OC>> It's been a long two years since the Schwab Cup was won, so Phoenix here we come. This could be one of those memories we want to hold on to, the one we won't forget. The one we're taking what if this was that moment? That chance worth taking, history in the making.

PGA TOUR Champions Learning Center.

VO>> The top 36 players in the Charles Schwab Cup standings have made it to the final event of the season, the Charles Schwab Cup Championship at Phoenix Country Club. This is it, their last moment in the desert sun, always a thrilling finish and even more so given the long path home.

VO>> Leading the way going for his sixth Charles Schwab Cup is Bernhard Langer. The German icon has a 337,000 point lead over Jim Furyk after the timbertech championship. Miguel Angel Jimenez and Ernie Els swapped places. This week, 880,000 points are available to the winner of the event. But first, the view from the top.

OC>> Major champion, World Golf Hall of Fame member, multiple winner of the Charles Schwab Cup, father and grandfather, Bernhard Langer has done his best to build an incredible career and an equally stellar home life. Ultimately, what is Langer’s legacy? The face of PGA TOUR Champions answers that question as he details his amazing body of work.

VO/OC>> It's about winning the Schwab Cup, and there's no bones about it. That's what everybody wants to do out there. It's one of the trophies we all want to win. I was hoping to be one of the top 10 players, but I really didn't know what to expect. And the first couple of weeks that came out, I was surprised how aggressive these guys played on the course. They were going after it and they were going for low scores. It's either all or nothing. And it took a bit of adjusting. But I fell in love with it right away

VO>> And a new chapter in a hall of fame career.

VO>> It is Bernhard Langer, who stands along in PGA TOUR Champions history.

VO/OC>> When you think about it, it's probably the hardest tour to get on to of any tours in the world, only have 80 guys playing. And there's only one real champions tour. To have won five Schwab cubs and to have won 11 Senior majors, more than anybody. Yeah, it's it's truly incredible. I believe that I’ve still gotten better. I work on my game, I think my technique can still be better and and I've played some of my best golf the last 13 years. It's like a puzzle. There's lots of pieces. And they all have to be in the right place at the right time if you want to be successful, because the competition is extremely tough out there. You got to have a good technique, a good team around yourself. Good caddie, good coach, good family, and the willingness and the drive to work on it. Well, I think family is really important to me. I grew up in a great close knit family and I wanted to add my own family. I got married in 1984 to my wife Vicki. I'm very blessed and fortunate that we have four kids two boys two girls, they all love the game. Now we have three grandkids it gets better and better. So that's my next career being professional Opa call myself, Grandpa juggling the job and family. You know that's really was always a difficult thing to do to look at your you know, calendar on one side with all the majors and the tournament's and then over here you had the family and birthdays and Mother's Day. All the things that are important and I didn't want to be one of those dads that would look back and have regrets of saying well, I wish I had worked a little less and spent more time with my family. So I was always trying to balance that. I think I did fairly well in that area and I think that's in the end more important than any trophy or victory I might have achieved on the golf course. The father son is my one of my favorite tournaments because I can play with my kids in front of you know, spectators and teach them the ropes and show them how to do it and and they get a glimpse of what I go through on a daily basis and to see them succeed and and have fun playing the game spending time with family and friends in that environment is is just huge. We were fortunate enough to win it four times, two with each son but even when you don't win, just being there and been paired with a Nicklaus or Trevino or anybody that in the field is a major champion is this it's a very unique week and it's always been a highlight of every year. When I look back to where I come from, with my background where golf is in Germany and all that to have made it into the Hall of Fame as a golfer is this just unbelievable, so I’m very honored, very blessed to be a part of that select Group and very proud of it too. I still love competing I love the game by itself and love competition. And I enjoy being out there with my colleagues and it's become part of my life became a teaching pro when I was 15 in ’64. That's a long time with golf and I enjoy it and I enjoy going out there practicing and trying to be the best that I can be.

VO>> Really no weak spots in this game.

VO>> What a performance by Langer.

VO>> One of those days for Bernhard Langer.

