**2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #13**

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > For the third consecutive week, PGA Tour Champion sets up in America's heartland. Madison, Wisconsin for the eighth edition of the American Family Insurance Championship.

OC > Hi, everyone. Welcome to Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini, and whether it's a World Golf Hall of Fame member or a player trying to reset his career on this tour, 2024 has been incredibly unpredictable in the win column, another week, another opportunity. Our Bob Papa, who called the action, offers this recap.

VO > Thanks, Vince. The eighth edition of the American Family Insurance Championship. Madison, Wisconsin Steve Stricker, the host of this event and what a fun final round. Ernie Els and Steve Stricker started the final round and a share of the lead at nine under par. Els play the opening 9 in 37 one over and Steve Stricker opened up a four-shot lead, Peter with that birdie at the 11th.

VO > Yeah tough conditions. The wind was gusting over 30. And Ernie Els played a beautiful shot here at the par three 12th. And he needed that. But he was four behind Steve Stricker at that point.

VO > Yeah. Then Els birdied 13. Stricker missed the green right at 14 and then missed this par putt. And now he had an opportunity for a two-shot swing because Els had this putt for birdie at 14. And he pours it in.

VO > Ernie turned it around with the putter. He missed everything the front nine. And he seemed to make everything thing coming home.

VO > Now they both made birdies at 16. This was Stricker’s putt for birdie at 18, the final hole of regulation. And that raced out about five feet long. And Els had this putt for birdie to win for the second consecutive week. But it came up a little bit short. Ernie would tap in for his par and they'd go to a playoff. Stricker had a difficult par saving putt and then after Earl Els missed his birdie putt top ten for par. The inexplicable Steve Stricker pushed the putt. And just like that Ernie Els is your winner.

VO > So, Ernie Els wins in back-To-back weeks. Picks up his fifth win on the PGA Tour Champions as he defeats the hometown hero, Steve Stricker. Let's hear from the winner and Hall of Famer.

OC VO > Yeah. I didn't make anything. You know I've been so defensive on the greens. You know, you see how quick they are, windy, you know, I'm six foot four. You know I'm getting blown all over. So yeah. What can I say. I'm just shocked right now. You know, I really feel for Steve. You know what a great guy. You know you got to play proper golf and you got to make some putts, you know, end of the day. And I, I feel a lot better with my putting, you know, playing with Steve Stricker. You feel like you don't putt very well, but I know I'm putting well, I'm, you know, striking it good. So, you know, I'm just I'm just hanging in there, you know, and trying to get my chances when I come.

VO > The Big Easy second straight victory and fifth career on PGA Tour Champions has him jumping to third in the Charles Schwab Cup standings. A T4 in Madison means Steven Ames is the new overall leader, replacing Steven Alker. Stricker is now fourth. Paul Broadhurst slips to fifth. Stricker by the way, with six victories a year ago, is still searching for his first in 2024.

VO > The American Family Insurance Championship will move to a new venue next year, TPC Wisconsin. The course was recently renovated over 600 trees, removed its marshlands and has water running throughout the property, so it will be a challenge and accuracy will be key. Steve Stricker was part of the redesign, his first along with his brother-in-law Mario, Tiziani and Mario's father Dennis. Steve joined wife Nikki and their daughters to discuss the closeness, of course, and family.

OC VO > When we talk about this course, I can see my father in law's eyes light up, you know? I mean, he's super proud of it for me to be a part of it, to help design it, is very special. Super proud of my dad for taking it on, having that vision, and, you know, Steve stepping in, giving him a chance to, you know, do something I know he's wanted to do for a long time as well.

OC VO > We're so proud of it. And, like my my grandpa put in so much work. My dad and my Uncle Mario put in so much work, and it's such a beautiful course. It was before, and I think we just shaped it into something even more beautiful, and it deserves to be shown.

OC VO > It's so special, and the fact that we get to share it with literally the world is, is so cool. It holds a very special place on our heart.

VO > We also had a Jason Gore sighting in Madison. Ordinarily, Gore works in player relations for the PGA tour. Here. He was a player. Gore’s a former tour winner turned 50 last month and received a sponsor's exemption to the Am Fam. It was a whirlwind week, to say the least. Starting the Monday before the event when he accepted the invite to make his tour debut.

C VO > This is what I love to do. I was told a bunch of people this week like I'm just a golf sicko. Like, I just, I love it. I think about it constantly and I think about how to get better, and I think about competing. But, you know, going out and watching these kids and they're just so good and how hard they work. And I'm like, yeah, I'm good. But, coming out here and seeing some smiling faces, some golf carts, lasers. I mean, this is I told Jay Monahan last night, I'm like, I'm living the dream right now. This is great. But it's just nice to be out and and play golf for that. That matters. And and I'm excited.

