**2024 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #28**

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > The 2024 PGA Tour Champion season came to a close on Sunday. And once again, the Arizona desert served as the backdrop. Playoffs, prestige and proper reward all playing out at Phoenix Country Club.

OC > Hello everyone, and welcome to this final edition of PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini in what was one of the tightest season long races in years. So many scenarios were possible, but in the end, a champion emerged to hoist the ultimate prize on this tour the Charles Schwab Cup. It was a breathtaking season, and with more on the closing scene, our man who called the action John Swantek with a wrap up.

VO > Well, Vince, it was simply one of the most compelling and thrilling finishes we've ever seen at the Charles Schwab Cup championship. And we have Bernhard Langer to thank for that. Torrid opening nine here, Lanny Watkins. 30 for Langer. Herbert at his first for the day.

VO > Yeah, he did. He made a simple birdie at the par five first but then this 45 50-footer at the second just buries it from across the green. Then at four, 15ft down the hill moving to his left. Another great putt.

VO > Did not birdie the fifth at the short par four but did gain one here from the first cut of rough at six.

VO > Yeah. Played a wonderful shot really cutting close here just over the edge of the bunker. Lands on the green and tries to go in the hole. Just hits the high edge of the hole. Goes to about six feet. And he would make that for another birdie.

VO > And he would add one more here at the ninth. And had a five-shot lead through the first half of the day.

VO > Well think he found his range right here. I think 25 30ft was his distance for the day. And he just buried every one of them. It seemed like right in the center. And then it 13 a really tough par three. He plays a smart shot left of the flag away from the water and buries the 18-footer. Really well done.

VO > He was dueling with Steven Alker in the final pairing of the day. But one group ahead Richard Green would birdie the home hole to post 17 under.

VO > Yeah. Hit it kind of a poor wedge shot in here but makes up for it with the putter. Man, we saw some long putts go in today.

VO > And Green was hanging around for a potential playoff. There was all sorts of scenarios unfolding at 18. But this is the one that we should have expected.

VO > Yeah. Langer from about 30 feet down the hill. Great read. Neither Cooke here myself saw it moving that much to the right. Perfect pace. Got that in the edge. Another wonderful finish for Bernhard Langer.

VO > Alker had a chance to tie and force a playoff here with a birdie of his own.

VO > Yeah, thought it would be a little quicker down the eye, but I think he was probably surprised he came up short as well. No reason to not be aggressive on that putt. I think he felt like he was just did not work out.

VO > For the 47th time. Bernhard Langer is a winner on the Champions Tour, and nice consolation and $1 million bonus for Steve Alker, who wins the Charles Schwab Cup for the second time. Langer has now won at least one tournament in 18 consecutive years since he turned 50 and joins the Champions Tour. He wins the season ending event. Steve Alker wins the season long prize. Vince.

VO > Thank you. Final Charles Schwab Cup standings. Now Steven Alker is once again the season long champion. Trading places with Ernie Els, who began the week at number one. Richard Green didn't win on tour but put together five runner up finishes this season to sit third. Harrington and Ames one three times each and round out the top five. Now let's rejoin John Swantek, who was with the champions.

OC > Bernard had to resist the muscle memory of just grabbing the Charles Schwab Cup, because he's done it six times in his illustrious career. But you did get that piece of hardware in your hands for the first time. Ironically enough, 25 different tournaments that you've now won. Put it into words for us.

OC > It's hard to describe, as you say, I got a few of these at home. Thank goodness. And really appreciate what, Charles Schwab does for the Champions Tour. They're phenomenal sponsor. And we, we love this tournament. We love this golf course. And, Tiffany, you do an amazing job year after year. Yes, she deserves it. For me, it's it's unreal. It still has to sink in. You know, of all the years I've been coming here and trying to win this, and. And now it happens when I haven't won a tournament all year. I want to thank Terry Holt my my caddie and, yeah. Hardest working man out here. And he he put a thought in my head, you know, I hit my wedge there on 18 a little long, it goes well, it's one more putt you gotta make. But I had one of the best putting weeks of my life. And, green keeping stuff. I owe you one. Well, done. Great job.

