**2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #27**

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > Imagine a brand-new event on PGA Tour Champions, the Simmons Bank Championship. And now raise the degree of difficulty by taking that event and dropping it in the middle of a playoff run. It made for high drama and high intensity at Pleasant Valley Country Club.

OC > Hi everyone and welcome to PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini. The over 50 tour landed in Arkansas. The penultimate event as a field of 54 was squeezed down to 36. As we head to the Charles Schwab Cup championship to conclude this season. As for little Rock, we had a champion and lots more. Our Bob Poppa had the call, and this wrap up.

VO > Thanks, Vince. Padraig Harrington picked up his third win of the year, capturing the Simmons Bank Championship in the season long race for the Charles Schwab Cup. The race was also on for the top 36. How about Jason Caron club pro from Long Island. Add Jason Caron started the week in 53rd position, but he rolls in this part for birdie. And Jason Caron finishes at 14 under. And he's about to earn his tour card. Meanwhile, Fujita also in the mix trying to climb up that leaderboard. He started 51st overall. Remember he lost the playoff in the US Senior Open. He finishes with a final round four under 68. Cameron Percy had it rolling. He had gotten it to seven under through his opening 14 holes. Then disaster hit as he bogeyed three in a row, and it was up and down for Percy throughout the course of these final holes. Meanwhile, Padraig Harrington trying to lock this thing down, Lanny. And he got off to a nice fast start.

VO > Well he did, he got four early today and then really just kind of put it on cruise control. He fought hard and played like a winner and champion down the stretch, really doing what he had to do to get the job done.

VO > Yeah. HE’D Go on to birdie four of his first eight holes and just kind of give himself some comfort level. Then his third at the par five 10th and just serves that out there for another birdie as he would knock that in. That would get him a 17 under. Opened up a nice lead. Made bogey at 14. And then Lanny all he needed was par at 18. Had this putt for eagle.

VO > Yeah. Hit an absolutely great tee shot. Smart play over to the right side of the green with five iron. And then a great leg putt from about 45ft to get the job done. Wins by two.

VO > Padraig Harrington the Hall of Famer picks up his third win of the season and wins the second playoff event, capturing the inaugural Simmons Bank Championship. As we look at the final leaderboard, Harrington moves up to fourth in the Schwab Cup standings. You see Caron, Fujita all earning their cards along with Percy. What a wild day it was. Let's hear from our champion, Padraig Harrington.

OC VO > You want to be in the Charles Schwab Cup with a chance. You want to be there the last week that if you do play well and look, there's not take it for granted out here. You, you got to shoot as you say in these three rounds that’s 17 under par this week, at least 15 most weeks. So, you've got to hole the putts. You got to get the break. And it would be to aim at the Charles Schwab final, you know okay, 72 holes I prefer that. But you still got to get the breaks and you got to play well. So, it'll be a long week and plenty of more pressure.

VO > Congratulations to Harrington. And with the win, Padraig jumps into the top five in the Charles Schwab Cup standings. Ernie Els remains in front after opening with 62 in little Rock. Steven Alker shoots 73 on Sunday to remain a spot behind. It was a day to play inside or out of the top 36 needed to advance.

OC VO > I'm like speechless really, to be honest. I didn't I didn't have like, you know, it's it's weird to think that I could even get to here. I know I didn't know what to say to to honestly, I really don't know what to say. It's, this is not my job. And I, I just didn't I didn't know if I was ever this good, I guess, socially of late. But then all of a sudden, some things started clicking that putter that I got started working. Just kind of happened, I guess. I really don't have any words to tell you about what it means or anything like that, because I just it's kind of shocking.

OC VO > I had some some demons I was dealing with in those last few weeks prior to last week. And I basically said to myself, well just get out of your own way Dave and just play some golf instead of looking at scores, looking at order of merit, Schwab Cup positions. Let's just focus on golf and see where it takes us. And last week it took me pretty high. And that's I wish I had of started thinking like that a few weeks earlier and I might not have been in this position, but it is what it is. I'll get plenty of starts if I'm 37, 38, 39 anyway. So.

VO > And now the PGA Tour Champions title train heads west with a much smaller passenger list. The top 36 meet at the Charles Schwab Cup championship finale, again taking place in downtown Phoenix, at Historic Phoenix Country Club November 7th through 10th. They're a champion will emerge in the event and overall season. As always, we will see you there.

