**2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #8**

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > PGA Tour Champions staged the second of four consecutive weeks of play in the Deep South. Familiar grounds. TPC Sugarloaf in Duluth, Georgia. A long time PGA tour stopped, but more recently. Home of the Mitsubishi Electric Classic.

OC > Hi, everyone. Welcome to Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini. And one thing about PGA Tour Champions. They are not short on storylines. Seven different events played this season. Seven different winners representing seven different countries. So, who would be lucky? Number eight in the Peach State? Our Bob, Papa and Peter Jacobsen had the call and provide a recap.

VO > Thanks, Vince. The Mitsubishi Electric Classic, the eight of 28 and the PGA Tour Champions schedule. 11th here at TPC Sugarloaf. And a wild Sunday, Stephen Ames started the day a shot behind Paul Broadhurst, but Peter Jacobsen, Steven Ames, after a birdie at one, dialed in with his third from 82 yards at the sixth.

VO > Well, the way he started on Friday, shooting a crazy 70 which included two double bogeys. He put it all together today, that eagle at six and right here at 13. The drivable par four. He hits a laser. Watch what happens here.

VO > And lands in the perfect spot. Takes the proper kick in. This green slopes so hard from front to back. And it gave it a little peek going by. And to see just how fast these greens are here at TPC Sugarloaf. But the putt you want on this hole Peter, is uphill. Stephen celebrating his 60th birthday gets that look.

VO > The key here at TPC Sugarloaf is to put the ball below the hole, which is exactly what he did. And he knocked it in for the eagle. And at that point he had a three-shot lead.

VO > Got him at 14 under par. Made birdie at 14 and then finishes in style. Little speed on this one but rolls in the birdie at 18 to shoot a final round five under par 67. Stephen Ames becomes the first three-time winner of the Mitsubishi Electric Classic, the first man to go back-to-back and the first multiple winner this year on the PGA Tour Champions, a four-shot win over Paul Broadhurst and Doug Barron, who shot a final round bogey free 69.

VO > Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday dear Stephen.

VO > Eight wins on the PGA Tour Champions. Three on this golf course. Why are you so good on this golf course?

VO OC > I think it's more because of the fact its target orientated. You know, you got to you got to shape your ball into the greens. You got to hit the drives properly. And the conditions every year you come back here we play. They're always in great condition. So, it's nice. Unlike when we played it in fast on the PGA tour it was cold and windy, and I was like, I think I'm going to come back here anymore. This time of the year. Beautiful.

VO > Well happy birthday. Congratulations. Appreciate your time.

VO > Thanks, Johnny.

VO > Off the course. The Mitsubishi Electric Classic is about giving back. And recently the bond between the event players and the special needs schools of Gwinnett grew even stronger. Last year, students sent handwritten letters to every player in competition. This year Dickey pride and Rob Labritz spent some time midweek making pizzas with students. Sometimes you putt for dough, sometimes you bake it.

VO OC > Well, we went and made some pizza this morning with a special needs schools of Gwinnett and yeah, it was awesome. We had a lot of fun. These kids, I mean, they come in with such a great attitude. It's it's really it really changes your perspective. It also changes your attitude. You know, you make a pizza like let's get excited. So, it was a lot of fun.

OC > This is unbelievable. Look eyebrow, smile, no hair. It’s perfect.

OC VO > Cooking the pizzas inside was just awesome because any time you can possibly affect other humans and, you know, bring some some smiles to people's faces, it's all worth it. It was really cool. just to to to do that.

VO OC > It was fun, to bring smile to those kids faces in there, you know, making pizza is my first time making a pizza. So, it was really cool. And, you know, see how that process goes. And my pizza didn't turn out that well. It's my first time doing it, but hopefully the next time I'll get a chance to do it again and it will a lot better.

VO OC > I guess. It tasted good. O'Neill ate my whole pizza. It was unbelievable. This guy I like tried to get a bite. He, like, slap my hand, but, yeah, it was pretty good.

OC > Yeah. This is a WD.

VO > From Atlanta, Georgia. Stewart Cink.

VO > It's good to see you out here. What's it, what's it like to have a home game, in the area as the tournament host?

OC VO > It's a rare thing in golf. You know, we travel all over the place. And just so rare that we get to play in our home community. And this is like the roots in Atlanta for me. I used to live here in this neighborhood for over 20 years. And so, we got a lot of relationships and know the course pretty well. It's just great to be back playing here.

VO > You know, it's interesting. I look at you and I see you kind of, I don't want to say torn between two tours, but you're still kind of on both of those tours. Is that a good thing? Is it beneficial. Can it be confusing. Is it is it is it helpful?

