**2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #21**

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > September brings us more of the thrilling regular season finish on PGA Tour Champions. With a trip to historic Norwood Hills Country Club in ST. Louis, the fourth play of the Ascension Charity classic brought us this.

VO > A thrilling finish. Former PGA Championship winner Y Yang in search of his first win on PGA Tour Champions, with Bernhard Langer posting a 13 under. Yang needs this par putt at the last to force a playoff and he rolls at home. Yang and Langer will play 18 again. On the first extra hole Y.E. Yang steps up and knocks down this birdie putt to capture his very first victory on this tour.

VO > Yes, for Yang.

VO > Winning the 2024 Ascension Charity Classic.

VO > And a winner for the first time on the PGA Tour Champions.

VO > Our John Swantek called it and has more.

VO > Thank you Vince. And what a finish to the week here in St. Louis at Norwood Hills, which has been around for more than 100 years and has seen so many memorable finishes through the years. This was one for the books, certainly. Take you through some of the final round highlights, and this was a turning point in that final round when Y.E. Yang eagled the eighth to take the lead. Trying to break through and win for the first time on the Champions Tour. But he would be hard pressed by world Golf Hall of Famer Bernhard Langer, trying to win for the 47th time. Fabulous tee shot to start the back nine to the par three 10th would result in birdie. Back and forth they went down the stretch and Yang delivered his best iron strike of the day at 17, when he needed it the most. Right over the top of the flagstick. It led to a birdie. Stewart Cink, who was also in the final group, made bogey so Yang led by one going to 18. But watch the second shot from Langer coming out of the left hand rough. Just enough to cover the front edge of the green, and it rolls out to about 15ft or so. At the age of 67 coming off Achilles surgery, he came back three months after that surgery. It's been an extraordinary season for Langer. And what a finished birdie the 54th hole. That would put the heat on Y.E. Yang. Needed this one for par. And it was not exactly a gimme. But calmly he sunk it to force extra holes. Back to 18 they went. They would play the par four as many times as necessary to determine the outcome. Yang hit a beautiful drive after Langer had missed the birdie attempts. Y.E. did not. A career start number 72. Career victory number one on the Champions Tour. Y.E. Yang, and it was a hard-fought victory with a 66 on Sunday, a birdie on the first hole of sudden death. Langer's 64 was the low round of the day, but he comes up one shot short. Y.E. Yang is the victor of the Ascension Charity Classic. Let's hear from the winner.

OC > Champions just on the third year. I think it's good, but today I think is a special, special day. Today and you called today. I very come play. I somehow know this, but I come play. Just now trust me and just play.

VO > With the victory, Yang moves up to the sixth spot in the Charles Schwab Cup standings. The top five remain the same, with Ernie Els trying to hold off Stephen Ames, among others. The drama continues in the season long race.

VO > 2023 was the season of Stricker on PGA Tour Champions, a historic campaign featuring six of his 17 career wins on this tour. Stricker is the reigning Charles Schwab Cup champion, and while he hasn't won in 2024, he is a top ten machine yet and still know hardware to show. Steve explains why things have felt a bit different this year.

OC VO > You know, it's gotten harder to kind of, you know, get motivated, especially when I take two months off. You know, but, you know, it's, you know, I'm 57. I've had a great run. You know, I come out here and have fun with this and, you know, it's it's, it gets harder to get the body back going when you take the time away. I need to do a better job of that, you know, come this fall, working out and trying to get in a little bit better shape. But, you know, I managed, I managed what I got.

VO > Ascension was Stryker's first event since mid-July, and this week is a sweet spot as he returns as a three-time champion of the Sanford International in Sioux Falls. Stricker won here in 2018 and again in 2022, and a year ago, when he finished a tournament best 16 under par. That victory pushed him to a single season earnings record on PGA tour champion.

OC VO > You know, it's always a lot of fun to to have that extra motivation when you go to a tournament. Shoot, I had a chance to do four at John Deere and had an opportunity coming down the stretch and didn't quite do it. You know, you feel the pressure when you're going to try to win, especially 3 or 4 in a row. So, it hasn't happened for me a ton in the past, you know, only one other time, but it's, it’s fun trying. And, you know, I enjoy next week, I enjoy, the golf course. They put on a great event there. Get to see Andy North, hero of mine growing up as a kid. So, yeah, it's a fun week to be there.

VO > Teams are set for the 2024 Presidents Cup, taking place in just a couple of weeks at Royal Montreal Golf Club in Montreal. Six captain's picks for both the 12-man United States and international teams have been announced by captains Jim Furyk of the U.S. and international Mike Weir, a Canadian legend, in a home game. The great event began back in 1994.