VO > When Learning Center returns, a native son celebrates the state. Unlike another Hope, Arkansas product, Ken Duke didn't grow up to become president, but he might be the acting mayor for the week. Join us as he journeys back home.

VO > As PGA Tour Champions enjoys its first go round in the state of Arkansas. It was a homecoming for 55-year-old Ken Duke. Born in Hope, Arkansas. Duke was raised in Arkadelphia, and it was with great pride. He celebrated the play off event while taking Learning Center along with him playing tour guide as he visited the place where it all began.

OC > It's so great. I do get a chance to come back, see my mom, but to get a chance to play here and come back in the state, it's very touching. I got a lot of friends out there and family out there. It's, really looking forward to.

VO OC > Well, this is a little place that I help design and build. It's called the Ken Duke golf facility. Man, it's Division !! school to have a thing like this. It's really help the men's and women's team spectacular. It's, It's it's state of the art, man. Small town like this to have something like this. I'm so happy for it. And a lot of kids come in out of here. It's really been nice. So right here, this is where my dad and I really wanted to put this golf facility. This right here used to be the old Arkadelphia Country Club back in the day. I mean, back in the 60s. All this down here where these apartments are used to be intramural fields. So that's where the band practice. That's where intramurals would go on, and we would hit from from the down by the road down there, up on top of the hill up here. Obviously, this wasn't here, the softball wasn't here. And this is where we practice with shag bag and and golf balls. And it's just a perfect spot for our facility. What it's all about you might notice me. I love to get back. And this is, this is part of it right here is just seeing these kids and going in here and picking their brains, and what do they want and get in a chipping match with them or putting match. And they beat your brains out and, it's interaction. That's what it's about for me. And it makes just makes me feel good. And it's really nice. This is it, man. This is this is a dream for me. To my dad to have this, few highlights of my career on the younger days, some of the older days, and. It's kind of fun stuff.

OC > I saw your ranking man.

OC > Hanging in there.

OC > I got you some swag.

OC > All right.

OC > You can't get on the campus without swag.

OC > Alumni, look at their Henderson State University, baby. Yeah. Go. Reddies Yeah.

OC VO > House I grew up in 5 Lexington Circle. Right here. Right there not even a mile from the campus. So, I was over there a lot checking everything out. Here we are, this is our circle. This is my house right here on the right. Up and down this hill. Many times. Bicycle and everything else that goes with it. But it's great to be back here in the neighborhood. This is where I grew up. This is this home. This home for me. Small town. Just, you know, my we're big fisherman, and my dad park his boat in this n the right side here. And we're back back the trailer and and back it in there. I've done that thousands of times, you know. And he would take 4 or 5 shots. I'd almost take like 1 or 2. I got better at than he did. But but, no this is home. This is my sisters, and I grew up in Arkadelphia High School and good stuff.

OC VO > Look at there. Boom. Look at those pictures. Still rolling the rock, man hitting shots. A swing hasn't changed much. Got a little bit shorter, but that's about it. But great memories. Great memories. Look at those legs. Those are no short shorts that more than any. Right? That's a good look back in the day. No mullet. Just, bowl cut. That's what that is bowl cut. Yeah. DeGray State Park. This is where my dad and I used to come out here and fish all the time. There's a lot of times he was working. He said, hey, son, get the boat ready, and I'll meet you at the at the ramp. And here I am right here. Have the boat ready. And we go out here and fish. I mean, look how beautiful this place is. It's so peaceful. And a lot of fish out here. We've enjoyed a lot of many times out here. We lost my dad a few years ago, 2016. And, my sisters and my mom, he put his ashes here because that's where he wanted it. And that's that was his love. And obviously that's my love too. Sure, I play golf for a living. But fishing is my love. And anybody knows me, they know that. And he's one introduced me to it. And it's been very special. I enjoy that. It's a good time to get away from from the game.

VO > Tour guide Ken Duke tied for 39th in his home state but still sitting 24th in the standings, meaning we will see him compete in Phoenix at the Charles Schwab Cup championship.

VO > As stated, the Simmons Bank Championship is a new event on the tour schedule, therefore somewhat leveling the playing field in terms of local knowledge. As such, players like inaugural winner Padraig Harrington shared with us what he goes through in competing on a course for the first time. Harrington and caddie Ronan Flood allowed us to tag along on the 18th hole Tuesday before play.

OC > 296 covering those bunkers down on the right.

