VO>>OC Welcome to learning center, I'm Vince Giulini. You know, golf is an ‘anything can happen’ sport and last year, anything did. Alex Cejcka surprised even himself, entering as an alternate, getting through a playoff and capturing his first major in just his third start on this tour.

OC>>VO The week before I kind of look at the entry lists and I think I was like it maybe eleven out, so I knew it's impossible to get into the tournament so I kind of took a week off. I didn't really practice a little bit and I haven't looked on the list for three, four, five days and suddenly I get a text message from the TOUR that I’m already I think third alternate the week before and on Monday I get a text message that I’m suddenly in and so I was a little bit freaking out, I didn't play golf on the weekend and I was a little bit lazy, but you know in the end I was happy to make the field. I have no idea what's gonna come but, I was excited that I think Jay Haas was the last one to pull out I think on a Monday. I was just delighted, you know, so I made my trip down there on I think Tuesday morning and the rest is history.

VO>> Stricker misses and Alex Cejka, in just his third start on the PGA TOUR Champions, won the first major of the year 2021 Regions Tradition.

OC>>VO I didn't maybe expect too much I was just happy to be in a tournament. I know you have a buddy on the bag, but you are playing well so you know you give yourself a chance, hole putts, make a couple points for the ranking this year, but then you know we really played well, it was fun, and you know suddenly there on the weekend we played for the title. We both were happy we both were nervous I think Timmy was more nervous than I was, but in the end, you know we were lucky that we made it into the playoffs. The playoff was just incredible victory with that birdie, you know unexpected against Steve with such a short game and the way he's been playing all his career you know, but I take it you know it was a great win and totally out of the blue I just I really didn't expect that, but I was playing well and I'm happy it happened that way.

OC>> Alex Cejka’s bridge to success on PGA TOUR champions is no accident. He's a self-professed grinder and he's been able to combine that work ethic with great talent and the ability to close. In the 2021 Regions Tradition it was Cejka holding off one of the best on this tour, Steve Stricker, in a playoff and along the way he impressed many of his peers.

OC>>VO I played in that Region's first two days, and he was, his golf was flawless. I mean, he played superb really did play well those two days. Putted unbelievably well you know, holed you know didn’t miss anything from that side from inside ten feet. Just putting straight looked good, he was driving it long, so it wasn't a great surprise that he won because he was playing that well, but you know you never know what's gonna happen on the Sunday, leading a tournament has its different effects on different people, but he handled it great.

OC>>VO Yeah it was incredible. I played with him in the last group in Birmingham, the first one he won. So, it was a very tough day was very windy on the tricky course. He does have a game that is suited for those kinds of conditions in Europe he won Valderrama which is one of the toughest courses in Europe under similar conditions, very windy, extremely difficult golf course so he has a game that is suited to high pressure events, is very straight getting off the tee. Good putter, good solid player so it’s very impressive.

OC>> He is a very hard worker, is very determined, very target oriented, and sets himself some good goals and he's come a very long way. I mean let's face it, you know, where he grew up, where he was raised and now, he’s been playing on the PGA TOUR at the very highest level and now with the PGA TOUR Champions. My hat's off to him and great job.

OC>> What Alex did straight away was unbelievable. Again, Alex's main, I’ve played with Alex for over twenty, over twenty, thirty years he's been played some in Australia I’ve seen him in Germany on European Tour. He’s just the journeyman who hasn’t stopped playing so it's not unusual for that guy to come out on the Champions Tour and play well.

VO>> The man Cejka clipped in that playoff, Steve Stricker, has made back-to-back starts since returning from a mystery illness that attacked his heart, liver, and white blood cell count. Steve finished tied for second two weeks ago the Insperity invitational and last week in the Mitsubishi Electric Classic he posted a t-10 finish. Stricker is pleased to be back out on tour, he's getting back all but about eight pounds of a twenty-five-pound weight loss and has been building towards this week.

OC>> It feels great to be back out here playing I know that. Strength is still a bit of an issue you know and endurance it'll be a challenge, but you know at some point I gotta just keep putting in the time and it’s part of a workout all right? I've been doing it at home, but this is golf and it's something you really can't prepare for unless you come out here and experience it on a daily basis.

VO>> Well Regions is on deck, and I wonder if you can talk a little bit about last year in the playoffs and kind of that exciting finish we had there.

VO>>OC Yeah that's it's always a fun event I look forward to regions tradition playing at Greystone in Birmingham there every year. Courses always in great shape they get a great turn out of fans, Region’s does an unbelievable job and yeah, I was close you know I had an opportunity and Alex Cejka just nipped me in the end, you know, in a playoff but again it's always a fun event and I look forward to going back there each year.