VO > The United States team, 12 one and one in this competition boasts another strong contingent, including world number one Scottie Scheffler, who will be seeking his first win the Presidents Cup match. Two-time major winner Xander Schauffele, another easy automatic. Captain's picks include first timers Brian Harman and Russell Henley, along with Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley. Here is U.S. assistant captain Justin Leonard, who understands choosing one player often means omitting another.

OC VO > A lot went into it, you know, trying to find guys that that have some versatility with pairings. You know, there were really three very easy picks. And then the others there were like, you know, we had to weigh, okay, what kind of atmosphere they're going to help create. And in the team room, you know, recent form certainly has a lot to do with it. In the case of like Max Homa, he's great in the team room. He's very easy to pair with. You know, he's a real vocal leader. We've got a bunch of leaders, but we've got some quiet leaders. Max Homa, by all accounts, has been a very vocal leader and that's something that you need. You don't need a ton of those guys. But you need a few. And so, he fits that role. We all feel like Max, his game is going in the right direction. He hasn't driven the ball great this year, but I think we can set him up for success. And you know he's got three weeks. I think he's going to play in Napa. So, that's a good thing. And then it's hard. It's hard leaving Justin Thomas off the team because he's what he's meant to. You know, the United States and Ryder Cups and Presidents Cups. It's hard leaving you know a great young player Akshay, who by all accounts I think would pair very well with a number of guys. But it just we didn't feel like it was it was the right time. We felt like, you know with the 12 that we've got, we've got a great team room and we've got some very, some, some pairings that just jump out and say, okay, this, this is going to work either because it's worked in the past or because we just understand the players games and their personalities. So, it's a lot more than just you know, oh, he's finished in the top, you know ten the last couple weeks or he's you know 11th in points versus 15th in points. There's a lot more that goes into it than that. And in the end though, I think, you know, it's, it's so interesting that it comes down to the top 12. I don't know if that's ever really been done before. Look, I'm happy for Keegan Bradley, too. You know, obviously he's got his connection now is the Ryder Cup captain next year. And his captaincy would probably be most helped by being an assistant captain for the first time. But then, you know, he's a player first and foremost, and you don't want to take that opportunity away from him. And and the way that he played at the BMW with the season on the line beating an incredible field, the shots that he hit down the stretch, you know, it's it's it's just a no brainer. And I think honestly him playing with this team will probably help his captaincy more than I would have said maybe a week or two ago, because he's going to get to know these guys, you know, up close and personal, playing and practicing with them. Not that he doesn't already, but but in a team atmosphere like that, I think playing will help his captaincy almost as much as being a, you know, an assistant with it, with the, you know, an earpiece in his ear. But we're stripping him of those duties, because we need him to focus on playing, you know, we're trying to just put the best team together and the best 12 and go out there and try and get it done.

VO > Coming up by learning center. If golf is anything, it is quirky. We ask these players what and why they go with the ball marker they use. That's right on the mark. When we return.

VO > Anyone who has participated in sports knows there is a routine that goes along with mental comfort and ultimately success in golf. That includes the unique aspect of marking one's ball individual to that player and ownership of sorts. We asked players to describe the ball marker they use and why.

OC >Depends how far from the hole. And I have two.

OC > So. I have my marks with my little my little logo on them. You know, the the quarter size.

OC> I use a coin that's got to be 70 and below. This one I just showed you 68.

OC > Buddy of mine at home made this for me.

OC > And I have my Laurel Valley because that's where I play. Calusa Pines because that's where I play.

OC > Flesch and bones on there. Bones was my nickname in high school.

OC > I want to put all four schools where my kids are either going or going to go.

OC > And it's always cool because I'm whole goal is, you know, we want to play golf and have fun, enjoy it. But at the same time, we've got to have a number to shoot.

OC > Well, I got to have a little youth connection. So put the Longhorn on and.

OC > I've just got a little selection on these ones here. And these are the ones that I can show you. There's lots of ones because we're on a family program, I can't really show you there's some bad languages and stuff on some of the other ones.

OC > My Irish clover on there, which is important to me. My high school finest high school's near and dear to my heart. Help coach that golf team.

OC > There's a gentleman that gives me a coin every year out here. He did it for me on tour. On the Champions Tour, he'll always hand me an interesting coin to mark my ball with. And this year, he gave me a 1960, which is my birth year.