OC > Which is rough, but that wouldn't be the end of the world. First time seeing the hole. Obviously, we've got a rather large lake all the way up the left. Kind of looking at it. If you can hit a good drive here, you're definitely breaking the back of this hole. If probably if you have a shot, lead you’d play out to the right short here. This plays as a pretty safe to tree shot. You know the difficulty. The difficulty wouldn't be if you're a shot behind, you're going to take it down the middle of the fairway and just go after it, not worry about that water at all. You know, if you need to make birdie down the last, well then, you're trying to play play to the right half of the fairway and take your chances. Even if you did push it out to the rough with your tee, let's see how we do.

OC > Right down the middle. Can I get there.

OC > Leave that there.

OC > Can I get three of those this week? Steve Alker’s caddie does the yardage books here out here. Troy. They're so good. Now you could just turn up and play with them.

OC > It looks a decent enough soft enough hole. If you're trying to make five, I think you can, you know, you should be able to lay it up off the tee and you have a big second area. So, I think five is, but you still have to, you know, you still have to make your five. But it certainly gives a chance to guy chasing. And with the water so tight in the second shot too, it means if you can force somebody in, somebody can make a mistake and somebody can make an eagle here.

OC > Pretty much, as I called it. Can I can I leave that one there as well? And 96 yards. So, the thing about this is. We're going to assume that the pin is going to be back left. You know it looks like the over the water type hit. So, two you want to be a little further back to get a bit of spin. If it was in that pin, we would go further up. 58 degree. So, I'm going to probably the 96 yards. Looks about right. And I got to hit one shot into the left-hand side here. Just to get a feel for this. Shouldn't really play anything different than 96 yards downwind. But we'll see.

OC > I can't say that that 96-yard shot didn't play like a 96-yard shot. So, it’s pretty much that would give some confidence in the tournament having played at one that you know there's not didn't play long. It didn't play short. It just played. It played its number. So again, you're just trying to establish where a good miss is if you need it. These bunkers look great. Yeah. Bit of a slope. It actually looks like. you wouldn't want to miss the bunkers maybe in the rough, but if you're into bunkers you'd be very happy. Obviously, I hit this in close. I got my eight-footer for Eagle. Ain’t got a better putt. Oh no. Oh no interest in I'm going to put to what I think the Sunday on pins is. Now it's interesting I want to do this late in the evening because late in the evening is when we're going to finish. If you're trying to win the tournament.

OC > I'm looking at the fringes to see where he can putt from the fringe. So, he's always like, so like, you know, if he's banked over the back, it's going to come off that. But over there he could put it. So, it's tough to put the pin 4 or 5 to the left. I'd be saying you still got another two or three yards there where you can putt. S0, it's not as tight a pin as it looks in the pin sheet. Whereas sometimes you might just if there's no fringe there, then you can't putt. So, like I'm looking to see where you can put from on the fringe to give him that extra bit of room.

OC > Yeah. It's not a good miss to be avoided. I don't know if you'd avoid this, but if you come up here, you're going to be grumpy.

VO > Coming up on Learning Center, looking ahead to Phoenix with a set of eyes that have seen it all. Golf channel analyst Lanny Wadkins on players to watch and the challenges of the season finale.

VO > Professional golf can make the world a smaller place. It's where cultures meet. Enter the Rocco Miguel show Rocco Mediate and Miguel Angel Jimenez. Their common ground is the popular golf accessory, the cigar. Two aficionados who are rarely seen on the course without their sticks in the bag and sticks they fire up. Did you know the word cigar comes from the Mayan word Sikar? Here they are with more.

OC > How many cigars do you guys go through in a tournament week?

OC > Go ahead. How many do you do?

OC <> Okay, probably, it's more like a three four a day. Maybe a full box in a week.

OC > This could last me till tomorrow afternoon.

OC > No, no.

OC > No, I promise not.

OC > Not for me.

OC > Not for him. Because I light it, I don't like to light it. I don't like it. So yeah, everyone thinks but he he lets them rip. I just kind of don't have him all the time. But yeah. So. But we're still the same. Yeah, I mean look, look, seriously we're just weird. We're weird in a good way.

OC > You want to see a man smile? He already smiles. When I pull this one out and show him that.

OC > Indiscernible) This is a beautiful.

OC > This is absolutely stunning.

OC > Stunning.

OC > Look how pretty? You need a cutter, a little cut?

OC > You know, you got to say.

OC > Yeah, I'll give it a little teeny.

OC > They spend all that time making that perfect torpedo, and you don't cut it up here. See that?

OC > You see what it goes for you?

