2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #20

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > Late August and a hint of autumn in the air. In the great state of Michigan. And familiar territory for fans of professional golf. Grand Blanc Township, home of Warwick Hills Golf and Country Club. Since 2018, host venue for the Ally Challenge.

OC > Hi everyone and welcome to PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Chiellini, the Ally Challenge, one of six events remaining on the regular season schedule before the Charles Schwab Cup playoffs. And this anything could happen. Anyone can win. Stretch drive continued with more. The man who called the action Bob Papa, offering a recap.

VO > Thank you Vince. Warwick Hills Golf and Country Club storied venue hosting the seventh edition of the Ally Challenge. Stewart Cink, who blew a lead earlier this year at the Cologuard Classic in the final round, started this final round with a three-shot lead after four straight pars rolls in this long putt for birdie at the fifth and this would get Singh to 12 under par and a two shot lead over K.J. Choi, who got off to a fast start. Birdie at the seventh, got him to 13 under. Missed the fairway at nine from the 18th. Fairway at 125 yards in and he sticks the landing, setting up another birdie opportunity. And Cink would roll this in the shoot a clean three under par 33. This would get to 14 under an open up three shot lead over K.J. Choi. Choi made birdies at ten to get to within two, but Cink responds at the 11th. A towering shot in setting up another birdie opportunity. And he'd roll this in, and this would get Stewart Cink to 15 under par and open up a three-shot lead over K.J. Choi. Choi would birdie the 12th to get the 13 under par. And then Stewart Cink responds at the par five 13th, rolling in this pot for birdie and opening up a three-shot lead again. And that would get him a 16 under. He had a birdie at the 16th to get to 17 under. Missed the fairway again. Hit a beautiful pitch shot to here and rolls it in to post 17 under par. Stewart Cink plays the final 36 holes bogey free and shoots 12 under on Saturday and Sunday to post a four-shot win over K.J. Choi, earning his first win on the PGA Tour Champions. Let's hear from our winner.

OC VO > I think it went great. You know, I'm not going to lie. Definitely had the memories from Tucson earlier this year. I think any human being would. And, but I was really proud of myself the way I stayed in the present. And I stuck to my game plan. This course is, you know, it can be had, but you need to be in play. And that's a key on this golf course. And I did a really great job of that. And that's not really a part of my game that's always been there for me. You know I've I'm on I'm all over the place that time. So, it was awesome today. Hit it really good. And, you know, I made the round fairly simple.

OC > Yeah. You drove the ball great. I think, you know, being a great attribute of yours, you took advantage of that part of your game.

OC > Yeah. It's nice to be one of the younger players for a change and be able to, you know, use some power, and still can hit it pretty far. And the golf course was giving up some role. So, if you kept it in between the rough lines, you can get a lot of distance out there. And it helps on some of these longer, but also some of the shorter holes because you can attack and get it up there near the green and, I just I have a good time playing in this part of the country. And Warwick Hills brings back good memories from a long time ago.

VO > Yeah. Your first one of the PGA Tour Champions. Congratulations, by the way. And you've got an Open Championship. Seven other PGA tour wins. How significant is this win for you? VO VO > Well it feels like a new hurdle to get over. You know I mean it's a new chapter in my competitive life. And I would probably tell you that I thought I might have won before. Now, you know, this is about my 10th event, and I hadn't got one yet, so it feels good to get number one. And I'm happy to do it right here at the Ally Championship. And hopefully there's more to come.

VO > So, does this change your your fall schedule at all?

VO > No, I had already decided to change my fall schedule and add a lot more PGA Tour Champions events. This only confirms the decision was the right one, and I'm looking forward to being out here. I know the players. I don't know many of the venues as part of one of the reasons I want to be out here more is I want to, you know, see some different places, but I feel like it's time to move on over. And, you know, this is it's a lot of fun to come up here and, you know, walk up the last hole with a four-shot lead.

VO > Congratulations to Stewart Cink becoming the third first time winner this season on PGA Tour Champions. Charles Schwab. Cup standings now. Cink cracking the top 20 and the race at the top is tightening. Ernie Els tee, 35 at Grand Blanc and Steven Ames closing the gap. The top five remain the same.

VO > You might recall that Battle of blue-collar stars at the 2023 Senior Open Championship, with Alex Cejka prevailing over the weather and Padraig Harrington on the second playoff hole claiming his third. PGA Tour Champions. Major. As a result, checker qualified for the 2024 Open Championship at Royal Troon, playing to the weekend and finishing tied for 75th. This May get him more PGA tour events this fall, and he is truly conflicted. You might say he's torn between tours.