OC > That's Calusa Pines, Silver Leaf, because that's where I play, and Golden Valley, because that's where I play.

OC > When I get up around the hole, just so I don't distract guys. I've got this cool little whisper rock coin from Whisper Rock Golf Club in Scottsdale.

OC > When I'm up by the hole or I'm in somebody's way, I use a little, you know, the old school kind of plastic marker that pushes into the ground.

OC > That's what I use it around. I've got a huge selection of them, and if one's misbehaving, I usually go to the bad language ones and use that. But depends on who I'm playing with. Bernard doesn't like them so much.

VO > Next, a sport in which you leave your mark on another player. The NFL is back, and we chat with a couple of Super Bowl champions about the lure of golf. One of them, a newly minted Hall of Famer. The gridiron meets the fairway next.

OC > Still rolling over here?

OC > Still rolling.

OC > What's up man? How are we doing.?

VO > September brings us that first hint of fall weather. And of course, the NFL season. Week one underway with plenty of new faces and Leaguewide optimism, the ultimate prize is the Super Bowl. And earlier this summer we caught up with two players who have won it all, Rex Burkhead and Dwight Freeney, who recently entered the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Almost nothing was out of bounds.

OC VO > All right. We got a little football segment for you NFL segment. We have a longtime NFL running back and Super Bowl champion Rex Burkhead is with us. Also, seven-time Pro Bowler most notably with the Indianapolis Colts and a Super Bowl champion as well Dwight Freeney. And by the way Dwight has an appointment in canton, Ohio, entering the Hall of Fame.

OC > Congratulations on that.

OC > I appreciate it.

OC > We're going to get back to that in just a minute. But Rex, I can't I can't imagine anything you face on a golf course is going to be more intimidating. And to try to handle one of these guys.

OC > Yeah.

OC > Right.

OC > Absolutely not. No. That's that's why I'm done playing football. So good running these guys.

OC > But what what is it about the game? You think that helped you learn a little bit about yourself? Because it is a humbling game.

OC VO > Yeah. I mean, the reason why I love golf so much is the variables. They're all under your control. It's all about you. All right. But depending on, you know, the weather, okay, whatever. But that ball is not moving. So, if that ball doesn't go where you want it to go, you can't blame anybody else. You. And the thing is, is great because you can go out at any point, at any time and work on it and figure it out or not figure it out and ask for help. So, I mean, that's why I love this game.

OC > Yeah. Same question to you, Rex. What is it about the game that you like?

OC VO > Yeah, I just love I love the challenge of it. I didn't grow up playing at all. And, you know, kind of got my first set of clothes my rookie year in the league, and so started playing. And every time you go out there, there's something you can work on, and you never know what you're going to get. It can be great one day and bad the next. And I just love that challenge.

OC > I can swear sometimes the kickers have a wedge out there while they're practicing by themselves, because they're all pretty good.

OC > Oh yeah, they are. Well, they don't have to do to twist things and turnings and run. And they didn't run over, you know, and they don't have that same type of life that fluid does. Yeah. Fluid motion, no issues.

OC > What's, what's what would you say is the best part of your game, Rex that you kind of lean on?

OC > Oh man. Probably my short game.

OC > Yeah. Good. Great.

OC > Yeah. Short game struggle a little bit off the tee with accuracy and all that. But for whatever reason, the short games come the most natural way. Yeah.

OC > How about you Dwight?

OC VO > Depends on the week. It depends on the week. It varies. Right now, the putters up the putters. How nice. How is the pot is hot. Everything else falls apart.

VO > Right.

VO > And when the putter is not, then everything else is good. So that's kind of where I am. That's my world.

OC > You know, it's funny. Football is such a bear down game. Intense. You know, you have to be ready ready at the snap. But golf is so opposite. You have to be your your most calm at the most intense moment. Right. It's this whole reversal.

OC VO > It drives me insane. It it literally does. It's one of those, you know, I'm so used to. Okay, something bad happens. Get angry, get hard, hit them harder. Run harder. Do something harder. Now it's like, no care less. Relax. Don't think about it. It's just. It's so opposite of what we know. And that's some of the reasons why I love it because of the challenge.

OC > Yeah. I guess the I guess is that Zen element. Right. That takes place with it.

OC > Yeah, yeah. I played in the Byron Nelson Pro-Am last year, and you know, I had the adrenaline going and I was like, man, I can use this for my swing and, you know, produce some good shots. You know, like in football, you know, it's a good thing to have it. And no, not at all. You got to control it. You got to control it. So, it's not easy.

