

2025 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER

SHOW #10

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > Major championship season is here on PGA Tour Champions, bringing us to sweet home Alabama. Greystone Golf and Country Club in Birmingham, again serving as host for the region's tradition. First of five majors on this tour.

OC VO > Hello everyone, and welcome to Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini. A major means for rounds, not three. And the stakes are certainly higher for the players. As for the region's tradition, it is an event rich in history, with past winners like Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino and Tom Watson, among others.

VO > This year's champion battled the field and Mother Nature. Rain was a constant subplot for the week in Hoover, causing delays Sunday and eventually a stoppage of play. Five players returned Monday at 9 a.m. to finish, including co-leader Jerry Kelly. This is Kelly at the par four 16th for birdie. And again, he is tied for the lead with Angel Cabrera at 19 under.

VO > Cabrera was magnificent on Sunday and kept that momentum going into the Monday finish. This is his third from the greenside bunker and the par five 18th leading this for birdie. Cabrera carded nine birdies in his final round. None bigger than this beautiful roll that finds the bottom. A round of 64 and a 20 under par finish.

VO > It is Kelly giving chase at the par three 17th, though a critical mistake. Kelly puts his tee ball into the greenside bunker. Really can Kelly get up and down from that bunker on 17 to keep pace. He leaves his second shot to hear what was a critical par putt with one to play. And Jerry cannot convert. He walks off 17 with bogey dropping a shot. Sitting two back of leader Cabrera heading to the last.

VO > Kelly on 18 now and needing eagle to tie for the lead. His second shot has to give him that opportunity, yet Kelly comes up well short of the green and his chances are fading. Last hope for Kelly with Cabrera safely, and he must hold his shot for eagle and a tie, and that does not happen. And the Regions Tradition goes to 55-year-old Angel Cabrera.

VO > And there's your winner. Angel Cabrera has won his first major on the PGA Tour Champions. He shoots a 64 in the final round.

VO > A second victory in four starts and his first senior major. Are Jeff Sluman caught up with the winner.

OC > Easiest 64 I've maybe ever seen, but I was most impressed with how you started out today. Birdie 16. Nice. Par 717 and then birdie 18.

OC > Bonus for Randy and I'll pay him within a year. So, I told him they all pay so much joy when I put Trevino in a good.

OC > It was a great day. Especially yesterday and today started with a great kid. Today it was cool.

OC VO > Okay. Last question. You want your first event two months ago on the PGA Tour Champions. Now you've kind of major on the PGA Tour Champions two months later. Did you ever imagine it would happen that quickly?

OC > No. Like I like you know me, Mickey naked gives you a thumbs up.

You. So, yeah. Was I got to put an open thumbs up here and there though.

OC > And we'll get there so quickly. I always thought I would, but I know I thought it would be so fast.

OC > All right. From all of us at the Golf Channel. Congratulations. That was fantastic play this week.

OC > Thank you very much. Thank you.

VO > Thank you. And congratulations to the Argentine masters and U.S. open winner. He wins and pushes into the top five in the Charles Schwab Cup standings. The top four remain the same. Kelly's runner up has him at sixth and Y.E. Yang's third at regions has him in the top ten.

VO > The region's tradition has been kind to Steve Stricker, as three of his seven career PGA Tour Champions majors have been won here. But 2025 has been a challenge physically for the former U.S. Ryder Cup captain. He went through an extended absence and only returned last week in Birmingham with improved health and an update on injuries that have sidelined him since the season opener in Hawaii.

OC > It's great to see Steve Stricker, a three-time winner of the region's tradition back at Greystone and really back on the tour after, what, a four-month layoff because of some injury problems you're dealing with. What can you share with us, Steve?

OC VO > Yeah, it's, it's been a battle the last few months, off the golf course and, you know, just been trying to get stronger again. You know, I had, a back problem that I thought I fixed, and then it I it morphed into a neck problem that I had this problem about 12 years ago, too. So, it kind of showed its ugly head again. And lost a bunch of strength in my left side, and, tried to play after the pain went away, but there just wasn't any strength. And it literally looked like I'd never played golf before. So, I've been spending the last 2 or 3 weeks just playing a lot, trying to get stronger, and it is getting stronger. That's the one good thing when you when you get a compressed nerve in your neck or anywhere, and if it happens too long, you know, you lose that, lose that strength. And sometimes it takes a long time to come back. But this, fortunately, is coming back pretty quickly.

OC > So, what are some of the treatment options and and how are you affected by playing the golf now is that is that been a good thing?

