**court2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #1**

VO > The PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > The Big Island never disappoints, nor does the season opener in Hawaii. The 40th playing of the Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalai on stage over the weekend.

OC > Hello, everyone, and welcome to Learning Center at this beautiful backdrop of a Hualalai Golf Course. I'm Vince Cellini. A select Field Open, the 45th PGA Tour Champions season. And here with a recap, the men who call the action, Bob Papa and Lanny Wadkins.

VO > Thanks, Vince. Each and every year, the PGA Tour champion starts their season off with the Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalai and Steven Alker a runner up in each of the last two years trying to lock down and win. Starting the final round with a two-shot lead over Harrison Frazar and Steve Stricker and made a couple of birdies. And then, Lanny, this is the break of the day as he hits the cart path and the larva, but it kicks the right way.

VO > Yeah. And you get breaks when you win golf tournaments. He got a heck of a break right here coming off lava and back down to the green. He's got to have this 50-footer for Eagle, Bob.

VO > Yeah. At this point, he led by two. And then instead of making a big number at seven, he makes a very small number in Eagle three, Frazar and Stricker regarding the hole, but he still picked up a shot on them. Yeah, it was an amazing turn of events, and it bumped him up. He walks over here to the eight 204 yards, six iron down the hill. Beautiful golf swing in there, too. About six feet. Just a really nice strike right there.

VO > And he rolls this putt in for birdie.

VO > Just the right edge put. There you go. Yes, indeed. No problem.

VO > Lanny, he didn't take advantage of the easiest hole, the par 5 10th, but he did a great job on the par threes. Like a 12.

VO > Yeah. Hit a nice shot in here his 12 tough location and just buries this 15-footer No problem.

VO > Made a birdie at the par 5 14th and then at 17 the par three with a three-shot lead, he says I'm closing the door.

VO <> Yeah. I didn't take it take this flag on but he had a club he really liked. So why not in there to about four feet.

VO > And then Alker would roll in this to get to 24 under the tournament, scoring record 25 under set by Loren Roberts in 2011. But Alker matches that with one more birdie to cap things off at 18. Back to back bogey free 63. Stephen Alker picks up his eighth win in his 54th start on the PGA Tour champions. He won the season ender at the Charles Schwab Cup and wins the season opener in 2024 over Harrison Frazar. Let's hear what the champion had to say.

OC > You knew your strikes and Harrison was going to come out. The weather was good. They're going to they're going to play hard. So, yeah, I try not to get comfortable. But, you know, if you want to answer your question, maybe, you know, when you get that second win, I think that, okay, you know, I can do this and then try and keep going from there.

VO > Congratulations to Alker on Win number eight on PGA Tour champions, the Charles Schwab Cup standings mirror the leaderboard. Alker taking the early season lead. What a job by Harrison Frazar in his tournament debut. And number three, Steve Stricker has now finished in the top three in 16 of his last 21 starts on this tour.

VO > Golf professional or amateur is just one of many activities on the big island of Hawaii. It's a wonderful place to explore on land or on the water. And this was true for rookie Stewart Cink and wife Lisa. It was Cink's first time on this island coming off a top 25 at the Sony Open on Oahu the week before. It was Tour Hawaii first for Stewart Cink and compete afterwards.

OC VO > This place is spectacular. It is. It's big like they call it the big island for a reason. There's not a lot of a lot of people here and it is just really cool. It's a lot different from the other places I've been in Hawaii, which is, you know, I've been some great places here in this state, but this is definitely at the top. We just took a car and went all the way across the island about a two-and-a-half-hour drive over to the Hawaii's Volcanoes National Park and just saw some neat stuff that you don't see every day. And looking down into the crater of Kilauea. And it was it was really cool, you know, just to experience that and get to see I mean, I'm kind of a I'm fascinated by landforms and geology and stuff like that anyway. So, really cool place to be in the world.

VO > Last year, Learning Center sent Dickey Pride out on the wild surf, and he discovered quickly how challenging Hawaii's indigenous activity can be. This time we put pride in a boat for some fishing, albeit in windy conditions. Hey, don't blame us. Dicky keeps coming back for more and we are more than happy to tag along.

OC > And Kings Island and all the amusement parks to get a ride like this.

OC > Ken. Ken.

OC > Oh.

OC > Hey what is going on man?

OC > I'm doing good.

OC > What are you doing?

OC > I'm practicing. Can't you tell?

OC > No. You're looking out at the ocean. It's like you're sightseeing.

OC > Well, you got to get a little meditation, too, with the sightseeing and the relaxation of the waves.

