Production Transcript for **26INTCUTCH - SIMMONS BACK CHAMP - MASTER**

[00:00:46.950]>>PGA Tour Champions.

[00:00:49.860]>>Proudly present the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs.

[00:00:54.240]>>And today from Little Rock, Arkansas, it's live first round coverage of the Simmons Bank Championship as the capital city of Little Rock comes calling for the second leg of the playoffs. 54 men qualify to get here to Pleasant Valley Country Club. Only 36 will earn the distinction and punch their ticket to the playoff finale in Phoenix, the Charles Schwab Cup Championship in 2 weeks' time.

[00:01:23.230]>>Beautiful par 5 finishing hole here at Pleasant Valley stepping in as, uh, the host venue here for the 3rd consecutive year. All right, quick start for Michael Block and Jamie Donaldson, both at, uh, 5 under par.

[00:01:38.150]>>Block has gained access this season through a couple of sponsor invites and a lot of fine play and top 10 finishes, and he's on the cusp of qualifying for the Schwab Cup Championship in a couple weeks. Rory Sabbatini’s name is on the first page of the leaderboard as well. He just won the playoff opener in St. Louis last week with a 62 on Sunday.

[00:02:00.530]>>I'm John Swantek. Great to have your company. Thanks for hanging with us here this week. Always fun to be with Paul Azinger. John Cook is our man on the ground of Pleasant Valley this week, walking with Stewart Cink, Zach Johnson, Steven Alker grouped together, the top 3 in the Schwab Cup standings, and, uh, they have had John Cook's company quite often this season. That's how dominant these 3 have been. Hello, Cookie. Hello there, guys. Good afternoon.

[00:02:26.690]>>I have been fortunate enough to follow these 3 all year long, talk to them a lot on Sundays. In fact, 15 times I've been able to talk to these guys on Sundays.

[00:02:38.390]>>Steven Alker coming off a bounce back birdie at the third after missing a short putt at the 2nd. 260 to the hole gives him 244 front, pressing it up there. Really wanna keep this right if you can, but that front bunker's not too bad there, Paul.

[00:02:56.950]>>Not for a guy like Alker. You can see it runs away a little bit there, and that's a beautiful look. Saw Paul Stankowski's name is one of the guys who's projected inside the top 36 with a nice start today. He is really hit or miss, you know, when he gets red hot, he doesn't.

[00:03:12.990]>>Lay off. He gives himself chances. He's had some chances this year.

[00:03:18.610]>>It's pretty shot from above 4 green. Leaves starting to change colors here in late October. Nice crisp autumn day to start our week here in Little Rock.

[00:03:31.790]>>Absolutely perfect conditions to play golf in, just mid-seventies, slight breeze.

[00:03:37.880]>>A little cloud cover. Stewart Cink to make birdie, and got that nice up-and-down there for Stuart for his first birdie on the card.

[00:03:50.170]>>Zach Johnson certainly can be the season-long champion. Alker as well. He likely would have to win this week and next week, but you would be foolish to put it past him.

[00:04:01.480]>>He's got a great track record on both golf courses right here, Pleasant Valley being defending champion and

[00:04:08.220]>>They're at the Phoenix Country Club. It's right up his alley.

[00:04:12.080]>>Zach now off the back of the green in 2, putted it down to this point. Got to be careful with these greens are so slick.

[00:04:21.700]>>My

[00:04:25.330]>>There is the first birdie of the round for the six-time champion this season.

[00:04:30.430]>>How do you think Alker's feeling right now, Cookie?

[00:04:34.250]>>It's one of those, you know, toughest putts to make are the, the, the 3rd.

[00:04:40.810]>>Third to putt for the 3rd birdie in the group, always the toughest.

[00:04:45.950]>>I have confidence in Steven coming off a birdie at the 3rd.

[00:04:49.490]>>Well, he's ranked 6th in putting this season. Pretty darn good.

[00:04:57.430]>>Sadly for him, Zach and Stewart are 1 and 2. There you go, right?

[00:05:13.760]>>Up 1 to the 6th. There's a birdie for Ernie Els, 1st of the day for the Big Easy.

[00:05:20.090]>>He dips into the red

[00:05:25.210]>>Block for the 7th birdie of the round through his opening 11 holes. Yeah, don't blink or you'll miss the block. He goes fast.

[00:05:35.170]>>It's a no-doubter. That is another no-doubter to get to 7 under par. Now, that's, you know, look at that scorecard. That's a mentality, you know, that says, I'm gonna go low. Par 58. There's another birdie for Stephen Ames. 5 of them on the opening round scorecard for Ames, offsetting a couple of bogeys at 5 and 6. All right, good luck for Zach Johnson here.

[00:06:01.430]>>Straight up the hill.

[00:06:04.620]>>Not many putts you can be aggressive on this golf course with the speed of these greens, but this doesn't do a whole lot here for Zach.

[00:06:14.210]>>This is a nice short compact stroke. Just watch the putter head.

[00:06:21.560]>>Beautiful putt. See how he held that putter head so still when it got through the ball? No recoil at all.

[00:06:30.010]>>Oh look at your boy Boo Weekley here singer man Boo Weekley. But you know that shirt. I don't know if you could hide from anything with that shirt on. Is there anything that that would like conceal you? What, what's the foliage around that would allow that to conceal you from something? Rory Sabbatini was out ahead of the leaders last Sunday and then just blew past all of them.

