**PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #9**

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > Springtime in Georgia, a spectacular setting for PGA Tour champions. It's the Mitsubishi Electric Classic, 10th playing. As the over 50 tour traveled from Texas to the Deep South, gearing up for major championship season.

OC > PGA Tour champions ushered in the month of May with a return trip to TPC Sugarloaf and the Mitsubishi Electric Classic. Hi, everyone. I'm Vince Cellini and welcome to PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. Georgia's hilly terrain and this challenging finishing hole put the players to a real test. So who was able to navigate their way to victory? With a recap, let's turn to the men who call the action Bob Papa and John Cook.

VO > Thanks, Vince. The 10th playing of the Mitsubishi Electric Classic. And Stephen Ames is your champion. He started the final round with a three-shot lead over Ken Tenagawa. And we take a look at some of the highlights. His third shot at the 10th was a thing of beauty.

VO > Yeah. Drives it in there nice and low checks goes up that slope and made one birdie on the front very efficient and starts the back nine with another birdie.

VO > Yeah. He had to make a great par save at the seventh, which kind of catapulted him as well. And then didn't take advantage of the 13th. His second into the Par 4 14th.

VO > And this was a beautiful shot. Brett Quigley had closed the gap to only two behind and in the respond with a shot like that that was absolute quality.

VO > That got an 18 under then his second shot in the 17th just cleared the bunker and then like he did all week perfect speed that gets him to 19 under par and he's opening up a big lead now hits a bad tee shot takes the unplayable because he knows he has a five shot lead he's playing for bogey what does he do. Makes par.

VO > Like the rest of his putts right in the center it it's just a perfect almost a perfect week for Stephen and to end it like that big smile.

VO > Stephen Ames becomes the second multiple winner this year on the PGA Tour champions, and he joins Steve Flesch as the only two men to win the Mitsubishi Electric Classic on two occasions. He obliterates the scoring record 19 under par. Stephen Ames, your winner of the Mitsubishi Electric Classic.

VO > In posting his first multi win season on PGA Tour, champions Stephen Ames continues to build on his success of last year, up to fourth in the Charles Schwab Cup standings and trailing only leader Steve Stricker, who was top five at Sugarloaf, two time winner David Toms and reigning champion Steven Alker. What a chase it has been so far.

VO > The Mitsubishi Electric Classic is Georgia's only PGA Tour Champions event. For the seventh year tournament proceeds went to the special needs schools of Gwinnett. The proceeds will assist in achieving the nonprofit's goal of creating an educational setting dedicated to maximizing students potential in a wonderful exchange, students wrote thank you letters to the players and they certainly hit the mark.

OC > Oh wow what’s this?

OC> If I had to learn that I might make when I get older.

OC > Letters from Johnny. Thank you very much for playing the Mitsubishi Electric Classic and supporting our school.

OC > We hope you have a wonderful week and play well. Good luck.

OC > Thank you very much, John. It's really cool that we have a support from Gwyneth, special needs school.

OC VO > No one's got it figured out because he's got a plaid shirt on and it's crimson. I think no one might be making it on the PGA Tour and then head to the Champions Tour in about 50 years.

VO OC > Mitsubishi's been a long time partner of ours, and since 2017 we've been one of the primary charities at Mitsubishi Electric Classic. They're always finding new and creative ways to give back and make an impact here, not only with the y'all's program, but with our school program as well. We can never say thank you enough, certainly to Mitsubishi Electric, but, you know, to the tour players, you know, they're the reason that this event happens. It's you know, some of our students get the chance to go over and be a part of the event. But it was just a great way for us to show our appreciation for them coming here to win at two, to play in the Mitsubishi Electric Classic, to wish you good luck and, you know, if it if it motivates a player to or makes them appreciate what their presence at an event like this means, we're all on board and happy to do it. And the kids absolutely loved it.