OC VO > Yeah, it's been great to play. And I've played a lot down in Florida. I've been playing a lot with Goosen down there and a few other guys. And it's, it's just been good to get back out there to play. And I just keep working at it. Right? I mean, it's, we all, at this age have something to deal with, and I'm no different.

And so, it's just it's been a process. It's taking a little longer than I thought, but, happy to be here this week, and I don't know what my game is going to be like. But, you know, I've been doing some good things, when I play. So, we'll see.

VO OC > Yeah. So, it's going to affect your, your tournament schedule, I would imagine. But what about your events coming up The American Family Insurance Championship?

OC > Super excited about that. Yeah. And the buzz around, the players is, is the same. You know, everybody's excited to come to Madison to play a team event. I get to play with my brother-in-law, Mario Tiziani which will be a lot of fun. We a family affair that week. And we're looking forward to it. And a new venue at TPC Wisconsin, my father in law's, golf course. So, you know, totally a dream for him to host an event and for us to be there and support our community and and to play a team event. You know, we don't get a lot of opportunities to do that out here and, or anymore, and, so we're all really, really excited to be doing it.

OC > Great format too.

OC > Yeah. We we're going to make it fun, right? We, we're going to play a best scramble than a best ball. So, yeah, it's it's a great format. No alternate shot. I said, you know what? Let's just have fun with this thing and and not put a lot of pressure on the guys. And let's have a lot of fun. And hopefully the fans will see that, in the players, a lot of smiles, a lot of joking around and having a little bit more fun than normal.

OC > Yeah, I know you're going to be out there no matter what. Hell, or high water, right? No matter how you feel. What if you have to play maybe with with one arm? Is it possible?

OC VO > I'll be there and I'm feeling a lot better, I really am, I'm feeling better. It's just about getting my game in shape, I think. And, But that's why I'm here. And try to compete and try to see what happens here this week and go from there.

VO > Yeah. And lastly, you know, it's funny, you've always kind of contoured your own schedule, but sometimes when the schedule is contoured for you it's a little different than do you. And I'm sure you miss it even even more.

OC > I did enjoy my time at home, though. I'm I mean, put it that way. You know, I, my schedule may be reflective of that going forward, too, because it was, it was fun to be there and, and, you know, played a lot of golf still, but just didn't have to worry about preparing, you know, as much as I did this last week to try to get ready for here. So, yeah, we'll just see how this goes and take it from there.

OC > So glad you're out here, Steve.

OC > Thanks.

OC > Good seeing you.

OC > Good to see you too, buddy. Yeah. Thank you.

VO > PGA Tour Champions is and always will be a second chapter in the careers of players like two-time PGA tour winner Will Mackenzie, who turned 50 last September. A free spirit who's

played many tours trek through places like Wyoming, Montana and even Alaska before life brought him back to golf in Birmingham as an invite. He explains why the Regions Tradition was his first PGA Tour Champions start.

VO OC > I'm dealing with a few little tweaks and injuries that I've just not been able to overcome. I put my application into Q school and was really wanting to go, but I was unable to practice and lo and behold, just pulled out. Knew I was going to have to shoot 15 under. Didn't feel like my body was going to be able to take it. So, pulled out and then just been focused with work. Got to make a dollar. So been I've been working, PGA Tour Live. It's been great. Been watching so much golf. But that's been giving me the itch, you know, to come out here. And this tour's so sweet. You know these dudes everybody's very focused. But it's pretty laid back.

VO > Coming up on Learning Center Wednesday and stargazing with celebrities from both entertainment and sports. Sir Charles in the pro-am, along with the go to college football coaches and the big dog from Athens all visit with us, talking golf and life next.

VO > If feel good vibes were a person, it would be Boo Weekly. The guy who makes us happy with his warm personality got to lift himself while in Birmingham as Boo's 90-year-old grandfather made the trip to watch him play. Boo's uncle was also on hand, and we were fortunate enough to sit in on this family reunion.

OC > All right pop, I love you. Glad you get to come watch me play. First time in Birmingham get to come play here. You know that's not right. That's right. But they put it on day two. They tell you and put it on day. And one of the other no children. That's right. We going to put it off to everyone on the show at that time. We out there goofing off and playing golf. There's four generations here buddy. Four generations, unreal and unreal. But again, you played a game. That's right. I'm glad you're here with me. Yeah, I'm proud to be here, son. Appreciate you. Yes, sir. I love you.

OC > It's unreal to have my family here to support me. And they see my ups. They see my downs. They seen the good stuff. They seen the bad. And, they've always been behind me, and that's, you know, that's what family is.

OC > What's it like to be here? To watch Boo play?

OC > Oh, well, we've traveled along way. (Undiscernible) you know? Yes. You don't drive your golf cart now; you better get on the ball on Thursday. But we're you to.