OC > By making the cut in such a big tournament and making a couple points of money, or whatever the count is. I reshuffled a little bit in my veteran’s category and in the fall season. So, when the FedEx is over and the new kind of fall season starts on the PGA tour, I might get in into a few tournaments It's going to be a tough decision for me. I don't want to dance for two weddings. You know, I got I want to still finish strong here on our tour. And the problem is if I might get into 2 or 3 tournaments on the PGA tour, they kind of overlap each other. So, it's a little bit tricky in my decision. What I going to have to do the next, maybe two months, but we'll see. It all depends how I play the next couple of weeks. If I move up, in our, in our rankings and, how I feel. But it would be nice to maybe play 1 or 2 more tournaments on the PGA tour.

VO > Cejka is also hoping to represent Team Europe for the World Champions Cup this December. He's in a tight battle to qualify for Darren Clarke squad. Decisions, decisions. If he plays in PGA tour events, he will not earn Charles Schwab Cup points, which are a factor in determining who qualifies for the team.

VO > Coming up on Learning Center, one player is on a path to earn PGA Tour Champion status, while another is hanging it up. You'll hear from both next.

VO > PGA Tour Champions is a wonderful way to revise your golf story. Witness Jason Caron, who last played on the PGA tour back in 2003 and is currently the PGA head professional at mill River Golf Club in Oyster Bay, New York. However, in a handful of events on this tour, he has top five for the KitchenAid PGA Championship and more recently, the Roger's Charity classic. So, Caron is in position to make the playoffs and perhaps earn full status next year. At this point, he's trying to stay in the moment.

OC > Yeah, I said to a couple guys this week that, listen, if some of that stuff happens, it's a great thing. A nice bottle of wine to talk about it and see what we can do. But I'm just going to take it as this is just an opportunity. If I can play more, I can play more. If I can't, that's okay, too. I understand. I mean I have a day job, so we'll see what happens. And I'll take it as, each week goes by, if you will. I like my life. I have a great life. So, I, if it happened because I play. Well, if I get in. That's one thing. But no, I won't do the qualifiers or, you know, Q score and something like that. I like what I'm doing, and we'll just see how it goes. You know, I'm just thrilled to be considered

VO > Sunday marked Jason Caron’s fifth event this season on PGA Tour Champions. He wound up t 47 at the Ali Challenge with a one under par total and slipped one spot to 48th in the Charles Schwab Cup standings.

OC > Tom Gillis is Michigan born and raised, and so it was fitting that he chose the Ally Challenge as his final professional event. Gilley turned pro in 1990, and golf has taken him all over the world. But now he comes full circle and shared with us his thoughts on a goodbye to golf.

OC VO > Really wasn't plan is just the way it is. My status hasn't been that great this year. I think I've played four times, back, hasn't felt great and it just felt like it would just be as good a time as any. I don't feel like I have to grind, like, go back to tour school and try to regain better status. So, I thought, well, this is, you know, all my family and friends are from here and they'll be out. And I'm like, this is a good spot to wrap it up after 34 years.

OC > Well, it's quite a journey. How would you describe that? You know what golf has meant to you and where it's taken you all over the world.

OC VO > You know, it's funny. I was telling somebody the other day I never had a dream playing the PGA tour. I I started caddying at a country club a mile away, and I worked bags and worked at the golf course, and I saw the head pro and he had winters off and he played three days a week. And you played golf tournaments. And he had a great looking wife and he drove a nice car. And I'm thinking, what else does a guy need? This is great. I got winters off; I can go to Florida. And so, I've never really had the dream. And then after I got out of college, the owner of Indian Wood backed me, and a few other people backed me. And I got better and better, and I just kept going. It took me 14 years, I believe, to get my tour card. I played seven on the minis and five in Europe, and it just kept going and going and going, and I never thought I'd even play the Champions Tour. Here we are. We got six years in, so. So, it's time.

VO > So. So, what are some of your favorite memories of of golf?

VO OC > Well, I think that when I played in Europe, we traveled all over the world going to those places like Dubai and Qatar and Malaysia and Singapore and Australia and South Africa. Those were really fun times. And, and it was a tight tour because we were all traveling together. Probably one of the finer moments is when you get that tour card the first time out there at PGA West, and it's such a hard golf course, when you, when you, when you get done with that after six days, there's nothing more exhilarating than that. You know, that's like, I at least I get a year to see what I can do. And then it just, you know, I end up getting probably eight of em, you know? So, it's been I mean, I'm lucky. I feel totally blessed.