VO>> Now for another Steve. In seventeen career starts on the over fifty tour, Steven Alker has racked up three wins and fourteen top-ten. In his last three events he has gone win, lost in a playoff, and then another win. No one is coming into the region's tradition with more momentum and his fellow competitors all know it.

VO>>OC Alki is playing fantastic, exciting, yet boring golf. Gotten to play with twice now during some really good rounds. I mean that could have been lower yeah it could have been higher it's just he's kind of in full flight to where it's on auto pilot.

OC>> He moves it out there pretty good and he doesn’t make too many mistakes. Like Bernhard Langar, just you know he just goes in there and hits his greens, gives him opportunities and if you missed the green, he gets it up and down this is just not much wrong with it you know.

OC>> We've all talked about you know you have good stretches where you play maybe three, four weeks in a row where you're playing like he is right now he's on his end eight or nine months of it so it's like obviously he's very comfortable with this game and that's the number one thing and you know I found that when I first got out here it took me a little while to kind of get comfortable because I don't you know I wasn't playing with these guys very often and I don't think Steven you know he played a little more with them than I did, but he immediately was comfortable obviously in a you know just the confidence he has in his game.

OC>> I think that he's getting very comfortable with what he's doing, and those things are to be expected when you're playing well. When you're not playing well you don't see them happening, so I think he's seen the patient that things are gonna happen that that's what's going on right now.

OC>> Yeah, he's just a really strong player. Hits it pretty straight, no real weaknesses in his game. Works really well and he's a sneaky long as well. There’s not much of him, but I mean he gives it a hundred percent off the tee and he’s up there with the longest out there so yeah, it's a good combination to have long, straight, and putt it well you know you can’t really fail to be honest, but no, he's took his chances really well and he’s a guy to beat at the moment.

VO>> PGA TOUR Champions is a who's who of players who won major championships as members of the PGA TOUR. For those competing here a major is another feather in their cap and reward for longevity and consistency. There's no question it drives them to pursue a major on this fifty and over stage.

OC>> I've been fortunate to win The Open Championship and to add to that out here would be, it would be wonderful and, you know, they’re the first tournaments I look to at the start of the year so you know this year it's been a bit of a tough year for me with, I've been injured once or twice, a couple things I'm quite one fight so hope would start up a little bit better and kick off the major season with a good week.

OC>> It’ll be wonderful to win a major obviously. I’ve won four on the regular TOUR and also played quite a few on this TOUR now and I think I played four or five of them now so. Contended in the one in Birmingham, but I would love to. Majors are biggest events it's always been the biggest events of might is always big events, but that's where you kind of separate yourself from the rest of the guys to the count of majors you can win.

OC>> Any victory would be a very satisfying thing at this point having not played a full schedule eight or ten years, but to do it starting at a major championship would just be icing on the cake.

VO>> When learning center returns, Charles Barkley, swing has seen tremendous improvement from what it used to be and it's about to get better thanks to pro-am partner, slash instructor Darren Clarke. We’ll explain.

VO>> Mitsubishi electric classic where Steve Flesch again gets it done in the loose a Sunday sixty-five that included nine birdies sees the left hander hold off hearing ten couples and Thomas for his second career win a PGA tour champions on this course just north of Atlanta Georgia our Bob Papa and Peter Jacobsen called it and have a recap

VO>> TPC Sugarloaf playing host to the nine eleven commission electric classic David Tom started the day with a two-shot lead start four seven Peter his third chance

VO>> You've got a burning these par fives if you want to win here at TPC Sugarloaf Raynsford easy tap in bird

VO>> Levin under Steve flash the front side both eight nine and roles in this party at the eleventh he was three back at that point Padraig Harrington sixty-four seventeen eighteen now and was and how much the flushes play second in par four fifteen

VO>> He's such a streaky player he can make birdies in bunches, and he was on fire this back nine

VO>> Thirty fourteen and fifteen to get to ten under and then his birdie at the seventeenth the eighteen like Herrington would that be a factor David Thomas laid out playing his third in eighteen

VO>> He went for the green in two he did not hit a great shot in there so disappointment for Saddam's

VO>> The flash is your champion his second win on the PGA tour champions both coming at TPC Sugarloaf he won here in two thousand and eighteen and now in two thousand twenty-two setting the stage for the first major of the year next week in Birmingham and the region's tradition

VO>> The stages said Bob and Peter as we head to Alabama with Steven Alker topic Charles Schwab Cup standings the top five has gone unchanged David toms tied for second pushes him into the top ten and look at the jump by winner Steve slash a huge ball that gets him to number ten

VO>> Charles Barkley's golf swing has shall we say evolved over the years but despite the improvements like all of us he strives to get better enter Darren Clark will last week during a program of the Mitsubishi electric classic Barkley received a tip from the former open champion

OC>> Water is no good where rice no good in the bottom right of the offer right at the bunkers I knew that myself one of them you know guys is slightly bigger persuasion we need to keep on turning swiftly turned over give it one of those just keep turning through a dilemma is a set dollar mark body quit no it doesn’t quit. Quickly body no good okay cool thank you Mr. Clark yes Sir

OC>> Just flustered but this old kid appears there was a dog like Lapham's written reality as a dog leg right, but he has two balls so we're gonna try for one more

OC>> I want to move to Bogo it dropped

OC>> Get that big strong ripped muscular chest through the ball charts you got this here in the fall okay maybe draw I didn't know any better I'd say did the first one deliberately good shot charts.