[00:06:52.470]>>There's the Rory Sabbatini that I'm familiar with.

[00:06:59.270]>>That is quite an, an easy little save for something that looked hard. That's gonna be a birdie.

[00:07:09.250]>>That is gonna be another Birdie.

[00:07:15.880]>>We'll go to the 10th. Vijay Singh, a return to the winner's circle at the age of 63 at the Ally Challenge a couple of weeks back. Pretty inspirational stuff out of Vijay.

[00:07:26.930]>>He just knows how to win and when he had his chance, there was just, he wasn't gonna be denied that that's the intestinal fortitude, you know, that it takes.

[00:07:37.860]>>K.J. Choi just birdied the 16th, looking for another here to get into red numbers. He just barely touched that.

[00:07:49.330]>>Just enough energy behind it.

[00:07:55.980]>>Up ahead to the green here at the 8th, Goosen to move into the red.

[00:08:05.750]>>There you go. 2nd birdie of the round for the winner in Atlanta, TPC Sugarloaf earlier this season.

[00:08:13.110]>>Scoot up to 15, catch back up with Stankowski. Nice start to his week.

[00:08:21.050]>>There's another

[00:08:25.400]>>That's the way you want to move this week in terms of the projections, and he knows it.

[00:08:30.210]>>They just desperately want the same thing, all three of them.

[00:08:36.610]>>That's the Charles Schwab Trophy. I mean, that's what they want at the end of the season.

[00:08:42.070]>>It might take a win to get there for Zach and Alker might have to win the last two.

[00:08:51.000]>>Nice compact little stroke here quick little one, yeah, yeah, this is a nice quick one just outside the right. Let it drip in nice up-and-down.

[00:09:02.720]>>3rd birdie of the round, just 12 putts required for Zach Johnson through the opening 8 holes of the day. And here's Alker back at 9.

[00:09:12.140]>>After a beautiful 5 iron from 202 goes downhill moving to the left.

[00:09:18.020]>>Well, well, well, just when we thought he was gonna, just when we thought he was gonna be.

[00:09:23.430]>>Shooting a higher score.

[00:09:27.000]>>A little flip shot here for Steven Alker, just get it over the bunker, hitting on the down slope, uh, how about it?

[00:09:35.360]>>That is so Alker right there.

[00:09:42.170]>>In a nutshell, just kind of treading water until the moment presented itself, and it did at the 10th and suddenly he's at 4 under. All right, back for the birdie punt of Zach Johnson.

[00:09:57.290]>>I think he got a pretty good read off of Stewart Cink's last part of Stewart's putt.

[00:10:03.960]>>Go slightly to his left, Paul.

[00:10:08.790]>>Well, he had that iron shot dialed in just, you know, his strength is distance control. But man, even when he comes up short, John Cook,

[00:10:18.740]>>He's a no mistake guy right now.

[00:10:23.410]>>Alker to get it to 5 under.

[00:10:27.720]>>Right from hole high, good breaker from right to left and quick. That was pretty. And there he is. Yeah, beautiful. The cameraman Loy might get his chance. Yeah, the cameraman slipped right in there.

[00:10:43.890]>>The most compact little move, this stroke, the cadence of it, the pace, the, the 12, if you were to count in your head, his 12.

[00:10:53.200]>>See if it repeats 12.

[00:10:56.650]>>That's it.

[00:10:58.790]>>And early walked it. That's usually the result. Well, a lot of good putters count in their head, you know. They, they count 1, 2, 3, impact, or 1, 2, whatever.

[00:11:12.100]>>One Swede to another, see if Svensson can finish this one off here.

[00:11:20.270]>>But

[00:11:21.920]>>Oh, you bet. Of course you can.

[00:11:25.220]>>This Swiss watch, little 65. This is a careful one right here. Paul Azinger, pretty good breaker from right to left. Once it starts breaking, it's really quick. Have to be careful.

[00:11:42.300]>>You were talking about the cadence of Zach Johnson's stroke, the 1, 2, 1, 2. Watch this. Now, he may not even make a practice stroke.

[00:11:52.810]>>But his cadence is similar. It's, it's, it's nice, short, compact, none of this long, languid business.

[00:12:05.410]>>How about one more little dripping speed there, Paul. Pretty good, huh? You know, that's the gift, isn't it, that the, he didn't have to think about speed. It's an assumption.

[00:12:16.700]>>But they've been

[00:12:18.560]>>Crushing the 18th hole today, par 5.

[00:12:22.750]>>Given up an eagle, a dozen birdies as well.

[00:12:26.620]>>Easiest hole in the course is the 10th, that par 5.

[00:12:32.340]>> Alker for the co-lead.

[00:12:36.110]>>why not?

[00:12:38.360]>>Why not?

[00:12:42.220]>>See

[00:12:44.630]>>Look at that scorecard since the 9th. 6 under par. Zach Johnson trying to join Alker and Stenson at the top.

[00:12:55.550]>>And a great look here from about 14 ft doesn't do much.

[00:13:01.380]>>He had a beautiful tee shot.

[00:13:08.250]>>This will take downwind par 5 coming up. Yeah, this will take old Michael Block right out of the last group. Look at this bingo.