OC > Well, for a first timer, it looks like you. You've got a plan here.

OC > Well, I got to practice for sure. This is the learning center, right?

OC > It is.

OC > Watch and learn. Let me hit a couple of shots.

OC > You’ve got it. Nice. You set this up yourself?

OC > Well, you’ve got to do everything you can to use your imagination.

OC > Look at you.

OC > One thing you got to do when you're out here on the beach.

OC > What’s that?

OC > Mind grabbing me that drink right there. You got to get hydrated.

OC > Yes, sir. Ken, I got to take my hat off to you. For guys a first timer at Hualalai, you’re a man with a plan.

OC > Well, thank you so much and honored to be here. And this drinks for us.

OC > Here's to you.

VO > Still to come on Learning Center, we learned the art of coffee farming in Kona, a huge industry here. Tour veteran Ken Tanigawa was the point man as we see what amounts to a hill of beans. Kona coffee served next.

VO > 11-time PGA Tour champions winner Scott McCarron is gearing up for another season of competition. However, during the off season, he took to the skies in a different kind of challenge a P-51 Mustang, a legendary World War Two fighter plane. Let's soar now with Scott.

VO > Whiskey Charlie turn right at Bravo back to the part of the military.

OC VO > A P-51 Mustang. You know, it s a World War Two era aircraft built in the 40’s. Really won us to war, World War two. It’s a 400-knot aircraft. It's a bubble canopy. So, you get to see everything and it's all a bubble glass cockpit canopy and you see everything. So, when you're flying the clouds, when you're upside down, you just kind of look up. You can see the ground and you're coming in out of a G, out of a loop, you pull them G’s. I mean, it's it's pretty exciting. It's just incredible. It's incredible. Airplane and and an honor to be a flight it. Got my pilot's license back in 1988 when I was a senior in college. And so, I flew out to Santa monica airport, when I was at UCLA, always loved flying, flew for a little bit after college, then kind of let it go a little bit. And it was tough to keep up when I was playing on the PGA Tour. And I got back here and again about eight years ago and flew around for a little bit for a couple of years. But my goal was when I turned 50 was to buy a plane and fly around like a malibu mirage. And I love flying anytime I'd go up, fly, I'll take the chance.

VO > Nose down just a little bit.

VO > Interesting fact about the area. Kailua-Kona is the largest settlement on the western side of the island of Hawaii. It's known for tourism and commerce and to the latter, the coffee industry. For more than 100 years, the Kunitake family has been farming coffee in Kona. And recently we took a trip there, along with Ken Tanigawa and his wife Angela, to get a closer look at how this product is made. A product that many of us can't live without.

VO OC > I've never been on a coffee plantation, so I didn't know what to expect. But just seeing all the love and the time and the effort that and hard work that would go into roasting coffee and getting to the final product, I think I could appreciate a cup of coffee a little bit more.

OC > You made it.

OC > How are you?

OC > Secret request you get a hole in one.

OC > Yeah. Okay. Good deal.

OC VO > My grandparents were the ones that were able to start the farm with third generation and then going on fourth and even fifth generation now that's farming the the fields.

OC > You want to learn anything with coffee, I am the guy.

OC > You’re are guy.

OC > In Kona.

OC > John’s the man.

OC > Yes.

VO OC > And for us, we just ended the harvest. But fortunately, we were able to find some stragglers, so we were able to do some processing today.

OC > You got to put this over your head in between. You're going to be Does it matter what hook? Oh that smells like coffee. You got to hook. Am I following you?

OC > Yes.

OC > All right, let's go. Yeah. You need a hook?

OC > We have the coffee, the red berries.

OC > So which one do you pick? The red ones or the green ones.

OC > You pick the red ones and the orange ones.

OC > And leave the green ones.

Yeah, the green ones will ripe maybe about a month from now. You can pull the branch down.

OC > Oh that's what that's for.

OC > Yeah. Pull the branch down. And then there's a cord. So you step it so the branch so you can reach it.

OC > Is that the right color?

OC > I think you should keep playing golf.

OC > Yeah.

OC > After picking the bean, of course, we have to put it through a pulpe that would separate the bean from the skin.

OC > Here we go.

OC > Dump them in.

OC > Well, I better enjoy this cup of coffee.

OC > That's what you got. Maybe two cups.

OC > Oh, I got two cups out of it. Oh, perfect.

OC > So what we'll do is we'll wash the bean.

OC > Yeah.

OC > And then it all comes out here. Okay.

OC VO > We use only the natural sunshine to dry our beans because that that gives it a special flavor, too. This is like a eight pound roaster.

OC > It's an eight-pound roaster.