OC VO > And you have a charity like this that benefits kids. You know, the PGA Tour and the PGA champions does such a great job of, you know, charity and helping out kids. And when you get something like this, I mean, that's beautiful. I mean, just the pencil for the fight, for learn and everything else. It just it really makes you feel good that, you know, yeah, I'm here doing my job and I'm playing golf, but I'm benefiting other people and kids to help them, you know, with school to get to a better place.

OC > Really classy. Thank you, Jeremiah.

VO > Since 2013, the Mitsubishi Electric Classic has contributed nearly $3.7 million toward charitable impact, making everyone a winner. Coming up on Learning Center, always a front runner, Steve Stricker was fortunate to play in last year's region's tradition, let alone win again. He'll discuss his comeback and what it meant both then and now.

VO > The season's first major is here, the Regions Tradition as PGA Tour champions returns to Greystone Golf and Country Club near Birmingham, Alabama. It dates back to 1989 with past winners like Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino and Raymond Floyd. Four days, 72 holes and a returning champion who made it back to the top a year ago following a terrible health scare.

VO > As Stricker's comeback to another major victory.

OC > What a story Steve Stricker was in 2022 at the Regions Tradition winning there just his third event back after missing six months with illness. And Steve, given the circumstances, how big a win was that for you?

OC VO > Yeah, it was, you know, kind of unexpected. Really didn't know what to expect coming off of what I was going through. And I always enjoy going to Birmingham and playing there at Greystone, but I really didn't know what to expect. And so it was a little unexpected but fun in all in all aspects, right? A family on the bag, you know. So, yeah, it was Nikki. I think I get confused between Mario and Nikki, but Nikki was there with me and you know, she was the rock in the whole thing when I was going through what I was going through and to win, there was. Yeah, it was a lot of fun.

VO > Yeah. So I will say you play well there. You had four rounds in the sixties. There are 20 consecutive rounds under par at the Founders course. So what is it about you in that place that meshes so well?

VO OC > Not sure, but I enjoy it. You know, it's usually in great shape. You got to work your way around there. There's some difficult holes where you got to kind of lay back and just, you know, play smart, get in the fairway and some holes where you can be aggressive, some holes where you got to be smart. So there's a great mix of holes there, some holes, par fives we can try to take advantage of.And yeah, so it's just a good thinking, thinking golf course where you get to plod your way around there.

VO > Back in Hawaii I said, you were 56, you weren't 56 yet, but you are now. But at this point in your golfing play, what what do you think maybe you do better than you maybe ever done it?

VO OC > You know, I think just keep the ball in front of me. You know, I don't obviously hit it as far as I used to. My swing has gotten shorter each and every year, like as we all do, as we get older. But I think it's just, you know, managing my game, taking care of the ball. And, you know, when I do get in the mistakes and make problems of holes or whatever, I just, you know, try to get out of there and make my bogey and move on, you know, but just try to play smart. And and I think that's what a lot of us do out here is the older we get, you know, you just you've been around the game for so long, you know, you know how to maximize your your game.

VO > Know when to hold up and the fold up, I guess, kind of thing. So at the time of our conversation here, you're leading the Charles Schwab Cup. And I'm I guess I'm looking way down the line, but I'm wondering, are you going to go for it this year or. I know there's always a a tree and a deer waiting for it back home around that time.

VO OC > There is. But you know, and and I'm part of the Ryder Cup this year, too, which is, you know, right in among some tournaments that I really like to play. And obviously, hunting season also is right in there, too. But we'll see. You know, I I'm playing more now. I'm trying to make an effort to really play well here early and see what I can do at the end. But I don't know yet. I'm not. I'm leaving it open. Right. I don't like to plan too far ahead.

VO > Well, we love you out here, you big impact. So, you know. Thank you, Steve.

OC > Thanks Vince. Thanks buddy.

VO > Steve Stricker has quickly piled up double digit wins on PGA Tour champions and his victory at the Regions Tradition helped regain his place among the top players on this tour. Strikers health was a major story, and his fellow players were impressed with his resilience and course demeanor. Two men who had a front row seat with him in the final group Sunday at Greystone saw the comeback firsthand.