[00:13:16.330]>>Birdie at 17 for Zach Johnson, and it's a 3-way tie for the lead.

[00:13:23.550]>>Meanwhile, Retief Goosen is up ahead on the green here. That's an eagle putt coming back down the slope. It's pretty cool looking. Come on, hello.

[00:13:35.930]>>That's a big bird for the Goose. Is anybody better on fast greens than that guy? It would be hard to imagine if there was. For an eagle, Zach Johnson trying to touch 8 under, be the only guy to do it today.

[00:13:52.400]>>It certainly took a look, didn't it? No, he's straight up the hill, not much to this.

[00:13:57.960]>>No, you don't get any straighter. He's, he'll make it if he just plays it straight. I agree. You don't get any straighter, probably, and, uh, man, one of these

tournaments we're gonna have to stopwatch this guy when he gets to right, maybe right to the ball. It'd be fun next year if we stopwatch some of these putters early.

[00:14:17.740]>>Yeah, that's a no mistake round out of that guy. Wow, he came in here, he was popping off how much he loved the course. He said it better be ready for me. And, uh, that is 3 really good players dueling it out.

[00:14:37.680]>>Oh, very fitting. It could be our man Freddie Jacobson said this out in style with an eagle here.

[00:14:57.700]>>Oh, another Pop stroke.

[00:15:00.950]>>No

[00:15:03.520]>>Nope, nope. Oh, that one wanders by.

[00:15:10.420]>>All right, so that's gonna do it for us today.

[00:15:24.980]>>It is playoff time on the Champions Tour. The journey began for 72 men last week in St. Louis.

[00:15:33.490]>>54 advanced and qualified to get here to Little Rock, and that number is gonna be trimmed. Just 36 headed for Phoenix in the Charles Schwab Cup Championship to conclude the playoffs in two weeks.

[00:15:47.580]>>Happy Halloween, by the way. Can we hit a longer one? Looking for some scary good golf today. We've seen some already, some really low scores brewing in this second round. I'm John Swantek, Paul Azinger alongside Henrik Stenson in the final group of the day. Quick start today, right out of the gate. You know, there's a lot at stake this week

for a lot of players, and usually when there's a lot at stake, that's when the great golf is played.

[00:16:13.770]>>Uh, it's like the Olympics, you know, you're called on. This is your chance, and, uh, this is the playoffs. So second week of the playoffs, and really I think the most confident players are the ones that are on top of this leaderboard. They played amazing yesterday. Alker came out of the rough, really an almost impossible shot, and then in what looked like an impossible putt, not for that guy, not for him.

[00:16:38.950]>>Yeah, it's been, it's gonna be good golf today. I can guarantee you that. It was really amazing golf yesterday.

[00:16:45.120]>>And off to a good start. And then you have a journeyman. I mean, really the ultimate journeyman rolls in here and it's kind of just come out of the pack, but he's gonna have a long way to go if he wants to beat the guys trailing him. I'll tell you that. That's Darren Fichardt who started the week 46th in the Schwab Cup points race, and he has made serious inroads on the top 36.

[00:17:08.960]>>With a 6 under par start through the opening 7 holes, great to have your company. Thanks for hanging this week. I'm John Swantek. Always fun to be with Zinger. John Cook will be our man on the ground following the final group of the day. That's Zach Johnson, Henrik Stenson, and Michael Block, who's had some late weekend groupings this season. How comfortable is he gonna look in a big spot today?

[00:17:35.080]>>Speaking of whom?

[00:17:37.160]>>There he is down there. The final group has reached the 4th. Blocked just double bogeyed the 3rd to give a couple back. I'd rather be long chipping back to that pin, to be honest with you.

[00:17:48.680]>>And I'm I'm gonna try to bunt this thing in time.

[00:17:51.550]>>I like it. Cut it. Cut it up there, yep.

[00:17:56.160]>>Me to your show.

[00:17:58.710]>>I mean it's still 224 and it's not exactly hot out. I do have a draw light though, so I'm gonna go with the sign with the camera guys.

[00:18:08.600]>>Cover my stance. There you go.

[00:18:14.120]>>OK, now we've got Michael Block ready to hit his 2nd, just left rough. His T-ball out of bounds on the last hole, end up making a double.

[00:18:24.520]>>It's got 205 front, 213 to the hole on a really nice line. Can you get up a little bit?

[00:18:33.630]>>What a shot

[00:18:37.120]>>And here's Darren Fichardt, the 51-year-old.

[00:18:40.070]>>From South Africa who's won 19 times around the globe, he's been in the hunt a couple times this season.

[00:18:52.470]>>Man, maybe it's his day, maybe it's his week. Didn't think we didn't think we'd be needing a prep on Darren Fichardt here in the 2nd playoff event. Look at that scorecard.

[00:19:04.070]>>You really gotta be careful, you get above these, these, these cups so fast, the greens are at least 14 plus.

[00:19:11.780]>>They have not lost any speed even with the cloud cover and a little bit of dampness out here.

[00:19:17.500]>>For a bounce back Birdie.

[00:19:21.290]>>Nice work, Azinger really dug in for that one. He's a good putter. He's just a really good putter. It's plain and simple. Got a nice read off the last part of Michael Block's putt from the back of the green.