VO>> That putter has been on fire!

VO>> And win number 41 For Bernhard Langer.

OC>> And once you've won anything, I think you want to have that feeling again. And now I don't think winning ever gets old.

VO>> You can watch more from that interview in the golf pass original Docu series “my roots,” which traces the story career of golf legend Bernhard Langer. There's one record that Langer is still chasing, and it's the all time Win mark. He can take another step closer to Hale Irwin's total of 45. This week in Phoenix, his fellow players continue to marvel at what this man has accomplished.

VO>> Jerry Kelly was at one point leading the Charles Schwab Cup standings, then, as it often does, life got in the way. 13 days prior to speaking with us, Kelly's wife Carol had a cancerous right kidney removed. In the aftermath, Jerry discussed just how difficult this has been. However, there are encouraging early signs for Carol Kelly's recovery

OC>> They found some, some pretty bad stuff in her right kidney. And we had to have that taken out. And you know, she's, she's doing great, we got a great pathology report. Yeah, they still want to do some, some digging because of, only her, you know, a rare type that, you know, some of the doctors are, are a little too excited to dive into. But you know, I had to be there for her a lot more things, more important things in the Schwab Cup, especially in my life right now. And she's number one. And I want to be there for her now. She kicked me out of the house.

OC>> I was gonna ask you if she told you okay, you gotta go. You gotta get going.

OC>> Yeah, I mean, the nursing might have been a little overbearing. You know, I was at her feet, probably a little more than she'd liked me to be but, you know, I just say I can't do enough for her because I know. You know how she's been there for me and in our family the whole way.

VO>> There is a brotherhood on this tour. And support has come from everywhere for the Kelly's. One of the fiery competitors on PGA TOUR Champions, Jerry Kelly finds golf from your distraction, as Carol's health is his only focus.

VO>> When we return, we'll hear From the man standing forth in the Charles Schwab Cup standings. Ernie els reviews his season, tells us what he needs to work on, and explains why the future is bright for PGA TOUR Champions, and a deep dive into next year's tournament schedule. That's all ahead, stay with us.

VO>> He is one of the great stories on the over 50 circuit this season. This past weekend in Boca Raton, Florida, Stephen Alker broke through to win for the first time on PGA TOUR Champions. The tour's 14th First time winner this season. With the victory he played himself from outside to inside the standings for a second straight week, earning enough points to qualify for this week's Charles Schwab Cup championship. And the New Zealand native earned full playing privileges on tour next year. Witt Watson and Lanny Watkins with more on the winner. And what's ahead this week.

OC>> Let's touch on Stephen Alker, the winner here in South Florida, first time winner on the PGA TOUR Champions. He goes from Monday qualifying for Boeing in Seattle later earlier this summer, a string of top 10s, Now he's a winner and all that goes with it.

OC/VO>> Yeah he has played outstanding golf. I mean he's coming out here taking this tour by storm. It is not a fluke he has not been given anything played his good golf as anyone the last two and a half months. I love his golf swing. I love his setup. I like the hands low. That's what I like to see the club goes up. The putting stroke is okay at times. But ball striking wise He's beautiful and great wedge game which you got to have good short end game to really take advantage of this tour.

OC/VO>> And something else I know you love is Phoenix Country Club. You've got a history there yourself. It's a great venue. It's one of the most popular and it's really the biggest deal. At the end of the season for the PGA TOUR Champions. What kind of player wins there?

OC/VO>> Well, we've had a variety of players do well there. Jeff Maggert won there Kevin Sutherland won there twice guys Goosen has been in a playoff, guys that hit it long guys that hit straight. And that's kind of the history of Phoenix country club going back to the days of Byron Nelson and Ben Hogan, if you will, they fit every kind of player conceivable, you know when they're so it's I think it's just a venue that requires great golf.

OC>> The best 36 heading for Phoenix, four day event to wrap up the season starting Thursday at four o'clock Eastern.

