**2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #22**

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > Like the faces on South Dakota's historic Mount Rushmore, the number is four, four regular season events remaining on PGA Tour Champions. This was the Sanford International from Minnehaha Country Club. And high drama playing out in Sioux Falls. We had a play off. Richard Green birdied the last four extra holes with two-time defending champion Steve Stricker on the fourth playoff hole Stricker’s approach shot, is tracking and hits the flagstick. Results in birdie and three consecutive wins at the Sanford International. How did we get here? John Swantek and John Cook have details.

VO > 54 holes was not enough to decide. The Sanford International events. It was a compelling sudden death playoff between Richard Green and Steve Stricker. But John Cook, there were some big moments in regulation, including this par save from Stricker at 17.

VO > Missed a makeable birdie putt at 16 that might have sealed the deal. Missed the green on the 17th to the left. Not a great pitch to there, but all of a sudden makes about a 12-footer for par

VO > Par putt at 18 in regulation falls short. He had a two-shot lead, and it was trimmed to one when he made five there. That opened the door for Richard Green to make birdie and force a playoff.

VO > Beautiful tee shot wedge underneath the hole right to their straight up the slope right in the center.

VO > They played 18 a couple times, and they played the 10th. And they go back to 18 for the fourth hole of sudden death. And this shot was sensational.

VO > Ball sitting way down 142 yards. Just wanted to get a wedge onto the green. Let it go up that slope with some pace and it catches the flagstick. Might have gone by about 12ft or so. Very makeable putt. But three feet is better than twelve.

VO > See the coin of Stricker there just three feet away. So, Richard Green pretty much had to hole this to extend the playoff.

VO > Y3eah. Hit a nifty little pitch shot from just short of the green. Not able to convert. Now Steve Stricker for the win.

VO > It has become a habit winning in Sioux Falls. Four victories for Stricker at Minnehaha. A successful three peat. Stricker wins for the 18th time. Let's hear from him.

OC VO > I tell you why it's such a treat to come here. I have such a good time here. Andy North being the host, you know, it brings a special connection. And, you know, we, last month lost my dad in January, and.

VO > Take your time.

OC VO > Well, I was trying to win. Was so bad. He he was the guy who showed me the game, and I owe him everything. Really. And, you know, we miss him a lot, but that was a guy that showed me the game how to act on the course. Just to be a professional. And we all miss him.

VO > This one meant so much for Steve Stricker, who moves into the top five with a long awaited first victory of the season. The top four remain the same. Richard Green may have again been denied, but as a force this season on PGA Tour Champions, remaining one to watch. But back to Stricker, the defending Schwab Cup champion who will now shut down his season on a winning note and explains why.

OC VO > You know, I've been struggling a little bit with that. My dad, mentally just, you know, at home, you know, just going to be in there. My kids are busy with stuff. You know, I typically don't play a lot in the fall anyways. And, you know, to be quite honest with you, my back has not been the greatest. It got a little bit better each and every day. I found a treatment to kind of, I actually felt the best it did today. But there's something going on there. And in my SI joint that I just am struggling with a little bit. I don't have a lot of power at times. And so, I think I need to get healthy, go home. It's my time away from the game anyways. And, you know, we have PNC Championship in December, the World Champions Cup in December. So, I'll, I'll, try to get healthy, get stronger. I need to work out what I need to do and get stronger and, get ready for those events in December. That gets harder each and every year. You know, actually putting has become the hardest part, you know, bending over and trying to practice your putting, when you have a lower back issue. And, that part's been a little bit more of a challenge. But, yeah, somehow, was able to get it done this week. You know, first day I felt awful. I felt like I couldn't even turn behind the ball. You saw me in the pro-am. I was struggling with it. And I was frustrated, but it, Yeah, just got a little bit better each and every day and got it out and found a way to do it. This place, you know, motivates me. It's a special place for me here, you know, with with a connection I have with Sanford and, Andy North and, just the people here in general.

VO > Darren Clarke is many things major champion, Ryder Cup captain and notorious tweaker. When it's not instructional gizmos and gadgets, Clarke is perfectly willing to change his putting or full swing approach. And like the game itself, this can sometimes provide mixed results.