OC > Thank you, everyone, and thank you for the thrills that you gave us here today and for nearly two decades out here.

OC > My pleasure. And congratulations to our Schwab Cup champion over here. It's a pleasure competing with him and against him. And he showed today again why is up here receiving this big trophy in a second.

OC > And you showed why you're a Hall of Famer, the great Bernhard Langer. Everyone. Come on. And Steven, you get your hands on this for the second time in three years.

OC > Soak it in. What an amazing run. Right. And it started by qualifying for the Boeing Classic just a handful of years ago. Got you into another event. It all snowballed from there. And here you are with that trophy in your hands for a second time as the season long champion. Can you take a moment to reflect on where you've come from and where you've arrived Steven?

OC > Yeah, it's, it's been a heck of a journey. You know, there's there's so many people to thank. You mean, I got Team Alker on my bag. It's. You know, that's. This doesn't happen without just, you know, just just me. So, so many people to think that it's been a heck of a ride, just to get here and win another one. I know how Bernhard feels now. Well, not really. I mean, he's won 7 or 8 or whatever, but just another one. I mean, obviously, I'd like to win today, and. But, Bernard, we're going to give a hand for Bernhard. He's incredible. He really is.

OC > He's won six Schwab Cups, by the way. But you're one of just seven players now who have won multiple Charles Schwab Cup Steven, pretty elite company. What does it mean to you?

OC > Yeah, it means a lot. You know, it's a season long race, right? And so, consistency. You want to try and get some wins in there as well. And I'm proud of the fact that I kept that consistency over the last few years. And, you know, just competing with Bernhard and everybody out here in the Champions Tour has it's just made me a better player. And, and I'm very grateful for that.

VO > When Learning Center returns to Phoenix, we'll sit down with the season long champion holding the Charles Schwab Cup as the tour's number one and recapping a year long journey to the top. That's next.

VO > Steven Alker was part of that wave of international players on PGA Tour Champions battling for the title. In the end, he had a chance to perhaps win the event, and the Charles Schwab Cup. A birdie try on the 72nd hole comes up short. Yet and still, he is your season long champ. The Kiwi who could and did again.

OC > Well, they say two out of three ain't bad. I think it's actually awesome. Steven Alker two out of three times being the season long champion here, is that sunk in for you? You've just come in and taken the tour by storm.

OC VO > Yeah well sunken no, no, probably give it a give it a couple of days Vince. There was the bonus today to win it. Obviously, I wanted to defend my championship and win this event. But Bernhard Langer, he's just relentless and he's just he's just amazing. What else can you say? But yeah. So, two out of three ain’t bad as you said.

VO > Yeah. Why are you so effective on this tour?

OC VO > I think I'm just efficient. You know, I'm kind of. I'm long enough off the tee to compete. You know, my iron games got better and better every year. And yeah, my putting has been solid every year. So. Yeah, you put all these stats together and you. Yeah. Mix them up and it's a pretty good formula, you know. So, but just to compete against these guys week in week out I think just makes me better to.

VO OC > Each year is different. And you had a single win in the in the season opener and all the way. But yet got all the way here and finish the job. What does that say about journeys year to year in golf? What's the what's the key?

OC VO > Just perseverance. I think basically that's that's the one word that's kind of kind of sums up my career really just kind of stuck at it, persevered. You know, to to have to have the opportunity to play out here with these guys, you know, the whole change of atmosphere from the PGA Tour and the Korn Ferry to come out here and showing the stuff, and we've talked about this before, but it was a second opportunity for me as a second chance. And those don't come around too often. So, I'm I'm really grateful. Probably the word. Just lucky for that. I don't know what it is, but the right word is.

OC > In your dreams. Did you anticipate that this could happen for you over 50?

OC VO > Well, no. I mean, you look back and you you kind of where I am now, like, well, you know, the potential was always there. Maybe I just didn't realize it enough. And now I'm realizing that now, you know, and, you know, I just I want to I want to win golf tournaments. And I think that's what Bernhard Langer has done so well. He just wants to win. And and you can learn from that. And I certainly have anyway.