[00:19:37.690]>>really focused yesterday on how compact his stroke is. If you just watch the head of the putter,

[00:19:45.020]>>It's almost like what could possibly go wrong?

[00:19:48.400]>>You know, it's going to go where he wants just to see if he can read it right.

[00:19:52.740]>>This is a tickler

[00:19:59.340]>>Beautiful pace as Zach Johnson drops one in. Now he's got things back on the front foot, and he's back within 2 of the lead. Just a short one here for Stenson. This hole has been the 3rd easiest on the golf course this week. A couple of eagles, 46 birdies picked up here.

[00:20:18.070]>>Yeah, similar putt to what Zach Johnson just made. This might have a little bit of right to left break in it, not quite as downhill as what.

[00:20:25.700]>>Zach had, but after that mis-hit 2nd shot, I'd love to get out of here with a birdie.

[00:20:38.810]>>All 3 players in the final group get the job done. Birdies for all of them at #4. And meanwhile up at 7, Stephen Ames in there close, looking for birdie number 4 of the round.

[00:20:54.680]>>There he goes. You know, he runs the tables on you once in a while. It's.

[00:20:59.350]>>Funny how he just has kind of had maybe just an average season.

[00:21:03.950]>>Meanwhile, back at 9, how about a little 28 through the opening half of the day for the leader? Could be his all-time best score ever. We'll have to ask him for sure what a score.

[00:21:16.110]>>There's your man Sabbatini. Zinger looking for Eagle at the 8th, made everything last Sunday, didn't he? It's quite the impressive run. He actually played the last 6 holes, 6 under, and then birdied the 1st 4 holes yesterday.

[00:21:28.330]>>Making a lot of nice putts. That's the key to that whole run he's on and look at that. He can make some Eagles, huh?

[00:21:36.410]>>Greg Chalmers began the week squarely on the bubble at 36th in the Schwab Cup race. I heard him on the radio.

[00:21:44.530]>>This morning, I think it was a replay best of talking about this very week.

[00:21:50.560]>>And, uh, he got some tough questions.

[00:21:54.230]>>Ame seems to be pretty secure.

[00:21:58.790]>>Hm. Especially with this start today. That's 5 birdies in the opening eight. Don't fall asleep on Stephen Ames as a potential winner of this tournament.

[00:22:08.810]>>Let's go to the 10, par 5 to start the back 9 here at Pleasant Valley and Mario Tiziani looking to tag it this for Eagle.

[00:22:19.240]>>Eventually it made its way to the hole and dropped into the bottom of the cup.

[00:22:25.940]>>That's a good pairing. Tiziani, Stankowski.

[00:22:31.150]>>is to get to 12 under.

[00:22:36.030]>>I have the field looking up at the board saying what's going on? Little claw grip pops that one in. Yeah, we got a special one brewing through 10 holes for Fichardt. It's been an onslaught. He leads by 3. David Toms currently projected at 36. This is the bubble boy, but if he were to birdie, would jump to 33rd. That's how quickly things can change. And of course double points on offer throughout the playoffs.

[00:23:02.830]>>Come tomorrow, there'll probably be 8 to 10 players that are gonna be stroke to stroke, whether they get in that top 36 and.

[00:23:12.930]>>Hard to believe that a player like David Thompson is on the bubble. This is one of the hardest tours in the world to get on and to stay exempt on. Here we go. This is for Birdie to get to 13 under par.

[00:23:26.600]>>Hello. Oh man, 10 under for the round and Pleasant Valley is under siege. Darren Fichardt threatening Steven Alker's 61 last year. After that brilliant pitch shot, I went over and then looked at the shot and I said, I'm not even sure I could have got this on the green.

[00:23:45.230]>>He's got 3 ft

[00:23:47.230]>>Pretty straight, maybe left center, I think Paul, that'd be about it.

[00:23:51.610]>>Well, this would be a sweet reward for taking that tee shot over the water.

[00:23:58.490]>>All the risk

[00:24:02.020]>>There's the resort paid off. It sure did.

[00:24:12.110]>>You know, Michael Block, who knows, maybe one of those guys having to take that risk tomorrow projected at 42nd. Right now that's a one spot improvement from where he began the week. Back up to the eighth and Alker, two-time winner of the Charles Schwab Cup 2022 and again in 2024.

[00:24:33.330]>>It's amazing and we've told the story so often, Zinger, but it bears repeating. He had zero access when he came out to this tour and he's had the season-long trophy in his hands twice. Pretty impressive, you know, he's kind of like, where did you come from? And now.

[00:24:49.530]>>If you like this tour, you're very familiar with Steven Alker.

[00:24:53.630]>>He's been a dominant figure, certainly one of the most consistent, calculated in his approach, strategic.

[00:25:00.980]>>And really, uh, everyone just admires the way he goes about it.

[00:25:08.580]>>This Eagle would be pretty stylish and would get Stenson to 11 under.

[00:25:16.720]>>Come on, Stenson. There you go. No.

[00:25:21.890]>>So Birdie at both of the par fives on the front side for Stenson today, but dearly would have wanted an eagle there. Man, that would have been something.

[00:25:31.930]>>Alker trying to get within 3 himself here.

[00:25:40.580]>>Always lurking, always hanging around, such a patient player. 4 birdies on the card.