OC > In all the modern teaching. You know, we go on Instagram, I'm like anybody, any of the viewers. You go on Instagram and take a look and okay, what's this guy says? That guy says, I know the modern thing in coaching currently is all this big, shallowing and coming down there. So, you get the club up here on that. It all goes this way and goes there. Now the problem with that is that I'm 56, a little bit too old and my hips don't move fast. So, with that being said, all the young kids can do it. So, for some people it works. But for a lot of people, it doesn't work. And I try to go down that route of shallow and stuff. And as stupid as I am. So basically, when you come down a notch following a lot of the modern-day coaching, nice to see the club had just behind the hands here at P6. P6 is where the club is vertical coming into the club is parallel to the grind. They like to see it this way. I for me for years and years, years playing links I've always got them off the golf ball. So, the young kids would hit the hips off this. But I can't do that, I just can't. I tried and I can't do it. So, for me it's more I've got to get the club up and get up more on my hands. Or if anything outside my hands at P6. And then I can tell as I've always been up, I got barrel chested guy. I cover the golf ball my way. My way of covering the golf ball is rotating hard this way. Young kids are a little bit more. They go that way. So, it's two different things. But I'm the idiot for listen to these all these so-called knowledgeable people on Instagram. And lot of them are. But for me it just didn't work. I'm too old, you know, I grew up playing on links, playing at Royal Portrush and on all the great links courses in Ireland and trying to cover the golf ball and I covered it by being a chest. I call it a chest cover. It's more upper rotate. Get the club open front to me down hard and get through it. Recently I've driving the ball a lot more to come, a lot straighter, a little bit of this, little bit. Whatever I want to do, but because the clubs in a much more neutral position for me coming from here, and that enables me to be in a position were coming into impact, I can hit the draw, I can hit a fade. I want the hands coming in, coming in to be here. Most amateurs, the majority of farmers that we see hit a big slice and they hit a big slice because a lot on their hands, their hands, when they get up to the top, their hands all go this way. And then they come across it and do all sorts of stuff. So, hence why the modern-day shadowing for a lot of amateurs helps them a lot because the hands aren't. Their hand path is not way, it's this way. But for me, I try to try it out and just play it worse and worse and more shorthanded. So right. Not I've got the club, club, have my work and above my hands and on my hands, and then I can come down and compress the golf ball that way. That's the way that I tried to do. The putter still hasn't quite wound up the way I wanted to yet, but maybe this week.

OC > That brings the question why did you?

OC VO> Because I'm an idiot. Because like anybody who's watching, watches, if you don't play, why do you think there's an answer somewhere? The answer is not. The answer is in the dirt. You got to figure out my swing because I'm old. That that's what I did. That's my. That's my, What's the word I'm looking for? That's that's my go to motion. And I tried to get better, and I'm, nobody likes playing poorly. You want to try and get better. So, you listen. Maybe go down an avenue or two that you shouldn't go down. And that's the wrong thing. It was the wrong thing for me. So now all of a sudden, I've got freedom to get the club back. I feel as if this is what we call in front of me. And I can rotate as hard as I want with my chest and hit it as hard as I want. My dispersion is going to think of a javelin, and with a javelin my dispersion does no, for the most part gone from here to here. And professional golf is not all about how good your good golf is. It is how good your bad golf is, because we all miss golf shots. So, if I can bring my dispersion down by having the club more in front of me this way here, and then turn hard on tip with my chest, go this way. My speeds jump back up too from being stuck here, which I was from. Oh, so slow with 157 158 back up when I hit it hard 172 73 which is very fast for old guys. So, I'm not Padraig Harrington fast, but Stewart Cink. But enough to get the ball out there over 300. So that's been a lot to do with why I have played a little bit better over the last few weeks. So, hopefully I'll carry on into the playoffs. And maybe I was to make a win or two before the end of the year.

VO > Coming up on learning Center, Rob Labritz on the range sort of. Labritz gets behind the wheel of a range picker and hijinks ensues. His fellow tour players couldn't wait to send him a message. That and more next.

VO > As a club professional, Rob Labritz wore many hats and did again for our purposes in climbing inside a range picker and wearing a great big target. His fellow PGA Tour Champions players were more than happy to assist in the making of this video. And you know that's going to leave a mark.

OC > All right, we're right back to our club pro days. Let's go pick up some balls and see if these guys can hit me. (Indiscernible). Pampling’s on point. You can tell he's playing well. He had a few top five because he just hammered me.

OC > (Indiscernible) I was like oh yeah it was too late. It was already gone.

OC > My three-year-old can hit it better than you can.

OC > Oh. Right off the top.

OC > This is the most fun we've had all year, right here.

OC > Oh that's not fair. He's hiding behind the scoreboard. Oh my, straight over the head.