VO OC > You could see he was just going about his business and, you know, not thinking about winning you just thinking about playing your golf and shooting the best scoring. And that's what staved off the best of him. But from a few players out here just playing a game, you know, hitting the right shots at the right time. Staying patient and then obviously, you know, putting it nicely that that always helps, too. So that's the biggest thing I got out of playing with those guys.

OC > He's one of these players, like I've been lucky, you know, he's very solid from the tee. Very good with the iron and short game. Very good with the putter. That's what you need and that's what you have with Stricker.

OC VO > Strick is is tough. A fighter. I know he went through some health issues. His game is amazing. And, you know, I kind of admire that he does it his own way. And, you know, he plays a dozen times a year and comes out firing. And I mean, he's always always in the hunt, always in the thick of things. If he's struggling for the first two days, he always seems to shoot 64 on Sunday and and he still finishes sixth or something like that.

OC VO > People don't understand what's underneath that stoic personality. I mean, it is a lion in there. He is an absolute beast.

OC VO > Tough character, really tough going strong. You know, I love playing against Steve, to be honest. He's got a few over me. I've got a few over him too. Thankfully, the US Open being one of them, but he beat me at the heat when he won the Traditions. I was runner up there to his win there. So, you know, we've had a few a few of those battles where we've been pretty tight. And, you know, you're in for a game with Steve. He's very similar character stuff. You know, we don't have to win a certain way. We can figure it out. You know, if we play great, that's brilliant. If we don't play well, we can win that way as well. And you always know Steve is going to keep himself in the game and you know you're going to come down the stretch. And he's he's very dangerous for such a nice person.

OC > One of the nicest guys in golf and one of the voices of PGA Tour champions on Golf Channel. John Cook joining me now. And Cookie, just wanted to get some early thoughts on the PGA Tour champions season. Your thoughts?

OC > Just, you know, a lot of guys winning tournaments. It's not just one guy dominating. So you got, you know, Steven Alker coming back after what he's gone through and you know, his game is right there. And after this season, he had, you know, to win recently. Ernie Els, I mean, you've got world class players like we all know. These guys are really still really, really, you know, really good. So it's great to see a variety of players winning out here.

VO > You talk about a variety of players. Are there any players that we should kind of watch that may not necessarily be considered true dark horses, but guys who can really break through and win on this tour?

OC VO > Well, there's some world class players that got their their card this year. Richard Green is certainly one of them. And he's world class. He's won on, you know, all kinds of tours. So it wouldn't surprise me that he would break out and win. You saw Mark Hensby win earlier. He had a couple of, you know, other really good events. So that's not surprising either because he's really good as well.

VO > What are the players still say to you about joining this tour? What's the adjustment that they have to make? What maybe surprises them or catches them in terms of preparation?

OC VO > I think what's surprising is they understand how good these players still are, how hard they work. You know, they train, they love what they're doing. It's a second chance to keep going and playing. And they haven't lost their skills. Bernhard Langer's 65 years, 65 years old, still playing at a high level. So it's a second chance for them. They understand that they're going to have to be very, very good if they're going to want if they want to compete.

VO > And The Regions Tradition. Our first major of the year on PGA Tour champions. What makes that a special event? What's entertaining about it?

OC VO > I think just the you know what it means. It is a major championship. It's on a wonderful golf course. It fits this tour. And it's you know, it's an exciting finish. And again, you get a variety of players winning on that type of golf course.

VO > Yeah. And just great to be in the state of Alabama. And that's, I think Steve Stricker, though, he's what a Wisconsin guy, but he almost owns that place.

OC VO > Yeah, he does. That's like another annuity. But what is it for Steve Stricker out here on the PGA Tour champion? It seems like every single week he's, you know, the guy.

VO > Cookie, thank you.

OC > My pleasure. Thank you.

VO > Still to come once again, Jim Furyk is called to captaincy. This time the Presidents Cup, where Furyk has been such a tremendous asset to Team USA. Furyk on the honor and why international team play is just different.