OC > Three. You see how this is? It's not going to be a bad.

OC > No, no, no, no, this is angel shaped.

OC > Angel. The angel sheer.

OC > Perfection. Angel shape.

OC > You see how we do.

OC > Okay. Looks like we have the same taste.

OC > Yeah. No, he has the best taste of all.

OC > And if I want him to check a cigar out, I'll give him a cigar. Say, tell me what you think of this. I'll get more and we'll kind of go. I’ll put it over here. Don't go. It's no good. And I went, we'll just toss it. He goes, no, no, no no, no, it's tobacco. We're going to still smoking. We just don't love it. It's so. Funny. Yeah. The opus is much better. I think. You know the guys.

OC > I know. Yeah, I know I'm…Let me let get a beautiful (indiscernible).

OC > It's just solid. Strong. And what I'm told is its organic tobacco. See we're smoking healthy.

OC > No. Great. Well, it's pure leaves.

VO > Here we go.

OC > Always fun to spend time with. World Golf Hall of Famer and one of the voices of Golf Channel for PGA Tour Champions Lanny Wadkins with us. And Lanny you you've got a front row seat. For this season. I mean tell me about this race. When's the last time you saw something as wide open

OC VO > It's pretty wide open and close and a different cast of characters for the most part. Other than Steven Arca, we haven't had Ernie Els up in contention. I've been waiting for a long time for Ernie to be up and in contention. I have long felt he's probably the most talented, best player out here. At least your credentials say that maybe other than Langer, with Bernhard being down the list is kind of nice to see other guys getting involved.

OC > How important is it to have the presence of an Ernie Els here when Steve Stricker is not in?

OC VO > I think it's very big. I think Ernie is far and away potentially the biggest name on this tour right now. It is PGA Tour Champions. It's not PGA tour also rans. So, it's good to see guys of Ernie's stature and credentials in World Golf Hall of Famer. Multiple major winner. You know be out here and play to his potential.

OC > Yeah. And I want to pick another name Steven Alker who's now a known quantity I mean he's not surprised anybody out here anymore. So, he's another guy that's clearly in the mix and maybe even more dangerous now coming in his position currently.

OC VO > Yeah. And he can really, really play. There's you know the there's no fly zone Steven Alker at all. I think the one thing question we've all had is where in the hell is he been the last 25, 30 years? Because a guy has that good a golf swing that nice looking golf game. It's very tidy in a lot of aspects that don't seem to be any major flaws anywhere. It's like, you know, why hasn't he done more in the past? Maybe he's just found his niche and found his game, you know, later in life. But it sure been fun for us to watch.

OC > Yeah, he's kind of like the Roy Hobbs of,

OC > Yes.

OC > PGA Tour champions, for sure. So, we get to Phoenix and know this all too well. Very different four rounds. And there's a lot of pressure there, too. I just like just a couple of the factors that we're talking about.

OC VO > Yeah, it is. It's nice going to a four-round event. You know they played three rounds out here the majority of the time. So, it really is a sprint. I always felt when I was playing out here, I had to go shoot 68 or so the first round to be in the mix for the weekend. Because you're now looking at weekend quicker, you don't really have time to make a mistake, have a really bad hole, or have a 71 or 2 and come back and win. That doesn't happen very often.

OC > I'd like you to speak a little bit to the evolution of PGA Tour Champions to to see to see a guy like Ernie Els, who's very much himself, and a Stewart Cink who's on this tour, Padraig Harrington, who's on this tour, this is not, you know, your uncle's PGA Tour champions

OC VO > No it's not I mean, we've got Hall of Famers coming out here and making a mark, guys that have been consistent winners throughout their career, like Stewart Cink who you know, the thing that I that I'm enjoying watching with these young calling me young guys, the 50 coming out, how long they are because they still maintain their length playing on the regular PGA tour. So, they're coming here and they're taking this to a different level with kind of the bomb and gouge mentality that the other tours had. Whereas this tour has been about precision. Is Bernhard Langer hitting fairways, you know, playing little cute shots into greens and, you know, dissecting golf courses. So, it's for me that's been the difference with these guys coming out here.

VO OC > All right. Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure as a player and a broadcaster really.

OC > Thanks a million Vince.

OC > Best of luck.

OC > Thank you.

VO > Which brings us to the end of this playoff segment. We will follow the sun to the Arizona desert. Until then I'm Vince Cellini. And as always, we thank you for watching as PGA Tour Champions moves closer to hoisting the Cup.