[00:25:49.710]>>Collars are pretty smooth.

[00:25:59.720]>>Because sometimes there's such an, uh, I don't know, it just, you feel like a need to chip it, you know, the pro would chip this. No, he won't. He's gonna putt it.

[00:26:08.480]>>You know that Putt

[00:26:10.520]>>As Arnold Palmer used to say, it takes a great chip.

[00:26:15.250]>>To get inside a bad putt. So that's how he felt. Took a good chip to get inside a bad putt. Would you chip if you felt like you had to hold it and putt if you wanted to get down and sue?

[00:26:25.220]>>Yeah, general rule, uh, it was kind of in your mind that was supposed to be the general rule, but I'm not sure that was right. I think it was whatever you're most confident is right.

[00:26:35.660]>>Well, that was the right decision for Zach Johnson. Easy. Birdie gets in one closer to the lead. Stenson for birdie.

[00:26:45.570]>>There can't be much in it. He came from above the hole. Yeah, no mistake from Stinson, not here. Beautiful birdie. Easy birdie.

[00:26:55.350]>>There's a couple chances for Zach to make birdies.

[00:27:06.560]>>These are a couple of shortish par 4s back here and certainly 18, and then if you make a miracle like that, there you go.

[00:27:13.870]>>And that's kind of been his thing. That's how you win 6 times in one season.

[00:27:21.550]>>Ricardo Gonzalez looking for birdie here, up and over at 15. Well, everybody loves Ricardo Gonzalez.

[00:27:31.210]>>And boom, how about it. There's a little fist pump.

[00:27:37.010]>>40th in the points race coming into the week and he can get in and look at that scorecard. There's a lot of activity on this side. Where's the par?

[00:27:47.450]>>Stuck in that logjam with a couple others at 10 under.

[00:27:53.560]>>But able to dislodge from it 2 in a row for Zach. Here he comes.

[00:27:58.370]>>Yeah, Zach's like that

[00:28:00.300]>>You know, well, that shot from Stenson deserves a 4.

[00:28:05.350]>>Just outside the right edge, get a little speed.

[00:28:09.530]>>Buddy, oh yeah, fantastic. What a finish. Birdies from all three in the final group, putting the finishing touches on our Saturday coverage.

[00:28:20.360]>>Zach loving the fact that he got that up and in just admiring the touch of the big man, uh, Stenson.

[00:28:32.550]>>Wow, look at these chasers. Zach Johnson trying to win for the 7th time, Alker for the 5th time, Stenson Goosen, major Champions. Jerry Kelly won a senior major this year. It's the who's who of the Champs Tour. The only guy missing is Stewart Cink, and, uh, he may come flying up from the bottom of the pack tomorrow, but probably not a chance to win for Stewart. However, he can sure be prepping for next week. He may still be leading.

[00:28:57.900]>>The Charles Schwab Cup going into next week and it's just a really a who's who. These are the best players on this tour.

[00:29:10.260]>>Pleasant Valley Country Club in the capital city of Little Rock, Arkansas. The backdrop for the second leg of the Charles Schwab Cup Playoffs, the penultimate event of PGA Tour Champions season. Zach Johnson, Darren Fichardt in the final group of the day, separated by 2 here. The Simmons Bank Championship. 54 players qualified.

[00:29:34.000]>>To get into the field here this week with only 36 advancing to the Charles Schwab Cup Championship in 2 weeks.

[00:29:42.300]>>John Swantek, Paul Azinger is alongside. Zach Johnson in the final group of the day is at the 8th. John Cook is tagging along with them.

[00:29:50.960]>>I am tagging along 4 birdies, no bogeys on Zach's card, a beautiful start to the day coming off a birdie at the 7th and.

[00:30:01.200]>>That'll be just short of the green and easy pitch shot.

[00:30:05.160]>>Back to 8, Fichardt for the bounce back birdie.

[00:30:14.730]>>So he, he knows it's fast and going left or right, and that's a nice bounce back.

[00:30:19.400]>>Confident stroke there to get him back to 16 under.

[00:30:24.820]>>Back to 9

[00:30:26.460]>>Jerry Kelly. Oh yep, the little pop stroke. That's pop stroke Jerry Kelly, see who that is.

[00:30:34.530]>>What a 3. Birdie to get the lucky 13 for him.

[00:30:39.140]>>To 18 here, just a moment ago, that was the 3rd shot of Scott Parel into the par 5.

[00:30:48.900]>>Well, there you have it.

[00:30:50.910]>>You knew something special was gonna happen.

[00:30:54.160]>>That's a dangerous little pin in the front. A great way to finish, and that may be the way he finishes his year.

[00:31:01.140]>>We'll go back to 11. Saw the second shot of Stenson a little earlier.

[00:31:09.810]>>No, but how about the 3rd shot? Slick.

[00:31:15.250]>>What a recovery. Two straight birdies to start the back nine for Stenson, who is suddenly within 3 of the lead. So Stenson making a charge at Zach Johnson, who hit 2 beautiful shots into the par 5 here, Cookie.

[00:31:30.950]>>And this is actually be putting uphill a little bit.

[00:31:35.460]>>Back of this green goes towards the back of the green, so a little bit uphill, not much to it.