VO > And it's interesting that, two golf souls, you and, Jay Green have come together, and he is going to be on your bag and formally on the bag of Grayson Murray, who unfortunately we lost as he took his life recently. But this this might be just the right kind of medicine for both of you. Maybe. Right?

VO OC > Yeah. I mean, I'm going to, you know, play for Grayson. Grayson and I weren’t super tight, but I knew him enough to give him a fist pump and say, what's up, G? And, but, you know, we were at his services Monday and Tuesday and grand. He was there, and I got the call. Jay Green was there on that call Monday. And when Nate said, you know, yeah, nine minutes to give me an answer. I called my wife. And then the first thing I said, she's like, who's going to caddie for him? I'm like, I know a guy. So, I texted him and I said, how much close do you have? Because I know he had like a tiny bag, but he's ten. His clothes don't take up as much as in his mind you. But and he goes, I got three outfits. I said, do you want a caddy? It's Champions Tour event this week. He goes for who? And I'm like, for me, man. Like, I hope that doesn't change your answer, but, but, no, he's just. Do you said like that would be perfect. So, it's going to be great. We're going to keep like, some perspective and and enjoy each other's time. And he's a great kid. And it's just, we're both going to feed off each other a little bit.

VO > We're glad to have you. So great to see you out here.

OC > Good to see you, my friend. Good to see.

VO > The news is not so uplifting for Madison native, and two time Am Fam winner Jerry Kelly. What began as wrist pain a year ago has progressed to a diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis, causing severe pain in his joints and even doing simple tasks, let alone high-level golf. Tests also revealed Lyme disease, which can also inflame joints. Kelly discussed his situation and current method of treatment.

OC > The fatigue and the pain got a little bit more unbearable than normal. I couldn't open and close my hands. my feet were cramping up, got to my knees and went back like it normally does. And I went in and, you know, I, I finally went to the natural path and, and went through got a positive Lyme diagnosis. But they looked at the numbers and they were like, that's your rheumatoid arthritis numbers are off the charts. If it's over 20, it's bad. I was like 195. So, I went to Mayo and got with a rheumatologist, and you know, they put me on a, you know, it's a chemo medication, methotrexate, smaller dose than most people take chemo. But, you know, that's it's been seven and a half weeks dry and seven and a half weeks on this drug because we don't want any alcohol to kind of get in between. So, we know what's going on. it's it's interesting. I haven't felt a whole lot better yet. we're going to tweak the medication, but, you know, we go up with that to make me feel less pain. The next thing you know, I'm more tired. So, they're both gonna eat me from the inside. But they they've gotten to my stomach, my esophagus, my lungs. got it before it got to the heart, which was a key. But, yeah, it's it's been that kind of a struggle this year.

VO > When Learning Center returns, Patty heads to the World Golf Hall of Fame. We'll hear from Padraig Harrington on what the honor means to him. And his peers provide some perspective on him as well. Celebrating Harrington's amazing career.

VO > There was a time when Padraig Harrington's future appeared to be in accounting. Now he is accounted for as a member of the World Golf Hall of Fame. The three-time major champion on the PGA tour is a worldwide star. Patty continues to teach us all, not only on the golf course but as an exemplary person. The Irishman had his moment.

OC VO > It's very special. It's it. There's a lot of satisfaction. It's validation for your career. I wouldn't have grown up with the Hall of Fame in my mind, and it's just not really a thing in Ireland for sure. But once you start, you know, especially when you start playing in the U.S., you hear about Hall of Fame players. He's a Hall of Fame player. As you start playing better, you kind of go, I want to be one of those guys. I want to be there. And they're often when you win during your career, you're busy. You think it's going to be winning all the time. And you, you kind of you get accolades, but you don't really enjoy them at the time. You kind of pass over them because you’re doing other things. So, you know, something like getting in the Hall of Fame is time to reflect. It gives you time to step back and say, you know what? You did okay.

VO > Padraig Harrington has won The Open Championship in 2007.

VO OC > I think I'll be remembered for being a competitor. Somebody who could get it done. Somebody good under pressure. Somebody who like that, like the battle, like to get, you know, like the fight, which I suppose that's kind of how I would set my style out there. Yeah. I love the rules, the capital of the golf, but I don't think you're going to get remembered for that. You don't get in the Hall of Fame for those things. You get in the Hall of Fame for winning tournaments.