OC > Should we give them a long range shot?

VO > Yeah.

OC > Right back here. Let's see what they can do now. Here comes a long ranger. Oh, there we go.

OC> Oh this one come on, come on, come on David.

OC > Oh, that is the dent right there. And then we got a dent right there. Man.

VO > Oh, he got out of the cart I want to stop. What's he doing? (indiscernible)

OC > Oh, yeah. That one had some heat to it. Oh, here we go.

OC > That was fun. Tiring. I'm tired. I'm puffing now for a range session. Normally doesn't happen that way. But that was a lot of fun. We haven't had that much fun driving range for a while, so. Yep, have to do that again.

OC > We got one right there. Look at that.

OC > Yeah. Where did they hit?

OC > Oh so this one's a little depression. That's right there. You see that. And then there's one other one right here. That's pretty good right.

OC > Maybe a few on the windshield there?

OC > The windshield held up pretty good. Right. There's a good one there. That didn't shatter. We're good. One on the roof.

VO > Coming up on Learning Center. As the tour moves to California this week, this Hall of Famer moves on. Mark O'Meara sharing some parting thoughts, preparing for an emotional week at Pebble Beach.

VO > It remains a jewel of American golf. Pebble Beach Golf Links site of this week's Pure Endurance Championship on this tour. And recently we had a chance to speak with a player who on many occasions made this scenic layout his own.

VO > and he birdies it again to win at Pebble Beach.

VO > In just a few days, one last competitive ride. Mark O'Meara on a perfect place for goodbye.

OC > Few players have a connection to a legendary course, the way World Golf Hall of Famer Mark O'Meara does with Pebble Beach Golf Links, a long and storied and distinguished career there in winning it. As it turns out, the Peter Insurance Championship at Pebble Beach will be your final PGA Tour Champions event. So, M.O. good to see you and thank you

OC > Thank you, Vince.

OC > How do we get to that decision?

OC VO > You know Vince it's been kind of coming over the last three years. I'll be 68 in January. So, when you've played the PGA tour for 27, 28 years now, the Champions Tour for the last 17, almost 18 years, I just think there comes a point in time when when life I've been slowing down, obviously limited schedule over the last two and a half years. And I just knew last year winding down, I was like, hey, I'm going to play four or five, maybe six events this year, and I'd like to call it a career at Pebble Beach, where I've been blessed to have a lot of success.

OC > Yeah, it's just an amazing place. And as a guy who's a California guy, Mission Viejo, you first get there and we're going to go down memory lane a little bit. 79 The California State Amateur and tell me about your connection. You win there. But just did you feel a connection or some sort of, attachment to that place?

OC VO > I would say for sure. I think any time you go to a place especially I remember the very first time was in 78, I came up to play in the California State Amateur, and driving in those gates and coming down 17 Mile Drive and seeing Pebble Beach for the first time in person, you know, the whole Monterey Carmel area. I just think it's the prettiest place in the world and then come back in 79 and win the state amateur. Look at the names on that California State Amateur trophy, knowing that a lot of fine players have won that championship. And then obviously the success that I've had and playing the Crosby, playing the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, you know, who wouldn't want to win at Pebble Beach? And that I've just been lucky to win, you know, six or seven times there. So yeah, it's been a great place and treated me incredibly well.

OC > I love that you mentioned winning the Crosby because you won the final. Yeah. Bing Crosby National Pro-Am 85.

OC > Yes, sir.

OC > Yeah. And Dr. Bingle was there. Yes. Correct. Correct. What are your recollections?

OC VO > Well, it's funny because in 84, I had a chance. I was on the last screen. I needed to make a birdie to to tie for first, individually. And our team needed to make a birdie or something like that to tie for first in the Pro-Am division. And I was playing with a gentleman named Jack diesel, who ran a company called Tenneco out of Houston. And he made a 60-footer on the last hole for birdie in that eagle. We won the team event in the Crosby in 84. And unfortunately, I three part of the last hole and didn't get in the playoff. And but I came back in 85 and as you pointed out won the Crosby.

OC > When you look back at what has been just such an impressive career Champions Tour included, but do you look back at the majors that you've won, or is it is it a bigger picture or what are some of the things that, you know, you kind of are drawn to initially?