[00:31:41.880]>>Very horrible

[00:31:46.220]>>God.

[00:31:49.720]>>It just lacked the pace. Oh, dead on it from what we could tell.

[00:31:57.390]>>Birdie 5 of the round secured, pushing Johnson.

[00:32:03.250]>>To 18 under to clear a Fichardt for the moment.

[00:32:09.960]>>You know this one's got some break to it and going downhill, so this one's really quick.

[00:32:18.910]>>He's been pretty rock steady on these so far.

[00:32:23.560]>>Well, he just walked that one right in the middle. Step it in, big fella. Answers the call. He was up for the challenge again to stay within one of the lead.

[00:32:33.830]>>Goosen with a chance back here at 12.

[00:32:39.220]>>He really turned his putting around this season. He, he got off that kind of prayer grip, went back to the grip that won him two US Opens.

[00:32:48.550]>>And, you know, the greens are so fast. Doesn't he excel on fast greens as much as anybody? I think so. Michael Block overshot the green here at 13, going with Putter.

[00:33:04.360]>>Uh

[00:33:05.670]>>Oh wow, was that timely?

[00:33:12.620]>>Yeah, what, whatever. It was that easy. A little shrug. That's what he's like that emoji on, uh, you see that guy shrugging. Look him up.

[00:33:22.750]>>Zach Johnson now looking for his 6th birdie of the day.

[00:33:27.410]>>Pretty easy putt for him straight up the hill, maybe just right of center inside right, no more than that.

[00:33:34.760]>>It's this tiny little stroke, but it's not quick. It has this 12 cadence, like 1212.

[00:33:42.700]>>And he's gonna match that cadence exactly, and he has really read these greens well. And there you go again. That's been the result a lot this week. Look at all the birdies on the Sunday scorecard for Johnson, 6 of them to get him to 19 under.

[00:34:00.000]>>Fichardt to match the Johnson birdie back at 12.

[00:34:04.270]>>Yeah, this has got some movement to it from right to left. Pretty fast putt as well.

[00:34:10.420]>>He's hung in there all day and kind of a soft bogey at the 7th and he just walks these putts right in the middle. Paul, he knows he does walk them in. I like it off to 14 for the Jerry Kelly birdie putt.

[00:34:32.190]>>Got it.

[00:34:34.890]>>Wiggle it in there. Nice little pop stroke.

[00:34:40.520]>>Back to 15, Ricardo Gonzalez is in the group with Michael Block here.

[00:34:47.120]>>He's also just barely on the outside. What a good Putt.

[00:34:53.260]>>What a week it's been. Began the week at 40th in the points race and the projection looking a little more positive for Ricardo Gonzalez, who just bumped David Toms out of the top 36 with that birdie putt.

[00:35:21.310]>>Back at 14, Fichardt, big putt. Beautiful wedge shot, takes advantage of it.

[00:35:28.960]>>He knows how to win. He's trying to take down one of the best match play players, one of the hottest players of the year, Fichardt. Look at that guy.

[00:35:45.400]>>Retief Goosen coming off 3 consecutive bogeys. And he said, that's enough of that. How about a birdie at 16?

[00:35:57.930]>>Back to 16 for the outer birdie putt.

[00:36:01.430]>>Just off the back edge of the green choosing to pot it.

[00:36:07.340]>>Just how it rolls through that fringe cut.

[00:36:12.800]>>No quitting this man. What a day. No, there's no quit. He's right.

[00:36:18.120]>>And, uh, Zach with the mindset.

[00:36:21.650]>>Kicking into gear to take the lead, John, on this Putt.

[00:36:27.650]>>It's only about 7 ft or so.

[00:36:31.200]>>A beautiful wedge shot in there.

[00:36:33.640]>>Can you take advantage of it?

[00:36:51.350]>>To reclaim the lead. Was there ever a doubt?

[00:36:58.180]>>Birdie at 16. She's got that intangible. Stenson still alive, needs a 2 at 17 for sure.

[00:37:12.080]>>And he got it. What an emotional seesaw battle. He's just really got to pull it all together.

[00:37:19.800]>>I think this guy, after that shot, John Cook.

[00:37:25.020]>>He has intents on making, he's intent on making this. There's Zach over there waiting helplessly.

[00:37:34.640]>>I'll tell you what, he's answered the call each and every time here, Paul, and this is kind of like the putt that Zach had on the last hole. You want to make it go to the right, but it just doesn't do much.

[00:37:47.480]>>Everything in your eye, it tells you this has got to fall right, but it doesn't.

[00:37:54.610]>>He's playing it to go a little right.

[00:37:57.380]>>Um

[00:38:00.260]>>Just inside the coin of Zach Johnson and right to the bottom of the hole. This guy's money, that's nails right there. A 2 at 17, there's only been 7 of them today.

[00:38:13.980]>>All the confidence in the world.

[00:38:17.710]>>None of the real experience, at least not out here. It's been a long time since he's won.

[00:38:24.720]>>And look at the length of this all of a sudden, John Cook, that's no gimme now.

[00:38:30.340]>>No, that's what I was saying when you asked me that, what his mindset is. I said if he tries to make this, he could hit it 3 or 4 ft by, and that's exactly what he did. And now, yeah, this just got a little bit longer.