OC > Yeah. And you come on to this tour also. And so, so effective and understanding that, you know, each week is this, this opportunity for me. And each week is a chance to continue to succeed. What's what's the future like now. Because you're I we talked about this before also. You're you're the you're the hunted not the hunter anymore. There are no secrets with Steven Alker.

OC VO > Well, I don't really look at it like that. I'm just enjoying the company I'm in and competing and, trying to win a golf tournament every week. You know? And that's been so much fun. Like, I've had so many top tens and top fives this year and been in the hunt a lot of times. I don't know how many times, but that's that gets the juices flowing and I miss that for a very long time, you know, going through the Korn Ferry and struggling to win in Europe and on the PGA Tour. So yeah, I just, juices flowing and and I love that. That's what we wake up for and to, to compete and have a chance to win.

OC > Yeah. Well continued success and we'll see you in Hualalai. Congratulations on another magnificent year.

OC > Thanks, mate.

OC > Thank you.

OC > Thank you so much.

VO > And when PGA Tour Champions Learning Center returns a look back at this remarkable season full of plot twists and surprise stories that made it such a fun ride, a salute to legends.

OC > Bernhard is amazing. He is incredible.

VO > The PGA tour champion star Stewart Cink lives in Atlanta and is a self-described Hawks fan. But his NBA choice the Wednesday before the Charles Schwab Cup championship was taking in a Phoenix Suns game. There, Cink was a willing prop for the Suns gorilla mascot, who bounced over him for an in-game dunk. The Suns went on to beat the Miami Heat. Cink had a gorilla encounter and a strong golf performance.

VO > The man with the strongest performance, Bernhard Langer. When faced with adversity, Langer was at his best. With a possible playoff looming, Bernhard calmly rolled home this long birdie putt on the 72nd hole to post an 18 under par and win the Charles Schwab Cup championship for the first time. Yet another box check for the 67-year-old German legend, certainly one of many. This was Langer's record 47th victory on PGA Tour Champions in 356 starts, a 14th victory after the age of 60. Unprecedented. And all of this following surgery for a ruptured left Achilles back in early February. He was chipping in a boot shortly thereafter and competing by May, then saved his best for last.

OC > Well, just when we thought we'd seen it all from Bernhard Langer, he puts together an amazing, remarkable performance in Phoenix. How did that happen when you're in a boot after Achilles surgery in February, how did we get here?

OC > Well, that was a long time ago. That nine months ago, seemed forever. But, yeah, I got got through that fairly quickly. I was playing competitive golf three months after surgery; I think three months. And it's been a good summer. But this is just something very special. I haven't been this excited in in a long time.

OC > What makes it so exciting? Is it coming back from the injury? Is it the fact that you kept your win streak alive for now, 18 years on this tour or other things?

OC VO > Well, all those two things for sure to to win the very last tournament of the year when I hadn't won all the all year. But to make that putt, when I had to make it, I mean, the odds were pretty much stacked against me. I think, Steven Alker was about, whatever, eight feet away or nine feet. And I had a 50 odd foot, footer, you know, to get out of the playoff and, yeah, that's, I don't recall more than maybe a handful of other victories that were as exciting as this one.

OC > You go Friday 64 and then 67, 67. You talked about your putting, and you mentioned of putting adjustment that you had made this week. Can you talk about that?

OC VO > Yeah, I did really well, maybe the best putting week I've had probably in my life or close to in my life, maybe top five in my life, but certainly last year, I just, moved the ball a little bit further away, which I had done before, but, you know, and, and and sometimes I feel better standing more on top of it. And then I felt better further away. But I was putting terrible on Wednesday, actually, in the pro-am, I played really good and made nothing. I had to apologize to my pro-am partners. I said, I'm sorry guys, I’m putting awful. I haven't made anything. So, I'd practice a little bit and move the ball a little further away and felt really comfortable. I started to see it better, see the line and had a good feel. And I mean, I made a bunch of putts every day.

VO > I was talking to your caddie, Terry Holt, and he said that he knew when you were on that couch for three months that you were going to come back, and you had another chapter to write. Is that how you felt about your return?