OC VO > I would say that I look at what's happened and transpired in my life and certainly golf. I owe so much to the game, and I realize how blessed I am to have played such a wonderful game for a long period of time. And I look, I've done way better than I would have ever dreamed. And yes, winning the majors was great because it came at a late period of my life, at 41 years of age and no one expected me to win, probably including myself. And it happened. But to travel around the world and meet so many wonderful people, realizing that to be on the outside, in an environment, on a golf course, whether you're a pro, amateur, starter, beginner, older player, you can't pick a better game. And, you know, as I've always pointed out, I mean, golf became my friend a young age and what a great friend to have. And it's still my friend, even though I may not want to play competitively and professionally anymore, I'll still try to stay in touch with the game every way I can.

VO > Yeah, it's great, my friend, because sometimes it doesn't seem like your friend out there sometimes.

OC > Oh well. I've cried. We've all cried many times on the golf course.

OC > So you, you have become sort of this, this man of leisure. I guess you have had some activities too. Away. We understand that you're quite the angler.

OC VO > Yes, I listen to. I'm probably better at fly fishing and casting a fly rod or a Spey rod two head a rod. Next week, I'll be in a river somewhere fishing and sleeping in on the side of the river in my tent. And then I'm a big snowmobiler in the wintertime, you wouldn't think an old guy would be riding the snowmobile up in the backcountry. But I love it, so I love the outdoors. I have plenty of hobbies that can keep me busy. And I think the biggest, the the biggest thing that comes to being a professional golfer, the hardest thing, I think would be the traveling away from your family, hotel rooms. You know, I don't miss that aspect to events.

OC > And finally, it's going to be an emotional week.

OC > Oh, very much so.

OC > So, what are you kind of anticipating with that? And will you take a moment or two at several spots over at Pebble Beach?

OC VO > I mean, there'll be a tear in my eye. I mean, there were certain a tear in my eye at Augusta National when I played my final Masters in 2018. It was the same at the open Championship in 2017, back in Birkdale, where I was fortunate to win the open in 98, I would 2017 that was my last Open Championship. And knowing that I can, walk away from a game at such a special place like Pebble Beach, it's been so, you know, wonderful to me and to my family and the experiences that I've had there. Yeah, it's going to be a little tough, but it'll be celebrated more than anything else. I'll be thankful.

OC > Personally, I'll miss you. We'll miss you out here as well. So, stay in touch. Don't be a stranger.

OC > I won't, I won't, I promise I'll always be. My phone's always on hard.

OC > Thank you.

OC > Thanks, Vince.

VO > MO brought to the game much more than stellar play. His personality, voice, perspective and general demeanor made golf fun for fans and certainly for his fellow competitors. We asked several to share some thoughts about Mark Francis O'Meara as he steps away from full time play.

OC > Hey, Mark, I just found out you're going to retire this year at Pebble.

OC > Mark O'Meara, I hear you're retiring. You shouldn't retire, young man.

OC VO > You've been a heck of a player for a long, long time. And I think there's so many people to join you and, your presence with them. Aside from golf, you've been a real gentleman on and off the golf course. So, to that, I want to wish you a happy retirement.

OC VO > Mark's been an incredible player for such a long time. And, you know, back in the day, whenever Lee was first come over here playing in America, Mark really took us under his wing and and showed us what to do. We went to his house for dinner at Isleworth back in those days and he just helped us. Whatever way could.

OC > We seriously going to miss you. You're a true gentleman. What a legacy you have left for the next generation.

OC > You know, I just wish him the best. He's a great guy. Gosh I’ve known him for 40 something years, which is amazing.

VO OC > It's been a pleasure to be, co laboring along with you for so many years. Congrats again on your career, on your mustache win and an open championship win. Enjoyed our times together on and off the golf course. And look forward to maybe doing some skiing in the future. So, take care of my friend, and congrats on everything.

OC > He's just always been great for the game of golf. He'll be missed out here for sure. I'll miss just yakking with him and talking with him. But, you know, he's made a decision. It's time to go. And and I respect that. And I just wish him the best.

VO OC > I just want to say that I've really enjoyed competing with you and against you. And, what a wonderful player you have been for so long.

VO OC > Couldn't be the nice amount of Mark O’Meara. So, he's had a wonderful career. It will be sad not to see him out here an awful lot, but I'm always a special man. So, he's had a great career and enjoy your retirement.

OC > Good luck to you bud.

OC > Hope you have a good one. And my best to you.

VO > Mark will always be a part of the game. Like he often says, you have my number, and we'll definitely stay in touch. Well, that is our time for this week's show. We thank you for watching Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini. So long.