VO > Oh, he's done it.

VO > What a four.

VO > Padraig Harrington.

VO OC > Oh, I far exceeded everything I could have ever wish for my career. So, I'm exceptionally proud. I look back on what I done, things. Anything different? Yeah, there's plenty of things I did on different, but I have zero regrets about everything I did, though. That's what made me all the different things, all the different quirks that are in me. That's what made me win three majors. I was somebody who got it done rather than, you know, I like to be critical sometimes of people who looked good and don't perform. I was definitely one who was all about the results over everything else.

VO > Every member of the World Golf Hall of Fame is asked to donate some items to the hall. Harrington has offered up the bags and clubs from his 2008 major championship victories. Patty’s peers offered up flowers praising his career, those who know him best as a competitor and ambassador of the game. If grinding could be made glamorous, it would be Padraig Harrington.

OC > Well, Padraig Harrington man, what a what a great player he's become.

OC > Yeah, Padraig, I mean that's a no brainer for him to go into the, the golf hall of Fame.

OC > Well obviously it's a first of all, it's a very well-deserved honor. he's come a long, long way.

OC VO > Well, Padraig is, very deserving of the Hall of Fame. He's an outstanding, golfer, has been for many, many years now.

VO > And Irish eyes are smiling again at the Open Championship, back-to-back.

VO OC > You know, the first time I really started playing with Padraig was in 97, and I remember playing with him at the Open Championship at Troon and that's when I really saw this guy can really play, you know, his mechanics were good. It just went from there, you know, ten years later he won those those three majors and he's won golf tournaments all around the world.

VO OC > He's really revolutionized his game. They talk about guys changing their swing over the years. Nobody has changed their swing as radically as Padraig has had, with great success on the back of it. So, it's very, very thoroughly, well deserved.

VO > First of all, he's he's a great guy. I've enjoyed spending my time with him over the years, and he's been a, a big name in the golf, world for a long, long time. And there's really no one more deserving for Padraig, to go into the Hall of Fame.

VO OC > He's a three-time major winner. He's done just about everything in the game of golf, and he's involved himself. He's a person that always wants to learn, very interested in figuring out what makes this happen. And, you know, especially with his links as well, you know, how hardly anybody has gained that much length in his 50s or late 40s, as he has. It's generally for the better of him. Makes him better. But he's also a wonderful person, great fun to be around and, very proud of him.

VO > We captained against each other at Whistling Straits and, him and his wife were wonderful people. And just, he's a true gentleman and puts a smile on your face when you go up and start talking. Padraig.

OC VO > Yeah, Padraig has been a great ambassador for the game for a long time. You know, Ryder Cups, three majors. you know, he's he's an unbelievable player, hard work at the game. And it's great to have him as a as a member of the World Cup Hall of Fame.

VO > Still to come, two more Hall of Fame members join us to reflect on their U.S. open anniversaries. South African style Retief Goosen, some 20 years ago and Ernie Els three decades down the road.

VO > June of 1994 24-year-old Ernie Els rises to the occasion to capture the first of his four major championships the 94th U.S. open, outlasting Colin Montgomerie and Loren Roberts in a play off 18 holes. Monday was not enough. Young Ernie pushed it to the second hole of sudden death to outlast Roberts and hoist the trophy at Oakmont. The Big Easy looks back at that breakthrough win.

OC VO > 30 years. Oakmont was a very different golf course. Trees with this big, tree lined most of the fairways. Very different now. But 30 years ago. Yeah. Unbelievable to shoot three over in the playoff. It was a miracle anything could have happened. So, just through grit and determination and just staying in the in the tournament somehow. Yeah. You know shooting 74 in the playoff and then winning in a sudden death. Arnold Palmer retiring from U.S. pen play in Pittsburgh, his hometown. Remember seeing Nicklaus play well. Hale Irwin playing well. All my Euros playing great. And somehow, I prevailed after 92 holes. You know, I did have some wins. You know, I won some in South Africa, won in Japan and Europe. But you know, to win out here and win a major at 24, that was that was a lot of pressure off. Ten-year exemption. Imagine that ten-year exemption. So, you can plan your stuff all the way through your prime almost which I did. So biggest win of my life, no question. Not even close.

OC > Two decades ago, Retief Goosen put together a high wire act at Shinnecock Hills that was absolutely epic in winning his second U.S. Open. And we will get to that. But first of all, Retief, 20 years ago, what do you remember about that version of Retief Goosen, that two-time U.S. open winner?