VO > Next year, the United States will look to continue its dominance in the Presidents Cup under a new captain, Jim Furyk. On Tuesday, the 17 time PGA Tour winner was announced as the 2024 U.S. Presidents Cup captain. The event will take place in September of 2024 at the Royal Montreal Golf Club in Canada.

OC >Another high profile team, another captaincy for a Jim Furyk World Champions Cup, and now the Presidents Cup. And given your past performance of stellar performance in Presidents Cup, what does this honor mean for you?

OC VO > I know it's special to to be asked to you know, I kind of miss playing on those teams. I was able to to play on seven Presidents Cups team. But you know, to be asked it's just a great honor to to be asked to be the captain. And I'm looking forward to the process. I'll be keeping a keeping an eye on Zach Johnson and that team in Rome and wishing them the best of luck and rooting them on and just kind of ready to start some preparations and get my ducks in a row and get organized for next year.

VO > It's fun, too, because your opposite, captain, is Mike Weir and I remember you both winning in 2003 when the Masters won the U.S. Open that year. So it's funny how these paths are always crossing one way or another.

VO OC > Yeah, Mike. Mike spent a friend for a long time and he sent me a nice little note. Congratulate me. And I. You know, I just said hats. It'll be fun to do it alongside you. And, you know, when you think about taking the Presidents Cup to Royal Montreal to Canada, he carried the torch up there for so long for Canadian golf, there's no other choice, but but Mike Weir. He is good man and friend and be happy to be alongside him as captaincy.

VO > Jim, what do these international competitions mean for golf?

OC VO > I just I think they're special. I think as a player, I look back when I when I said I have a list of goals for every year. I wanted to be on the Ryder Cup team or the Presidents Cup team. That was A1 one. I wanted to join the, you know, the 12 best Americans to be on that team. But you look at just look at the event, the way it's played. It's the one time where a football game or in this case a hockey game breaks out at a golf course. The fans are rowdy. They're having fun. They're cheering for their side. The players, players that usually see that are very stoic and don't make you know, don't have a big fist pump or, you know, screaming at the top of their lungs, pointing at the fans. You can't hear them because it's so loud. I think it just brings out a lot of emotion. I think it brings a lot of a good out in this sport. And I think the fans really enjoy it. And I think, you know, it's a it's a huge stage in the world for golf.

VO > Congratulations. Looking forward to it.

OC> Thanks. Appreciate it.

VO > Jim Furyk has an incredible Presidents Cup resume. He's played on seven U.S. teams and has an all time record of twenty, ten and three. In his last Presidents Cup appearance as a player, Jim posted a five oh and oh record in 2011 at Royal Melbourne. Since then, Furyk has been an assistant captain twice, once in 2015 forJay Haas and another in 2017 for Steve Stricker. He also captained the 2018 U.S. Ryder Cup team in France. 1994 presidents cup team member and golf channel analyst Jim Gallagher jr with more now on furyk latest role and the international team captain Mike Weir.

OC > I think both these captains are very similar. They're both gritty, they're tough competitors. They get a lot out of their game. It's going to be fun to watch them go. I think it's going to be difficult up in Canada with Mike Weir of course leading them and knowing how much the Canadian fans love it. But Jim will he’ll lead by example, I think he's not a rah rah guy and he's not going to go out there and try to be the cheerleader he leads by example, and then I think his team will follow him as well. But it's going to be fun to see how they go. I think it's going to be very competitive when these two teams go at it.

VO > When it comes to the actual Presidents Cup competition, it's been a bit lopsided when looking at the past results. Since the Presidents Cup started in 1994, the United States has won every competition except for a loss in 1998 and a tie in 2003. However, the internationals are trending in the right direction and will look to flip the script in Canada, helmed by international captain and national hero Mike Weir. When play begins at Royal Montreal Golf Club next year.

VO > That is all ahead. But this week, we head to Alabama and the Regions Tradition. Major championship golf is here on PGA Tour champions. That's our time. I'm Vince Cellini. As always, we thank you for watching.