs you know not only the anticipation of that, but once we're actually into it how would you describe that just this sprint to the cup?”

OC: “Well I would say is that you know it's been this long extended season right and so now we're about to embark into the three playoff events, the first one you know being the Dominion Energy Charity Classic in Richmond, Virginia. Top 72 are gonna make it there but I think what you're going to see is the focus of the players is gonna get a little more intense right, their attitude is going to change a little bit they're gonna want to perform at a little bit a higher level so that they can not only get to the next playoff event which is in Boca, Timber Tech but that they can make it to Schwab Cup in Phoenix.”

OC: “And finally, how proud are you to sort of share in this Ryder Cup victory with guys that play on your TOUR? You know the Steve Strickers and Davis Love, Fred Couples, Phil Mickelson, these guys these contributors to a great event?”

OC: “I mean all of those guys that were either captains or assistant captains on both sides are our players. So like they're passionate about golf they’re passionate about promoting the game of golf but knowing that they were out there with the younger guys and they're coming back to enjoy the Champions Tour is special for us.”

OC: “I want to share a little story with you just happened I ran into Stuart Appleby and just in conversation he told me he remembered saying 20 years ago or so, I'll never play PGA TOUR Champions, They all say that…and I said the same thing to him but guys come around and they realize that this is a wonderful place to compete and extend your career and that you have to come to that but when you do it's really an amazing experience for these guys.”

OC: “It is. I mean you know we joke that they all say that and they do Jim Furyk said the same thing you know handful years before he was gonna turn 50 and once you once you embrace it, you're all in and these guys whether it's been Ernie Els or Mike Weir and Jim Fuyrk and Darren Clarke, these guys all embrace this TOUR and it's really helped grow the TOUR and I think we're gonna see the benefit of that for years to come.”

VO: “Next on the Charles Schwab Cup playoffs Preview, the players discuss the Country Club of Virginia, the first playoff venue. Does it favor a certain style of player? You'll find out when we come back.”

VO: “This week's PGA TOUR Champions is in the capital city of Virginia for the Dominion Energy Charity Classic. The Country Club of Virginia is a par 72 layout measuring just over 7,000 yards. As the players tell us, this course provides a good test and is a welcome venue to open the playoffs.”

OC: “Well one thing, Dominion has five par threes and last year, I did very well on the par threes and that is number one goal but also have like a three inch Bermuda rough. You know the strength of my game are using my irons and using my driver. I drove it well, I kept it out that heavy Bermuda rough and was able to control the ball into the greens because you can't really stop the ball coming out of the rough so I think those two combinations to have success at Dominion is you really need to dial in your par threes, you need to play them great and you need to drive it great. I think that those two factors because the greens aren't that undulating or sloping and they're not that fast so guys are going to make putts so if you can control your ball, good par threes, good driver, I think give you a great chance for success.”

OC: “The golf is kinda…if you look at who plays well there, it’s kind everybody. It's not like one type of player it's the guys who are actually have their games in really good shape, play well there. It's just a nice, fair all around golf course.”

OC: “You look at some of the past winners, again some courses you see the top ten and eight of them are some of our longest hitters and you say well no kidding, but then there's other places where the winners have been all across the board and I think no more so than Dominion.”

OC: “Last year, we probably saw it very wet. So a lot of rain going in but I have a I think it's one of the best golf courses that we play all year so to kind of start the playoff run it's such a nice golf course I think is a bonus. You know it's a good solid test of golf. You can't fudge it around at Dominion, you have to hit your driver well, you have to hit your iron shots well, it tests a big part of your game but most importantly it's…for us it's a big hard long golf course and you're not going to fudge your way around there. You have to hit some good golf shots.

VO: “The playoffs are here. First round coverage of the first event The Dominion Energy Charity Classic can be seen Friday at 2 PM eastern on Golf. That will do it for the playoffs Preview. Stand by for more exciting and dramatic play as we get set to crown a champion. It's a sprint to the finish and we have you covered every step of the way. I'm Vince Cellini and we thank you for watching.”