OC VO > I was quite mentally strong that week. you know, a U.S. pen really takes it out of you mentally wise, the golf course, every shot you can hit, so many good shots at end ups pretty bad. And, for me that week, it was, a great putting display. Obviously, you always can do quite well, too, if you want to win a tournament. So, I felt very comfortable when I got there in the beginning of the week.

VO > Did you believe as a young player that the U.S. Open would be your avenue to a major championship?

VO OC > Not really. I always thought the British Open is the one I was going to win first. you know, starting my career in Europe, playing on a European tour, British Open. I've been in the top ten quite a few times over the years, and I always felt like it probably suits my game a little better now, but, and I love the Augusta obviously too. PGA is probably the one I've never really done too great in, but now I'll take any major one, that's for sure.

OC > Well, 2004 on that Sunday and the final round was just an absolutely unbelievable set of circumstances in terms of conditions on that day, par 70, you shoot 71. The field scoring average on Sunday was 78.7.

OC > Yeah.

OC > Almost 79. So, what do you recall about just the conditions of that day and grinding through it?

OC > Yeah, I mean the golf course changed when I, when I got there early in the week, I was beautiful. I love the golf course; I love the feel of it. And and then we woke up Saturday night and the golf courses disappeared. It was brown rock art and that, it was, amazing. I, I changed the course in two days, and then Sunday was no different. Yeah. The wind, the wind blew pretty strong. And, you know, we they already had issues on number seven with the ball struggling to stay on the green. I just hit on that seventh hole. I hit four perfect shots all week. A high cut up against the wind, and, managed to hold that green every, every day.

OC > It got to the point not to interrupt you, but they had to actually watered that green mid-round. So, by the time you got there, it hit the watering had taken place. Yes?

OC > Correct. Yeah. Luckily, luckily.

VO > Which caused quite a stir among the field.

OC > Yeah. It, it you know, that golf course, you know, even the last time when Brooks won that it was also issues were on the greens. you know, it's the thing about a U.S. open, I trying to push the limits of what can be done in golf. And, and then sometimes some holes could get a little stupid in a way. But I made four pars on that hole. I'll take it any day.

OC > Absolutely. And during that week, of course, there's a huge pro Phil Mickelson contingent as well with the two of you or. So, do you actually do you acknowledge or hear that or are you still locked into your game?

VO > No. I was pretty focused. New York crowd where Phil Mickelson is, is going to be loud. And I, I, I told myself, you know, it's going to be loud. Just block out what's going on. And my focusing was so good a couple of times my caddie said, you hear what that guy just said to you? And I'm like, know what? You know, I didn't hear. I was just so in the zone and not trying to get caught up in things that, goes on outside the ropes.

OC > You mentioned your putting, which was absolutely brilliant. You got 11 one putts in that final round; 31 one putts for the event. Why were you so locked in especially on those greens? And what do you recall about your performance putting wise that week?

OC > I always seem to like fast greens apart. Well at Augusta too you know, too quick and aggressive. Better. I seem to feel it. I don't like hitting the pad. I like to just stroke it. When the greens are quick, I seem to roll it better and keep it on line better. But, yeah, the greens…I still three putted the 10th hole that day. Yeah, although I was putting from off the green at the back, but I three putted the 10th hole. But, yeah, it was a few nervy ones and obviously the one on 17 was the key one. I mean, Phil Mickelson pretty much at that same putt for par and he three putted from there and I made mine. That was the turn.

OC > Would you say more impressive. You mentioned that. More impressive the up and down at 13 or your birdie at 16 that you made.

OC VO > Wow the up and down a third. Amazing. If that is a plus on on on 16. But yeah, I mean the up and down on 17 to have a two-shot lead going down the last is huge.

VO > Would you say that the U.S. Open still checks all those boxes as the most the biggest challenge overall in golf from the major championships?

VO OC > Definitely, I mean they they try to get an even par when he scores. I think the days of over par winning a U.S. Open is gone. Guys are just too good now and and, they're hitting in a mile and the guys are athletes, you know, it's, it's, you know, the caddies work out, you know? So, it's it's amazing. the game has become such an athletic sport.

OC > Do you still enjoy final question. You still enjoy talking about oh four and the U.S. Open?

OC > I do I don't like talking about 05. But 04 I’ll talk about any day.

OC > Thank you for spending time with us.

OC > Thanks.

OC > Appreciate it Retief.

VO > And that is our time standing by for more major championship heroics and history. I'm Vince Cellini, as always. We thank you for watching Learning Center.