[00:38:44.000]>>Putt, you're so tired. After that clutch putt that uh

[00:38:48.150]>>Darren Fichardt just made.

[00:38:54.530]>>Zach hasn't even come close to missing the center of the hole on any of these putts the entire tournament.

[00:39:03.120]>>You know, he knows what's at stake. He's had this.

[00:39:06.390]>>He'd been here many, many times.

[00:39:09.620]>>Pretty street putt.

[00:39:16.500]>>Dead center. 3 for Zach Johnson, 2 for Darren Fichardt. They are 7 clear of the pack as they share the lead and march to the 18th.

[00:39:29.250]>>OK

[00:39:31.640]>>Pretty impressive round, 6 under par.

[00:39:36.230]>>And Stenson, remember, drove it in the fairway bunker, had to lay it up, needs birdie here. Third shot.

[00:39:47.600]>>Gotta have it. Oh, it's gonna be one of those uphill.

[00:39:52.160]>>No, no, no, no, stop. Oh, well, that's gonna be the putt.

[00:40:02.740]>>Putt there something like that.

[00:40:09.250]>>It means so much. That's a good drive. It means so much for Fichardt if, if he were to win.

[00:40:13.930]>>In this golf tournament, John Cook. But, you know, an equal amount for Zach Johnson, he could take the lead in the Charles Schwab Cup. There's a lot going on.

[00:40:23.900]>>And uh it's this guy, the journeyman against Zach Johnson.

[00:40:30.250]>>One of the biggest tee balls of his life right here.

[00:40:38.620]>>He hit a pearl here yesterday up the left side. See if he can repeat.

[00:40:46.110]>>Well, he's answered the call time and time again. Beautiful tee shot. He's hit almost every single fairway.

[00:40:56.210]>>He's really driven the ball great.

[00:40:59.470]>>Uh

[00:41:02.510]>>A couple of birdies here at the 18th for Zach Johnson along the week. Will one more bring him victory number 7 of the season?

[00:41:23.620]>>He's got Darren Fichardt in prime position, so pressure on Zack now.

[00:41:28.780]>>Beauty, 3 great tee shots.

[00:41:34.500]>>Oh, tight little draw with some chase at the tail end of it.

[00:41:38.650]>>Yeah, he hit that dead in the center, right on the sweet spot. You don't get that kind of run out unless you nailed it.

[00:41:50.160]>>Stenson Birdie the 17th.

[00:41:52.890]>>He needs another one to knock David Toms out and head for Phoenix.

[00:42:00.920]>>And it's going to be those costly shots at 15 and 16 when he gave 3 away that's going to cost him a spot in the field in the Schwab Cup championship in 2 weeks. This was the birdie putt of Jerry Kelly to shoot 67 today. What a week for Jerry. Lone bogey of

the week came on the opening hole yesterday. That was the only blemish across 354 marvelous holes.

[00:42:27.030]>>Pretty steady for Jerry Kelly. It's been kinda

[00:42:31.380]>>Injury prone for a little patch here last year and this year, but he's come through strong as usual. Major champion winning at Glen Eagles, the Senior Open.

[00:42:41.510]>>Held off a guy by the name of Darren Fichardt who finished 2nd that week. And Fichardt, if you recall, almost flipped one in for an eagle on the final hole, which potentially could have forced extra holes with Jerry Kelly. He pushed him to the brink there and

[00:42:56.430]>>Proving this week that he belongs out here on this tour, making his 15th start on the cusp of victory perhaps as things unfold here at 18, Cookie.

[00:43:08.280]>>Yeah, right down the middle of the fairway, but he's, he's spotted Zach Johnson about 25 yards, so 254 to the hole, he can reach.

[00:43:15.870]>>Screen, there's no, no question about that. It gives them 245 to the front.

[00:43:22.000]>>Great look from the green down towards Fichardt, the camera in place. Here we go.

[00:43:35.530]>>Just right of the green, if it gets a kick, this should be, this could be good. It could be great. No, it's better than great.

[00:43:45.180]>>Sensational.

[00:43:55.060]>>I mean right here if you feel like a problem.

[00:44:00.040]>>I just, I'm worried about hitting a 3 and just get absolutely going because I can't swing easy at a 30, I got you, dude. You're on the 4. Hit it. I'm on it right now. I'm not fully decided yet. I will commit whenever I do. I will commit.

[00:44:22.060]>>I mean that's how you send it right now with that thing. The wind is not hurting at all.

[00:44:30.670]>>OK, wind out of the right, 227, this is his 4 hybrid, he hit it on the last hole, hit it right on the button. He knows what he's gotta do.

[00:44:42.370]>>Sends it high in the air, moving from right to left, needs to hold its line right there.

[00:44:48.470]>>Can he use that backstop? Will he use the backstop?

[00:44:53.940]>>No, it's too far and he's gonna have to put down the backstop. It's a nail biter now. He was fully committed to that 4 hybrid to Darren Fichardt fully committed as well. Chance for an eagle when we come back.

[00:45:17.170]>>Look at the scene at the 18th hole at Pleasant Valley. Looks like everybody on the property is around the perimeter of the green here. Zach Johnson, Darren Fichardt, co-leaders at 20 under, both with eagle putts.

[00:45:33.240]>>Great attendance, really well attended. Great community here, great community support.