OC > You know, you talked about relationships. And one of the things that you've done is give back. And there for a year you coached high school golf, right?

OC > Yeah.

OC > You know, I wonder how much you you could they could relate to your career as to what what they could be. In other words, just be present in certain situations. You never know what's going to happen.

OC VO > Oh, exactly. And great case of that. My number two man was a guy named Bryce Barringer. And he punts for the Patriots now. And he went down to, Illinois to punt for Lovie Smith down there. It didn't work out. So, he went to Michigan State. I think his girlfriend was there. He wanted to go to Michigan State. And they had a really good punter, and he got hurt and they pulled him out of class. And then he never left the job, you know. And then he was a finalist for the Ray Guy Award. He finished second and Bill Belichick drafted. So, I see him punting on Sundays. I'm like, man, I coach that kid. He was my two man, you know? And he was a good golfer too. So yeah, we had a lot of good fun, a lot of good memories. I still stay in touch with those guys to this day.

OC> What's, what's next for you? What's going to keep you busy?

OC > Or about right now, it'll be spending time with the family. And that. I got a junior in high school my daughter, my, son just checked into alma today. He's going to play college basketball there up the road and golf. So, we'll we'll come up, watch him play at times, and it's just less time on the road and more with the family.

OC > Yeah, that's that's really what it's all about. So how are you? Are you an emotional guy? Do you think you'll get emotional?

OC > I'm going to be more emotional. Let my son go away. He heads north to school. They start next Monday, and we head to Detroit Airport and fly back to Florida. I think I'll be more concerned about that than I am. The last round of tournament golf, you know, so it's going to be hard for him and his mom to let him go. He's our first and he's a good kid. And I'm just thankful we got so much family up here to look after him watch him play.

OC > Yeah, but you know, those friendships last. The ones you made out here, right?

OC VO > Oh, yeah. That's what I'll miss. I'm not going to miss really anything other than the guys. The camaraderie, the locker room, the travel and flying on planes together. I'll miss the relationships. That's what I really, really miss. I won't miss the. I would miss having a chance to win it and competing when you're playing well. But times when you're not playing well and you're on the road and those four walls are closing in on you in the hotel. I won't miss that much.

OC > Hell of a run. Gilley.

OC > Thanks, Vince.

OC > Hey, man, thank you for your time. Best of luck.

VO > No problem.

VO > Tom Gillis scores a top ten in his final event, closing with a 68, his best of the week and eight under total. In a farewell to Remember. Way to go, Gilley.

VO > Coming up, we delve into the mind of Professor Steve Flesch, helping you find a path to success on the Greens. Even when things take an unexpected turn. Solutions in the Flesch next.

VO > Next up on PGA Tour Champions, the gateway to the West, Saint Louis, Missouri, for the Ascension Charity classic. Last year, it was no contest. Steve Flesch caught fire on Sunday, posting a blistering nine under par 62 and 19 under total. One big reason for the win. His performance on the Greens. We caught up with the left hander who helps you make more putts when things go sideways.

OC > Spending some time with Steve Flesch, defending champion at the Ascension Charity classic, and I want to get into some of the nuances of what happened there. But, well, the big question, will Griffin be back on the bag for you?

OC > Griff's back here in that right to defend with me. So, he and I are going to be a duo that week again.

OC > He's getting to be quite the looper, right? He's also worked for Fred Couples, too.

VO > He has. He spent a lot of time with Fred the last couple of years. He won with Fred in, North Carolina a couple of years ago. So, he's got two wins under his belt. He's doing all right.

VO > Wow. Dad or Fred Couples. That's that's that's quite a duel.

OC > It can be. Can be. Yeah. You know what? I, I kind of defer to the Hall of Famer there in that sense a lot, but I'm glad he's coming back in St. Louis.

OC > Well, no question where you left the field and putting and winning in St. Louis. And you're kind of an abstract thinker when it comes to putting. And I know one thing to you're not afraid to do some changes, right?

OC > Right.

OC > When it comes to your putting technique.

OC > Yeah, it's a lot of analysis, a lot of what's going wrong and how I can fix it in my mind never really stops. So, I'm not, if I go down a road of thinking what I need to do to make it better, I'm not a I'm not a vert averse to just making a change and see if it works. You know, I, I love to have an old faithful. I loved it, you know, never change. But that's not how I'm wired. And it's not who I am. So, I'm, you know, I'm not afraid to make a change. A lot of them have worked out, a lot of them have failed. But hey, I enjoy it.