VO>> While not everyone who makes the Charles Schwab Cup championship has a chance of winning the Schwab Cup, Everyone has a crack at winning the 72 hole event. And with a limited field of just 36, The opportunity to play in the season finale is quite an achievement. Steven Alker’s win last week in the timbertech championship moved him from 46 to 22nd In the standings. As a result, Shane birch moved out.

VO>> This combined rollover season truly was a tale of two campaigns for Ernie els. early success didn't translate into more wins in 2021. But the Big Easy did pull into the top five of the standings. Els reflected on his play, the final stretch and the future of this tour.

OC>> Ernie Els eased into the PGA TOUR Champions campaign in 2020 with a couple of wins and has now been a part of this carryover season. So I was hoping to get some of your assessment on what has been really this long journey home, Ernie and and your journey in particular in joining this this tour.

OC>> Yeah, I mean, I turned 50, the year before, in October, October, baby. So I missed out on those last couple of events of ‘19. And then 20 came around and had a really wonderful start down in our way. Got into a playoff with Miguel and Freddie. Miguel won that playoff. So it was a pretty good start. I would love to have a win. But you know, it was nice. And then, you know, got my first one a couple of months later, the Hoag. So things happen. Good pretty nicely there for a bit. If you look back. It's been the longest season in the history of golf, and feels like, two years of golf. But there's been a lot of other stuff going on. So we actually been very, very fortunate to have been playing this much golf.

OC>> Well you have and it fortunate too, to be called a rookie. At this point in your life. We I talked to Jim Furyk about the Rookie of the Year race. You know, there are quite a few good candidates. I don't know if you think about it, or if you guys joke about it amongst yourself.

OC/VO>> We haven't actually talked about it because we don't feel like rookies anymore. Because there's been so many other guys that's come along, you know, but I guess Jim's he's got to win that Rookie of the Year at the moment. I mean, he's won a major, you know, won, two other events, you know, second on the money list.

OC/VO>> So what about being an impact guy on the on the money list and being in that mix all year? That's kind of one of those things that very, very big incentive all year long. And you stayed there.

OC>> Yeah, thanks a lot. Yeah. But I felt like I had a better game last year this year. You know, I've been working quite a few things. And on the greens, I've been working on quite a few different putters and so forth. So I don't think I've finished off many tournaments in the right way. But it's been kind of a work in progress for me this year. You know, I've tried a lot of different driver shafts, you know, trying to get a bit more length here and here like yeah, and, you know, obviously on the greens, you know, it hasn’t been terrible, but it hasn't been quite where it should be on. The other guys are making putts. And with my length where I can get onto par fives you know, you should dominate those kinds of holes, which I have, but you know, on par fours, and you know, makeable putts, I've missed quite a few out there. So I want to work on that, but which I have done. But it's been a, it's been a fun time with these guys, be with him. Week in and week out. I've played a lot of golf, seen a lot of new places. It's been a good kind of two year run.

OC>> It really has and you've all made it so very entertaining. And speaking of which, Ernie, you're in this mix of guys 52, 53 and people that are coming into the tour this wave of players is really going to amp up the tour over the next few years. Yes?

OC/VO>> Absolutely, I mean, you know, myself and Jimmy came out kind of the same time. Retief was ahead of us a little bit maybe a year but yeah, so you talking about the younger guys, you know? Yeah, you know, 52, 53, Alex Cejka won two majors. There's so many guys I'm going to lose, leave out so many guys, but you know what I mean? And there's more guys coming Phil’s joined us for quite a few events. I mean, he's such a major draw. I see Justin Leonard’s coming up. Next year. We got David Duval coming out. We've got more and more guys coming. And then these guys start mixing it up. It's going to be great television viewing again. You know, I remember watching the Champions Tour back in the 90s. You know, with Lee Trevino playing and and obviously playing I mean, Gil Morgan. I mean, there's, there was some great battles out there and there was a lot of interest. And I think that that's going to come back.

VO>> Coming up on Learning Center, a pause and then the 2022 season will roll out in January. The PGA TOUR Champions President helps us celebrate the return of some events and what's new on the slate. That's next.