[00:45:47.970]>>What a crowd.

[00:45:50.890]>>And Zach Johnson now and

[00:45:54.090]>>And he's looking at this like he's, uh, trying to figure out some kind of puzzle here, John. He's got a lot of, it's, it's a busy putt.

[00:46:04.290]>>I would call it busy. I'd also call it, call it complicated.

[00:46:08.850]>>Because if he just has to crest the hill, that's it. He's got to hit it about a 3 footer and then.

[00:46:15.870]>>The slope will take it the rest of the way.

[00:46:18.630]>>Now he had one of these on 7 the other day.

[00:46:22.270]>>Very similar to this, and he left it about 3 ft short and then missed it.

[00:46:28.120]>>But this one right here, I think it's got a little bit more slope to it. If you just crest the hill here, Paul, I think it'll get all the way there.

[00:46:38.760]>>Hey

[00:46:39.520]>>It has felt very much like match play Zinger for several holes, and they always say in match play you have to assume your opponent's going to make a putt. Fichardt is in there close. How does that affect how Zach Johnson puts a roll on this one? Yeah, he's got to get this. He's got to get this going way left. Stop it right on the crest.

[00:47:01.100]>>You know, the interesting thing is Zach Johnson has so much experience in this situation against Fichardt.

[00:47:08.510]>>Presidents Cup.

[00:47:12.690]>>Ryder Cup.

[00:47:15.780]>>All right, I got

[00:47:17.290]>>Lots of matches under his belt, and this is a metal match play where you have to post the score, but it's totally.

[00:47:24.700]>>This putt for Zach against Darren Fichardt for the championship, John Cook, and boy, Zach's taken a long time.

[00:47:34.700]>>Yeah, it's complicated, Paul, like we said, he's gotta hit this like a 3 footer.

[00:47:43.520]>>Not locked in on it just yet.

[00:47:47.300]>>

[00:47:49.380]>>He's playing 20 ft of break.

[00:47:52.200]>>Look where he's aim. That's, that's a solid 20 ft of break, 18 ft of break. Look at that. Just tap it.

[00:48:07.520]>>That's got a little speed to it. Oh my goodness, easy.

[00:48:12.790]>>We may be about to be outside of Darren Fichardt. Yeah, he is. We might be witnessing something very rare and special.

[00:48:24.970]>>Who's out, John? Looks like maybe.

[00:48:29.560]>>I think it's Steven Alker for par.

[00:48:36.350]>>But he's also going to give Zach a little bit of a read.

[00:48:43.140]>>Well, Zach hasn't had a three-putt the whole tournament.

[00:49:00.290]>>Zach Johnson in there quickly watching that one like a hawk trying to gain some information.

[00:49:06.690]>>Disappointing finish for Alker, made a couple of 6s on the 18th year this week. It wasn't his day, but he will live to fight another day.

[00:49:17.780]>>And that will be in Phoenix in 2 weeks.

[00:49:24.870]>>Well, the last thing he wanted after that eagle putt, Cookie, was his stress on the Birdie putt. That's exactly what Zach has on his hands here.

[00:49:32.870]>>Yeah, that he does. He just had it in a bad spot, you know, he hit that 4 hybrid just a little too good.

[00:49:42.160]>>But he got a good read off of Steven Alker. He knows exactly what it does. It will fall slightly to the left. You gotta keep speed up.

[00:49:49.920]>>And just dissecting the putt from the cup all the way back to the ball.

[00:49:55.310]>>He uses all the tricks, breaking out the plum bob.

[00:50:03.270]>>If it doesn't go in, it will give Darren Fichardt two putts to win. So effectively this has to go down and time and again today, this week, this season, this man has been up to the challenge in moments like these.

[00:50:23.800]>>Zach's a closer, Swanny.

[00:50:27.540]>>This is one of the putts, you know, you expect him to make no 3 putts for the week, John Cook, not 1.

[00:50:34.780]>>This is the final hole.

[00:50:38.700]>>Got to make it.

[00:50:41.690]>>Right on the right edge with some speed.

[00:50:45.330]>>when it drops.

[00:50:47.690]>>Just enough speed.

[00:50:51.280]>>What a 4.

[00:50:54.490]>>Nails, that's all you can say, I mean.

[00:50:57.710]>>That is some good putting this week.

[00:51:01.540]>>64 on the final day for Zach Johnson, and he can only watch and wait now. The tournament is in the hands of the 51-year-old South African Darren Fichardt for Eagle to win the Simmons Bank Championship, and this will be the upset of the decade, John Cook, if he makes this.

[00:51:21.660]>>Big breaker from right to left and once it starts breaking, Paul, it will pick up speed. He's got to be high line, let it drip in.

[00:51:32.880]>>Get

[00:51:34.230]>>Oh, and it's Fichardt at the finish.

[00:51:38.940]>>What a Putt.

[00:51:42.720]>>Eagle on the fifty-fourth hole and he's a winner for the first time on the Champions Tour. And he takes down a big scalp, a playoff victory at the Simmons Bank Championship.

[00:51:57.800]>>That was incredible. What a spectacular finish to the week here at the Simmons Bank Championship. Darren Fichardt Eagles, the 18th to shoot 64 after yesterday's 61. He establishes the tournament scoring mark with a 22 under par total.