OC>> Thank you great tips off you've done this before well I tried to do this before

VO>> Ckay Chuck okay still to come on learning center will tell you about Fred couples making a special request of Tiger Woods son Charlie that was key to Fred competing at TPC Sugarloaf it's a father son story with a twist but before we go to break Super Bowl champion and dancing with the star’s contestant Victor Cruz with a challenge to Miguel held him and.

OC>> Some ago Victor Cruz and I see little dance little thing you do at the plate what can you do this can you dance in the south can you do I'll have to see it you see the jays to look you'll see the steps okay he's going to

OC>> I think so I see you yes, I said that you see you see how you that's in this I think that hey well now you look how you will be one of the with the flamingo thank although this outside complement right maybe we need to make this I'm going to make this and does it

VO>> Joe Licata began caddying for Fred couples in nineteen ninety and was beside him during couples nineteen ninety-two master’s victory currently loops for Tiger Woods so with couples needing a temporary caddie of his own last week in the Mitsubishi electric classic Freddie had to call in son of Joe young Joseph Lacava who's been seen on another high profile

OC>> It's always fun to spend time with Fred couples or we're gonna talk about catty protocol now usually I think if you're going to ask for the use of another player's man, I would imagine there's some procedure that you have to follow so in this case tell me exactly the backstory with Joseph look cop on the back

OC>>VO Well I did I don't know Charlie's cell number, but I got in touch with tiger and J. T. was on the thread they didn't reply, and I think maybe they thought we were teasing a little bit but then I said listen tiger I need to make sure Charlie's okay with Joe canning from Atlanta he got right back to me, and he said I just talked to he's fine with it

VO>>OC You guys have a conversation as well no I missed out on Charlie's numbers well it looks like they did all the work so it's all good here now is Charlie's been pretty busy playing in more events than you or fewer events than you are this year he's Charlie works is playing a lot of golf I do keep in touch with how he's playing and I'm him it so bad right now that for details all over the lot but we will talk a little bit about Charlie dinner because I know his father has talked a lot about tiger and Charlene says he just takes it your Bible it's fun for me and so when I came here I told one of people yeah I got a comma canning for me I'd really say Joe stuff and so we came and then they'll know who is immediately so he's a superstar because it these they got your I so I hope he's like his father and his father for twenty two years and I hopefully I'm Joe a few times that's where I wanted to S. R. U. chip off the old block how much of you learn how much you know about their dynamic your father right

OC>>VO Yeah you know I'd say I spend the weekends carrying don't win foot so I kind of have a little bit annoyed with this is a completely kind of new ballgame here you know that using a range finder down slow so it is no so learning the ropes a little bit but talk to my dad when I walked the course so you give me some good knowledge so he's been helping our mission nothing changes so like the old days so like I called Joe and I said look find a hotel room near me get a rental car selves sure enough he gets around cars picking me up drive me to death nothing's changing their cell I know I got a good cabin a good kid back you know I don't blossom around I used Abbas is that around a little bit and that didn't go so well for

OC>>VO So what qualities would a young man have to have a word or an older gentleman I guess to do to really to Kerry for a high-profile player like yourself for tiger someone like that I imagine not everything's a fit

OC>> Knowing I'll be honest with you because of you know if it was if it was Olin brown just robbed him if it was his son I probably wouldn't do it I don't know I don't know anything about Olin and in his son I've known him since he was four years old that doesn't mean he's going to come out we're gonna have a blast caddying but we are implying cell I know his father like the back of my hand he's a spitting image of him I have nothing to worry about and so it's kind of it's very fun for me it's probably going to make me pay more attention which is a good thing I'm not him he's a he's already got a down he's walked the course you know when you're working for entire in Charlie's group there's really no \*\*\*\* around is that correct he's answering these questions very well

OC>> Lastly, Joseph, so would that save any tips any final thoughts as you make your way here?

OC>> You know I just said make sure you're on top of things and kind of have everything under control makes she ready always have a ball in the pocket there you go make sure to tell

VO>> No question Joseph learned from one of the best the education of a cat he continued last weekend well that will do it for this edition of learning center we'll be back next week with a recap of the first major of the season the region's tradition until then I'm Vince Giulini thanks for watching.