OC > Yeah.

VO OC > You see the whole process from beginning to end. Taking the coffee ou know this is how they roasted it. So, pretty neat to see.

OC > Ken did perfect. He can come and help us every year once I need the help.

OC > Speaking of coffee, who better to share a cup of Joe with in World Golf Hall of Famer and Golf Channel analyst Lanny Wadkins. Lanny, we're going to talk about the 24 season, but first, 23, which was the season of Stricker, how much did he tilt the tour and where do you see this moving forward?

OC VO > Well, I think it was just an outstanding year. I'm not going to say he tilted the tour and that's going to happen again. You know, seasons like that or, you know, there's sometimes once in a lifetime, unless you're Tiger Woods, Steve Stricker is a heck of a player, but he's not Tiger Woods. He might be Tiger Woods of this tour right now, but we'll see going forward. It's a lot to recreate. And I'm pulling for Steve. He he's he's fun to watch There really no flaws or weaknesses in his game. And I think that's why he's continued to play so consistently well.

VO OC > Yeah, he stays within the Steve Stricker game, too. So. So how about some other guys to watch this year? I mean, who who do you have your eye on? And some guys that can can really make a move.

OC VO > You know I've been waiting on Ernie Els to hit a hot streak, you know, ever since he's been out here. And maybe this is Ernie's year to be Steve Stricker, if you will. And if Ernie gets the putting going with his capabilities, he could run the tables. Also, we've got to watch Stewart Cink. He just had a really nice weekend in Honolulu last week on the regular tour. I think Stewart can be a big, big factor out here, but he's got to concentrate on this tour. If he tries to play half and half, it's just not going to work. There are two different animals.

OC VO > One of the players that we talk about each and every year is the great Bernhard Langer, who will be 67 in August. And Lanny, we talked about can you go back in the golf annals, the history and and tell me who has done this in their late sixties to continue to be competitive like this the way Bernhard has?

VO OC > You know, the only person that even comes to mind for me that played that well that long is probably Sam Snead. I mean, Sam played so well into his sixties, even seventies. He was a factor on tour when I came out and he was close to 60 at that point in time. Sam was an amazing specimen. He was a physical specimen.

OC > Super flexible.

OC VO > Yes, he did stuff. He could kick an eight-foot door jam. And when and when he's in his seventies, I mean, he was he was an incredible athlete. And Langer has done that for himself. He stayed in great shape. I saw him last night. He looks as fit as ever. He's in good shape physically. He's solid mentally. If everything goes, you know, well, I don't see any reason he's not going to stay involved. I thought he was going to start tailing off a couple of years ago because I saw his swing getting a hair shorter to me. He's gotten the length back in that. That's a hard thing to do, but he has really gotten the full turn in length. He's got a little more pop in his bat and the putting still solid.

VO OC > He does a ton of work. Before we let you go, just how the tour has evolved, in your opinion, Where where is PGA Tour champions right now in those years that you've been following it?

OC > I think it's on solid footing right now. I think Miller Brady and his staff have done a wonderful job. It's moving forward. We have great tournaments. We have great sponsors. The courses continue to evolve and improve week in, week out. We've got some new sponsors that have been outstanding, you know, with some of the stuff happening on the regular PGA tour. Don't be surprised if we don't maybe pick up some other sponsors going forward. Guys who think they're spending too much out there may come over here and get the attention they deserve. You know, we give a lot of attention to the amateurs and their customers with two days of pro-am a week and then the parties, the whole thing. So, this tour does an outstanding job of taking care of their business.

OC > Well, Pitch Man to Larry is one of the voices of Golf Channel. It's great to have your voice for another season. Okay. Thank you for your time.

VO > Still to come on PGA Tour Champions Learning Center, a new year and new challenges for our players who share their goals for 2024. As always, they are their harshest critics. Stay with us.

VO > Season number 45, PGA Tour champions. And while the players events and competition grows, one thing stays the same. That is the desire to succeed. Top to bottom, players continue to push themselves into another year as so much is on the line for these men given a second chance at glory. We asked them to share their goals.

OC VO > I think my goals this year are to try to stay grounded early, try to be committed to what I do, and I would love to finish similar spot on the money list. I'd love to get in contention more, but obviously my goal is to win.

OC VO > Definitely get in contention more often than I did last year. You know, winning's first and foremost as a goal. But but focus on other things to get there. You know, just the process and and those kind of things and playing freely and enjoying trusting those the work that I'm put in.