VO OC > No, it's I don't I don't like the idea of it being me being torn between two because that indicates a struggle. It's it's not a struggle. It's, I feel like it's somewhat more of, like a, a blessing and an opportunity to be able to have the choice to do either one. And I enjoy playing PGA Tour Champions events. I can't get PGA tour golf out of my system just yet, and I have good friends and, good memories on both places. And so, it's just really a good spot to be in as a 50-year-old professional golfer, to be able to have both.

VO > You've been so successful on PGA Tour Champions, as expected. how much, enjoyment do you get out of that? Just kind of, sort of really always being in the mix?

VO OC > Well, I mean, you know, you don't really want to jinx yourself or anything, but it's just, it's a competitive environment out here, and I'm a competitive person, and, and I've worked really hard in golf for a long time, like all these players. And it's just, it's a thrill to be able to get back in into the mix. And whether it's PGA Tour Champions or regular PGA tour or whatever, it doesn't matter. It feels the same way. And that's what we live for. That's what we've played all these years for, and we work so hard for.

VO > When learning center returns, a pair of Atlanta Falcons players joining the golf scene at TPC Sugarloaf, Kyle Pitts and Younghoe Koo share quality course time with Billy Andrade and Koi, plus a sit down with fast riser Thomas Bjorn bursting onto the scene and playing his way to a new chapter in his stellar career.

VO > Coming off a seven and ten season that led to the dismissal of their head coach, the Atlanta Falcons turned NFL draft night into, well, more head scratching signing quarterback Kirk Cousins in the off season to a $180 million deal, and then using the eighth pick overall to select a quarterback, Michael Penix Jr, out of Washington. Meanwhile, two current Falcons focused on another sport.

VO OC > One thing about fans in the state of Georgia they love their football, college and pro, and they also love their golf. So why not combine the two? Well, a pair of Atlanta Falcons did just that. Kicker Younghoe Koo, a son of the South South Korea that is, shared some tips with fellow South Korean K.J. Choi. Meanwhile, tight end Kyle Pitts met up with super fan Billy Andrade and they compared notes as well. As expected, high jinks ensued.

OC > So good.

OC > Oh, I got something for you.

OC > Oh. Yeah. Wow.

OC > So, same thing with the club face.

OC > Okay.

OC > So, club faces hits the foot.

OC > Wow.

OC > Leg of a shaft.

OC > Okay, shaft.

OC > You got it. Okay, you can move it.

OC > You can move.

OC > Same thing, same thing. You want to hit the ball right here? like that?

OC > Okay.

OC > Yeah, it’s a high is a low ball lower?

OC > You want to hit the ball right here.

OC > Wow.

OC > So it goes. so, it's about halfway between middle right here. and then you want to hit the ball up that way.

OC > Can I try it?

OC > Oh.

OC > So normally watching TV…

OC > So yeah.

OC > There you go.

OC > Yeah.

OC > Yeah. All right.

OC > That's it.

OC > And then.

OC > It’s down the middle, down down the middle.

OC > Oh, chip shot next. It’s not easy.

OC > Was that easy or hard?

OC > No, no.

OC > Nice. Good ball. That's a hell of a shot right out of the car.

OC > Will we be able to find it?

OC > My guys got it.

OC > So my question to you is you came from Philadelphia?

OC > Right.

OC > You had to be a Philly Philadelphia Eagle fan.

OC > Yeah.

OC > And you go to Florida to play football.

OC > Yeah.

OC > Tell me about that transition from the north and going to the South.

OC > I mean, the main thing was look at this heat.

OC > Right.

OC > You know, I hated the cold.

OC > Okay.

OC > Big decision was when we got to January, I didn't want to have a down jacket. I wanted to still wear slides.

OC > Right.

OC > So going to Florida, I knew in January it may be like a two-week cold front. Yeah. But for the most part knows heat. And I just knew the SEC was the highest-level ball in college.

OC > Right.

OC > So you know once I got the chance, I want to go too far but not far enough. And in the heat. So that was kind of checked all my boxes.

OC > Nice.

OC > He was up 20 and he's up 20, 340.

OC > 340.

OC > I mean that is within 10.

OC > I mean I was smoke, smoked, smoked.

OC > This year you guys the pressure is going to be on you guys especially playing in the South. What are your thoughts going in this year?

OC > Just you know with with us having a new regime new head spirit quarterback.

OC > Is it a whole new offense to?

OC > Yes, it's a whole new offense a whole new head coach. it's a new year. So, it's new us is starting with a new identity. You know, everybody in the league is zero zero. So, we just got to go out and win our games one by one.

OC > Okay. All right. Ready? Go.

OC > Uh, oh.

OC > What we got?

A. Oh.

OC > There it is. Oh. That hurt. Oh, man. How old are you?

OC > 23.