OC > And you've changed from round to round or even in Mid-Round.

OC > Oh, I can't change mid-round. But no. Round around. I mean, I you know, when I won Colonial, I used three different putters and two different drivers. So, you know, it doesn't matter to me if I feel like I'm going to. That first tee was something I have confidence in or I'm looking forward to trying, I'm going to go with it.

OC > All right. So, it's interesting we're on a practice green. And sometimes you can do all these different drills and you know go around the hole from three feet. But we're going to take it to a to another level. And you're going to help our viewers with something they may be facing that ordinarily they might not practice.

OC > Yeah. You know and a lot of it is I'm a field player, you know. So, like I said I change because it might feel different. But my putting is all feel. I don't get too technical with it, you know. But I try and keep my routine the same. But today I thought I'd do something different. You know, how many times have you found your ball above the ridge when the hole is down below? A lot of amateurs are like, wow. How do you even go about reading this? And this is how I break it down. I basically just I walk down below the hole from where my ball is, and I'm trying to find the fall line, or just where it from the top of the hill to the hole. It's straight if I putted it from above. And I've gone ahead and pre marked up, cheated a little bit here just to just for simplicity's sake. But if I found this area to be the fall line, if I just roll it down that line, that should come pretty close to that bottle of water. Okay. So, we know this spot right here is the fall line. I get below the hole, identify that spot, and I kind of try and find like a spot in the green. Maybe it's a little light-colored spot or something where I can roll that over to get to that spot. So, this is my ideal place I want to roll the ball over. Now how from where I am, do I get to that fall line? Now you got to read this putt. So here, you know, if I imagine that this is the hole for me to to get to this fall line spot, how do I get there without too much speed. So, I've measured okay, that's about 18in a break to get there. Now I'm only hitting the putt acting like the holes right there. So, I line it, line my ball up to the spot 18in above it, and I'm ideally trying to just die it around that coin. See how I can do here.

OC > Pretty close. So now, I just let gravity do its thing. You got I mean sometimes they'll fall in, but man, what a great two putt. Your partners will be impressed.

OC > Very nice. Thank you very much, Steve for that lesson.

OC > Yeah. You know, it's one of those things. I'm not close to the hole very often. So, I'm faced with these a lot. So, I'm pretty good at them.

OC > All right. So, take that information. Make it work for you Steve. Thank you.

OC > Thank you.

OC > Great to see you.

OC > Yeah. Nice seeing you, Vince.

VO > College football kicks off this weekend. And we didn't have to look too far to find fans who bleed their school colors each and every year. PGA Tour Champions players, like many of us, are looking forward to the upcoming season. So, we figured why not team up and get their predictions on just how their teams will fare in 24?

OC VO > My daughter works in the sports information department now, and she's been going to practice every day, and she said, it's nice and hot, but I mean, they always look good when they're practicing against each other. You know, it's just whether or not they're going to be good. They put another team out there. But we got a lot more depth this year. Obviously losing, a Heisman quarterback and a couple of first round receivers. We got to replace a lot of offense, but I think we're going to be better on defense. And so hopefully overall the team will be even better.

OC VO > Well, I know we have the hardest schedule in the country right now. I think there's 8 or 9 teams in the top 20. We're going to find out really early. We play Miami. First game of the year in the swamp. I'm actually going to the game, so I'm very excited about that.

OC VO > I don't know, I know we got Bobby Petrino back, so we're going to score some points. I just hope our defense can hold some points; you know what I mean? But we're excited. Football season is the best.

OC VO > Obviously a little bit of transition year for my team. We've got a new coach and a lot of new players. So, I'm looking forward to see where the program is going to be moving. It's going to be it's going to be interesting for sure.

OC VO > You know, I think there's a lot to build on. You know, proud of the cats changing conferences as well. So, a lot of new, new looks, different conference, you know, maybe tough first year, but I think they're gonna I think they're going to turn some heads

OC > They'll be very competitive. You know, I think, you know, I think as a, an alumni at Wake Forest, the school is the third smallest in the country, in the country for division one football. We're just static that we can compete, that we have chances to win, you know? And if we can get to a bowl game, you know, that's a bonus. So, I'm looking forward to the season. I think it's, it's going to be a great one, especially now that it's expanded, and we got more teams that have a chance to to win a national championship. With the way the playoff system is. So, I'm looking forward to it.

VO > So, golf and football don't mix. Not so fast, my friend. And with that, we say goodbye for this edition of PGA tour Champions Learning Center. Thank you for watching. I'm Vince Cellini, so long.