OC VO > You know, kind of build on what I did in there towards the end of the year last year, start playing a lot better near the end of the year in the playoffs and you know, build on that. You know, a lot of my focus is on the Presidents Cup. So, I'm trying to temper my own expectations in my own game to them. And I'm quite active and quite busy with the Presidents Cup, but I still love to compete and play, so my expectations will still be high when I when I do play.

VO OC > Have fun again this year. That's number one. And then just try and give myself a chance to win as many times as I can. That's what I've been doing since, To be working and just put myself in those positions and keep trying to get just a little bit better again this year. You know, there's new guys coming on to stay strong and keep fit and keep working hard of the game.

OC VO > To have my bad weeks be what my good weeks were at the end of last year. Pretty simple. That that makes the other goals of winning multiple times chasing down a Schwab Cup you know you know consistent top ten so that much easier.

OC > My goal this year is just to focus on my game, getting it back to where I know it was my whole career and then hopefully the fighting weeks will come more often and I'll win a couple more than just one.

VO OC > Want to go out here and have fun. If I' m having fun, I'm usually going to play pretty well. So my goal is to have as much fun as I can. This year. In 2024, obviously, I want to compete again for Schwab Cup and to watch those guys in that World Cup team competition. That's a goal of mine too. I want to be a part of that this year.

OC VO > Well, Shane Bertsch is one of those stories that's not headlines, but it's very important for players like him on PGA Tour champions, and that is Shane. You had status after the TimberTech Championship in the playoffs in 23, but that wasn't good enough for you. So why did you decide to attend Q School?

OC VO > Well, mainly the main reason was that I didn't have the words fully accepted to my name at the end of the year, and I just bogeyed the last hole at TimberTech, which cost me, you know, that fully exempt status. And I felt like I could improve my position. So, I went on and I'd had success down in Arizona before and I wanted to see that full exemption, you know, right by my name. So, we got it done through the week.

VO OC > You sure did. Finishing Tee three at Q School. So you're in great position and he's talking about positions. We're in position here on the green. And one of the adjustments that you've made in your game is you're putting change that you've gone through. So, tell me about that adjustment and what you're doing now.

OC > Yeah, I just I've been in this on like method for a few years now, but last year, early in the year, I bounced back and forth and thought I could get back into a short putter because like I said, like you said, I was always a great putter or had been. But all I did basically was I was playing with the ball. He was using this putter and he's telling me how good it was balanced. And I thought, you know, I can just turn that into an arm lock. He uses a little different method. But the big thing about arm lock method is you have to get it bent correctly to where you can get into the putt really quickly and not have to, you know, make all of these contortion moves like I've had to with other ones before. So, the way I have this one set up and with the arm lock grip, the wrist lock, it goes against the arm a lot easier. And I feel like I'm basically put with a short putter. It's real easy for me to get in and then use my method, which is a left stroke. When your arm lock your left arm, you know, push and pull. So, it's just an easier way. And at the end of the year, under the pressure, when I finally pulled it out, it was making path was making some of the putts better on the shorter putts. But the biggest thing is that my speed was a lot better. You know, 40, 50 footers. We don't always hit the ball close to the hole. So, if you're over, you know, on the other side of the green, you want to leave it to that length or, you know, at least two or three feet instead of early in the year, I had a lot of five, six footers. And, you know, those end up wearing on you.

OC > So, maybe you can hit another one for us and just tell anybody out there who's going through a change that that that process what it's like, because there's got to be some uncomfortable moments in doing that, right?

OC > Yeah, there is. And I mean, for me, I've used this method for a few years, but the biggest thing is right here with this, arm lock. And people some people put with their hands more neutral or even behind the ball this method to get it on your arm, you have to have some loft on your putter. So, what's the correct amount? It could be different for anyone, you know, because we were all made a little different. People got bigger forearms, this and that. So, when I when I could just tell that it was really easy for me to get here and that's why I went with this putter, freed up my shoulders better. So, like I said, my my overall distance control is much better. And when you are making a change, you have to be willing to stick with it and you know, you got to try it under pressure. That's the biggest thing for us. We can all hit certain clubs on the range or the putting green, but when I put this in to play at the end of Raleigh the last round because I had nothing to lose, all of a sudden, I, I started to feel some good things and then carried on the rest of the year.

OC > Yeah, well, you've been playing under pressure, so should be ready to go in 24. Fully exempt. Fully ready. Thank you. Thank you very much for your time.

OC > Thanks.

VO > A solid putt is a great way to finish your hole and you finish this show. Thank you for being with us. As PGA Tour champions moves from Hawaii to next month's Chubb Classic in Naples, Florida. And we will be there to bring it to you. I’m Vince Cellini. We'll see you next time.