OC > 23.

OC > Yes, sir.

OC > Okay, what do you think? And how many years you want to do this? Until you play out here on the Champions Tour with us.

OC > No, I don't I don't know. Y'all are the older tour players, so it's not like you just came from another sport. Just coincidentally.

OC > Right.

OC > There are many football players who can just make that quick transition. No getting into programs. That sounds a little more feasible, but just hopping straight into the champions. Not that that'll take me. That takes some time. That’ll take some time.

OC > All right.

VO > 2024 has been a fast rise on PGA Tour Champions for Thomas Bjorn of Denmark. The 53-year-old turned invites in Morocco and Dallas into top five finishes, getting him into the Mitsubishi Electric Classic, and he'll be in Houston later this week as well for the Insperity Invitational, the classy Dane and Ryder Cup mainstay shared with us his thoughts on being in the over 50 mix.

OC > Thomas Bjorn has long been a world class player and has a great association with the Ryder Cup as a player and as winning captain in 2018 and will be back as a vice captain as Europe defense in 2025 in New York at Bethpage Black, which you should be very calm and serene, I would think. Yes.

OC > I agree quite well away I think what's coming our way. But that's Yeah, that's that's next year.

OC > Yeah. That's, that's sort of part of the atmosphere, I would guess. And it shows the emotion of both sides and how important it still remains for everyone.

OC VO > Yeah, absolutely. And I think, you know, in general, when you look at Ryder Cups over the years, it's on both sides of the Atlantic, it it's, you know, it dances on that line and, and that's why it should be, it should be dancing on that line. And obviously that sometimes leads that fight to go too far. And and you know what I think. But I think the 12 players on each side, kind of have a good perspective on that. And they try and keep it in the right place. And I actually think the players tend to come together that, just try and keep it in the right atmosphere and, you know, but yeah, you needed dancing on that line.

OC > How much is it meant to you over the years, especially as a Dane and being there to represent Denmark?

OC VO > Yeah. It was, you know, I was one of those guys that, I mean, I was 18 months on tour and and I played in my first Ryder Cup in 97. And so, I became very, very big part of my life. I was fortunate to play with that generation of European players that, that dominated world golf in the 80s and early 90s. And, and to be part of that group of us was very cool. And it was, you know, but it it meant that the Ryder Cup became such a big part of your life. And, and I'm glad that I've been able to carry that through. I mean, it's, Yeah, it's 1997 seems to be a long time ago, but, yeah, we're still we're still about it.

OC > Well, it's wonderful to have you out here. LPGA tour champions becomes a big part of your life as well. And you're on your way with a second in Morocco. Which which had to feel really good. How special was that?

OC > Yeah, it was, it was cool. You know, I think one of the things that, you know, I played a lot of main tour golf, in my early 50s and, and you kind of feel like the, you know, the grandfather of the tour and you're playing with all these young guys and, and all of a sudden you you change the scene to play with guys that you play golf with all your life. And I was it was really nice. It was nice to to see all those guys again. It was nice to play golf with them and it was nice to feel competitive again. So it, yeah, it takes a lot of good things. takes a lot of good boxes for you when you get in that environment. And hopefully we can carry it through. It's nice to come over here and start playing a bit of golf again. It's been, it's been a while playing once or twice, but now just get a little bit of a stint by playing a few events.

OC > But this is this is a destination for you, is it not, this tour. And what are your plans to get here?

OC > Yes. It's, it's a destination. I mean, I want to play. I want to play with these guys because I played with them for almost 30 years. And, you know, they they are the ones that I want to play against and want to be part of, have that tour and that environment to be part of my life. But, you know, I got a lot of other things going on and, you know, it's got to kind of mix it with family and mix it with everything. But the moment we we're giving it a go and see if we can, we can get ourselves a card and give it a go on this tour.

OC VO > I was going to say, you saw what Ricardo did and everything changed in an instant. So, if you go out there and you do control your own destiny to a certain extent.

OC VO > Oh, definitely. And that that's, you know, that's the main goal is to go and play good golf and then everything else takes care of itself.

OC > You know, the tour, PGA Tour Champions is really a second chance, a second opportunity for so many players. And and if you don't mind, I know you have gone through some personal things as well that you dealt with. and that's a second opportunity. So how refreshing or how maybe rewarding is it for you to be out here and go through maybe some of the trials and tribulations that you've had?