VO>> The 2020 Charles Schwab Cup Championship took nine extra holes to determine a champion. Ultimately, Kevin Sutherland defeated Paul Broadhurst, but one of the key shots Sutherland hit came on the sixth playoff hole. His short game once again proved to be at championship level. An improbable shot to keep on the green, Kevin avoided the bunker and the water and save par on the hole which extended the playoff. Sutherland explains his thought process in this week's What's your edge.

OC>> One of the things I did during that shot was is that I was when I grip the club, you want to grip the club open and grip with how you normally would grip it, I take a little bit weaker left hand when I do this. So it allows me to keep that face open. Last thing I want to do is that face to shut down, causing it to kind of have a little bit more topspin and run across the grain. This way, I can swing a little bit more full at it and be able to elevate the golf ball to make it land softer. Like I said, we want to grip the face open. So I don't want to grip it and open the face. I want to grip it with the face open. So I grip with the face open. And if I can just slide the club underneath the ball, something like that.

OC>> Always great spending time with PGA TOUR Champions President Miller Brady and Miller before we get to the 2022 schedule here. Let's talk a little bit about this long journey home and and how satisfying it might be to hit the finish line. Whereas everybody kind of bought into this.

OC/VO>> Well, it's rewarding. It's rewarding because we have such great title sponsors and our players have bought into it. So yeah, we're at the finish line. I can't wait to see who wins the Charles Schwab Cup.

OC/VO>> And what a commitment not only from sponsors, but players and all the tournament officials as well, in terms of committing to making sure that this thing gets done the right way.

OC>> Well, yeah, I mean, we had the safety protocols put in place to allow us to play and everybody was committed, whether it's our title sponsors, our players, our staff, our friends of the Golf Channel, everybody had the same goal in mind, and it's been a great success.

OC>> Alright, the 2022 schedule is out. 28 events just kind of an overview about what to expect next year as we get back to back on track.

OC>> Well, yeah, but hopefully we're back to normalcy you look at a schedule 28 events, really the most events we've had on our tour since 2008. And we look at 28 events strategically that we play two or three in a row, you take a week off two or three in a row, you take a week off. Our players like it that way because they play a lot.

OC>> Can you tell us a little bit about tournaments that are new on the schedule or some that were are sort of maybe second year events as well?

OC/VO>> Well, we're able to bring back a few events that we weren't able to play during COVID Whether that's going back to Morocco, we're going back to Biloxi, Mississippi, with rapid scan, Newport Beach with Hoag. So three events we can rack onto our schedule.

OC/VO>> I think this year, we also saw an influx of mega stars coming on tour. And I I really believe over the next couple of years, this is going to raise the level of play and amp up things considerably. Because this is not your father's 50 year old tour.

OC/VO>> Well, sure. And I think we're lucky because the guys that have come out in the past 18 months, whether it's Darren Clarke and Mike Weir and Ernie Els, I mean, I keep going Jim Furyk, you know Phil Mickelson from time to time, they bought in to this tour, they've embraced this tour. So you look forward to the guys that are turning 50. You know, Padraig Harrington just turned 50. He's going to be out here. Stuart Appleby, you look at David Duval is gonna write his debut early in the year next year, Justin Leonard, middle of the I can just go on and on. And it's very exciting for this tour.

OC>> And finally, it is rewarding. But it's been a long journey. Like I said at the top of the interview, are you ready to kind of catch your breath, and then reset with a full schedule next year at a wall a lot.

OC>> I'm ready to catch my breath. But I'm not sure that happens. We finish our season. Right in a week and a half. We immediately turn around we have annual tournament meetings with everybody coming together. And for me, that's going to be a celebration of what we've accomplished over the past 18 months. Then we'll turn our attention to 2022.

OC>> Well, I'm already looking at Huawei, so focus on that for now. Great Year. Thank you very much.

VO>> That will do it for the show, and the combined season as PGA TOUR Champions brings it in the finale in Arizona. Thank you for making this show a part of your week. I'm Vince Cellini and we will see you next time on PGA TOUR Champions Learning Center