OC VO > Yeah, I, I was told by my surgeon and my PT that if I go through the proper physical therapy and take care of it, I should be able to play professional golf again. And it's just a matter of when. And I wanted to be back for the Insperity Tournament in Houston. And, and I made it. So that was, I don't know, three months, three and a half months after my injury, off we went. And I got into a playoff a couple of months ago but lost to Y.E Yang. But had a lot of good top ten finishes in the middle of the summer, which really helped me to make it to the Schwab tournament, which was one of my goals.

OC > Obviously you have a lot of great golf left. 47 wins. What's next for you? Shooting for 50 at age 67. We play to your 70s. I know you're in the moment for this particular victory, but it's just it's incredible to have you around and performing at this high level.

OC VO > Well, thanks for saying that. And, you know, it's I've been very blessed to have been given this talent and this gift to perform under pressure and to be healthy enough to do this for so long. When I've won 46 and beat Hale Irwin’s record, my goal was to get to 50. And I realize that's a very lofty goal because people say, once you turn 60 you are not supposed to win out here. here anymore. But we know that that's not right. And people have proven that wrong. So now I'm at 47. Who knows? You know, if this is my last one, so be it. It was phenomenal. But I still think, there could be 1 or 2 left in the tank down the road.

OC > Yeah, well, I certainly believe that as well. Thank you, Bernard, and thank you for coming back and being Bernhard Langer for all of us.

OC > Thanks. Appreciate it. And enjoy the offseason.

VO > They say Father Time is undefeated, but Liger is putting up a fight again. He is the all-time leader in wins on PGA Tour Champions two better than the great Hale Irwin. More importantly, Langer has changed the way we see 60 and over players. Given his dedication on the course in the gym while inspiring his fellow competitors along with everyone who loves and appreciates the game.

VO > Looking back on the 2024 season, it was a wonderful tapestry of golf talent, established tour stars and several first-time winners and achievers changing their golf careers in one weekend. An ultra-competitive season that engaged us from start to finish. Here are some of the players summing up what it was like to be in the mix.

OC VO > But it was a good year. You know, I don't think I played particularly as good as I did the first half of the year and the second half, you know, after July, after the British Open, I never really regained the sharpness I had before I went to Europe. But, you know, this week was, was a tough week. You know, I didn't quite have my A-game. And I was really trying hard, but hung in there, even today. And I was really trying to find some magic at the end, the, just to try and get to the top five. But it is what it is. It's been a really good year. And, we'll come back, you know, stronger next year.

OC VO > And you don't quite get it done at the end, you know, you feel a little bit left deflated, I suppose. Deflated, demoralized. Feels a little bit similar, I guess. It's really, really difficult to win out here on this tour. To go out there and you play your absolute A-game, and you still get done, it it's demoralizing at times. So, you just hope that the right guy can get you there at some point. So yeah, it's a matter of being patient, understanding that everybody out here very good and and work harder.

OC VO > You know, three wins is nice. So, I'm happy with that in 15 starts. I putted it well early on in the year. I didn't play very well. I played better at the end of the year. Is the case I putted; I didn't putt badly. I putted okay towards the end of the year. So, look, whereas I said, this is certainly not the perfect year in any shape or form. It gives me something to build on for next year.

OC VO > My seasons, probably a B-minus of, sort of, it's been playing okay, but not quite. And a lot of work to do in the offseason and hopefully come out strong again in Hualalai.

OC VO > I like I honestly thought if I could get some status top 45, I'd be. That'd be a good effort because it's hard to get out of just qualifying alone as tough, but then to create more opportunities. And that's what you need. You need just more chances to, to keep playing. So, it's it's very, very difficult and it's very rushed sometimes because you qualify and then you go get playing. And so, there's a lot about it that's very challenging. I'm looking forward to next year. Now.

VO > The 2025 PGA tour champion season schedule is out, and here are a few of the details once again 25 regular season events, three playoff events, and the season will start with the Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalai in January. There is one new event the James Hardie Pro Football Hall of Fame Invitational in Boca Raton, Florida. That's in April. The American Family Insurance Championship will debut a team format and a new course for next season, so hang on for another ride alongside legends.

VO > And that is our time for this final edition of PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. A tip of the hat to all of the players who entertained us, as well as providing tips to improve your game. Happy holidays everyone! It all begins again in January on the Big Island of Hawaii. I'm Vince Cellini, so long.