OC > Yeah, I think, you know, when you look at sport in general, like, you know, most professional sports, you know, you come to a, a natural halt in, in your sport and, and, but in golf it kind of, you know, all of a sudden you're kind of come to a stop that you can't compete with, on the main tour. But then there's, there's another life there that, that comes to you when you're 50 and, and I think that's, I think that's very much what golf is all about. And it sends a great signal about the game that it is a game for life. It's a game that you can carry through, through the years. And, and I think these guys out here shows that, you know, it's a, it's a great tool to be on. And, you know, that dedication to golf and and the time and effort they put into it is still 100%. And that shows what this game is, is mostly about. And they're still competitive and they still want a, you know, it's a very friendly tour. But Friday morning, you know, when when the game goes, it's still very competitive and its still people want to get out there and win. But it is a very friendly tour. But I think that's, you know, that's all the great things about this tour. But the main thing for me, if you look at it from the outside, is that it, it really portrays the game of golf very, very well that it is a game for life.

OC > And thank you. I appreciate it.

VO > Next up is the In Spirit Invitational and news on a pair of multiple winners there. Defending champion Steven Alker and Bernhard Langer who is making a remarkable return to action. Stay with us.

VO > This week is the Insperity Invitational at the Woodlands Country Club near Houston, Texas. Past winners of this wonderful event include Fred Couples, John Daly, Jay Haas and 2018 champion and four-time winner Bernhard Langer.

VO > As it turns out, the Insperity Invitational will also be Bernie's comeback event. Suffering a torn left Achilles tendon in February, Langer has worked feverishly to rehab and will be back in competition at The Woodlands. I reached out to the 66-year-old legend, who wrote back in part, quote, I am very excited to be back playing in the Insperity Invitational and seeing my friends and colleagues, especially being in and spirit ambassador and four-time champion of the tournament. Can't wait to see everyone next week at The Woodlands in Houston. Langer added why he thinks this is the right time to come back and if he can still win this season.

VO OC > One of the physical therapists on the Champions Tour, Paul Shern, he says nobody's ever come back too late. And that made me think, you know, a lot of people come back too quickly and get hurt again. But I wanted to make sure I followed the protocol of what my surgeon and my PT say, and and do my PT, which is very important to understand, to recover 100% and recover quickly as well. And I think if I get back to be my best again, even at my age, I still think I'm competitive. and I'm still think I can win on certain golf courses.

VO > Speaking of Insperity Invitational champions, a year ago, Steven Alker made it back-to-back wins there while playing with a heavy heart. Alker lost his longtime caddie and friend Sam Workman to cancer just months before competition, surrounded by workman's friends and family in the Houston area and with son Ben on the bag, Alker crafted a fitting tribute and recalls that special week.

VO OC > Well, you know, I'm trying not to think about it too much. I mean, you know, there's always that feel like you've put a little bit of added pressure on just trying to defend. my attitude just been not, not defend, but just try and win another tournament. And, you know, I like the place. Good memories. Feels good. Fits my eye, get the putter going that way you can never know.

VO > You know, it's interesting. I always see you and I think about your journey as you've kind of come on to the tour. Great story. Then all of a sudden of the wins, Charles Schwab Cup champion, I'm sure it was fun to do the climb. What is it like to be the hunted now when you when you're actually out in front?

VO OC > Yeah, I don't know. I kind of don't feel like that. I just kind of feel like, it's just great to be out here in this environment, playing with these guys and just trying to give myself a chance to win a golf tournament. That's that's the biggest thing. So, you know, I don't really think about it, to be honest. You know, I just go and play my golf and enjoy where I'm at and where I'm at right now in my, my phase of my career.

VO > Was there some sort of a just an evaluation of yourself that maybe happened with all the success that's happened on PGA tour champ? Do you see yourself differently?

VO OC > Yeah, a little little shift, you know. yeah. It was just a second chance. Second opportunity. And that's that's how I see it. you know, I didn't have a good PGA tour career and played all over the place. Australasia and Asia and and a bit of a journeyman. So to come here and just have this little bit of success and feel like it was another chance, let's, let's make the most of it and, and you know, I've done a lot to prepare, you know, body and and the, you know, the caddie and the team and the family and, and just everything, you know, it's been a whole combination of everything, so I can't there's no secret sauce. It's just, you know, it's just a combination of everything.

VO > Darren Clarke returned to competition last week in the Mitsubishi Electric Classic. Prior to that, he was enjoying his time off on the water. More specifically the Gulf of Mexico. Clarke went tarpon fishing near Bradenton, Florida, sharing with us the tale of the fish that didn't get away.

OC > Cheers and big tarpon on fly is my one of my big passions outside of outside of trying to practice and figure this game out. So, I was lucky enough on a Monday to get a big girl, 150-pound, female tarpon great fish, great fight, looked after the fish, released her that grow a little bit bigger and be there for the next guy.

VO > And now it's time to let you off the hook. Another learning center in the bag. I'm Vince Cellini. We thank you for watching. And we'll see you next week from Houston and the Insperity Invitational.