OC > And you know I have asked athletes this, you played your Super Bowl champion, Super Bowl champion. So, you played in you know the biggest games. Is it still nerve racking to to put a tee in the ground out here and its celebrity event. Maybe more so in some cases.

OC VO > Absolutely yes. Because I feel like out here that confidence you have in your own skills is a little different than when you're out on the football field. So, you I mean, you made duck pool hook line into the crowd out here. It's, we got people lined up. It's a totally different ballgame.

OC > Do you feel that way?

OC > Let me tell you something. What we do is we play football. That's what we do. And we've been doing it for a very long time. You put a ball that doesn't move right there. Man watch out and there's people watching. Oh boy. So, it's a completely different ballgame.

OC VO > I'm wondering, Rex, were you able to glean anything performance wise with I guess, the Tiger of the NFL playing with Tom Brady all those years?

VO > Yes.

OC > And you know you had Peyton too. So, it's like you know you guys go fortunate.

OC VO > Yeah. Just his mental preparation and then his ability kind of like we were talking to relax in the big moments. I mean he would step in the huddle during those big time plays that we needed in the, you know, playoff games and just be totally calm, understand this is the job we got to do. And when you have that presence around you kind of rubs off on you a little bit. And so, you hope to just, you know, somewhere, you know, how to hold that standard a little bit.

OC > You probably have that experience as well.

OC > Well, I mean, I'm opposite size of Peyton, you know, so I don't know what's going on with that offensive side. I'm trying to disrupt.

OC > Actually, he was pretty intense on the sideline

OC VO > Yeah, I wouldn't know. I mean literally it's kind of log offense. Do what you do. And that's what we're going to do, what we do and we're going to meet together at some point. Yeah.

OC > So, I have to ask you, what's more satisfying? I know what it is probably at this point, birdie or hole and out somewhere or a sack for you. What's what's more satisfying?

OC > It's always going to be a sack. It's always going to be it's always going to be a quarterback. So, I just so hard to get, you know, so hard to get. They don't want me to do it. And I want to do it so bad. That's that's for me.

OC >What about you? Touchdown or great golf shot

OC > Man I have to go with touchdown too. You throw an eagle or hole in one in there though I don't know. And that's a little different.

OC > You get that same kind of juice. Yeah. Hey now you're Plano guy. So, you're you're in. This is kind of your where you grew up.

OC > Yeah. Right. Yeah. Not not too far away. Family and friends.

OC > So, is there pressure on you when you come back and play in these events?

OC > Maybe a little bit. A little bit. Especially if you got friends coming out, you know, hoping they want you to do well. But at the same time, you go out there, enjoy it.

OC VO > Yeah. Have a good time and listen, congratulations again. Pro Football Hall of Fame this summer.

VO > I appreciate it.

 VO > You must be on cloud nine.

VO OC > If there's a higher cloud to be. That's where I am.

OC > Top ten?

OC VO > Yeah. Listen, it's it's been a permanent smile on my face. And I was talking to somebody up day is like, look, you know it's good when you start hitting balls in the water and you say, you know what? But I am a Hall of Famer. I am. Who cares about that ball that doesn’t matter. And I can't wait until I get inducted. That's my mindset right now.

OC > I gave you this advice before the interview and I do it again. You come back here next year. Where the blazer. Everyday just play in the blazer.

OC > Just play in the blazer.

OC > Yeah, just just like you know, Masters has they jacket. Just play in the Blazers.

OC > I don't know

OC > At least one day. Listen, I'll probably get killed. I'll probably get those guys will come find me. Well, they probably come find me, but no, I just I can't wait. You know, I've been I've been blessed to be around so many great players in my career and and all those who helped me get there. So, you know, that moment going to be for everyone, everyone who had anything to do with me being there

OC > Well, guys, thanks for being here. Before we go. You went, we talked, you talked about your, souvenirs from playing in the league all those years, right? Yeah. You got a souvenir?

OC > Yeah, yeah, we got we got our signature match. And so, you're going to have this scar. Oh, yeah. You must have played. I must have played the bad ones. Yeah. This one was.

OC > One time I had a hangnail during a show. That was hard to work through. Thanks so much.

OC > Appreciate it. Thank you.

OC > Good talking to y’all.

OC > Yeah. Nice talking to you.

VO > And like the football scoreboard, we have reached all zeros. It's off to South Dakota for another exciting week of PGA Tour Championship. Until then I'm Vince Cellini. As always, we thank you for watching this edition of Learning Center. So, long.