VO OC > He watched we play from the Nationwide Tour days, and we travel from Chattanooga to Louisiana to everywhere Mississippi. We got on the PGA Tour and John Deere Classic. Yes, we have been everywhere. We've been everywhere. Yes, sure. Yeah. How proud are you of his game here?

OC > He's a little proud.

OC > The Regions Tradition, Tradition. Each year, a very special Wednesday pro-am featuring celebrities with deep connections to the state of Alabama. Folks like, arguably the greatest college football coach in history and perhaps the finest all-around American athlete of the 20th

century. We were sharing time with many of them and offering equal opportunities to Roll Tide and War Eagle.

VO OC > The Regions, they do so much for us, our universities in the state, and then obviously for the Children's Alabama's hospital.

VO OC > I come over here more for my, loyalty to to Regis Bank and the Children's Hospital. It means a lot to give back to this community.

OC > Please welcome the one the only Bo Jackson.

VO OC > It's home. I grew up here to show my limited golf skills to all my friends and fans. It's a good thing because you're giving back.

VO OC > Shout out to my Auburn people. It's always great to come back here. It's great for the city this week and to me to play a small part in it. I get to honor playing with the greatest college football coach ever, so that's even more special.

VO OC > I would think now with without coaching duties that your game would improve exponentially. Has it?

OC > Not really. Seems like the more you play, the worse you get.

OC > You've had an interesting relationship with golf, right? Would you say it's like a rocky marriage sometimes?

OC > Yes

VO OC > I'm thinking you're busy in Athens. I don't know how much time you have for your golf. Like what's prep time for you for this event? Like a quick bucket of balls?

OC > Yeah, a bucket of balls. Maybe a member guest here. Now, that's that's about it. But I don't get to practice much.

VO OC > Me and Kirby, you have a little deal going today. I think I can take him. I think I can take Kirby. We got a little side action going on today, and, but we always do. And, he and I are good friends, too, so it's good to see those guys out here.

VO > I heard you and Freeze got a little something going.

OC VO > Well, freeze is a better golfer than me. Let's clear that up first of all. But I do get more strokes than him, so it balances out.

OC > What do they say about coaches? If you're if you're

OC > If you're playing good golf, you're probably soon to be fired.

VO > What is your inner coaching monologue to yourself? Coaching yourself through a hole or a shot.

VO OC > Well, you know, when I was a coach, I always emphasized the players just play the next play. But how do you manage that in golf? You know, golf is like a metaphor of life. You know,

every shot matters, but then you got to hit the next shot, and you got to have full concentration on every shot, or you get punished. And I think that's what some of the really good players can do. They recover great. They can stay focused on what they need to do on the next shot.

VO OC > You're just these guys year-round, so it makes it competitive. Not so much in golf, but for gridiron it is.

OC > What do you say to folks in just a shout Roll Tide to you?

VO OC > I, I just say Roll Tide back.

OC > Not War Eagle.

VO OC > t's either a way of saying hello or screw you.

VO > Coming up on Learning Center, more major momentum. Ernie Els sits in as the Senior PGA Championship sets up at the site of his 1997 US open win. The Big Easy on memories of congressional and what to expect there.

VO > The PGA Tour Champions makes its way to venerable Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland, this week for the senior PGA Championship. The iconic Blue Course is again front and center, becoming only the fourth club in the country to host all four of the United States men's traveling major championships.

VO > For some players on this tour, it will be the first time playing congressional. But for Ernie Els, one of the feel-good locations of his brilliant career, The Big Easy won his second U.S. open championship at congressional back in 1997. Prior to returning, we had a chance to speak with Els about that victory and grab some insight into what we can expect given the course changes in 2020.

OC > It is back-to-back major championships on PGA Tour Champions, as the Senior PGA Championship, presented by KitchenAid sets up at Congressional Country Club, all too familiar to this man. Ernie Els, the World Golf Hall of Famer. 1997 you win your second U.S. Open at Congressional 28 years ago. Yeah, Ernie, almost 30 years ago. How about that?

OC What is going on? I mean, really, you haven't changed a bit. Oh, my goodness. I've had to make a couple of four footers in my life. I've really aged, but no, it's it's amazing. Yes. Almost 30 years ago. And my first one was, you know, I guess 31 years ago. So yeah, it was great times. I mean, I remember a lot of what happened on that Sunday, quite clearly.

OC VO > And I want to get into that. So, let's go back. You mentioned your first U.S. Open win at Oakmont in the playoff in 1994. So, you're sort of a more a known commodity, more or less in 97 coming into Congressional. But you weren't exactly in great form. Right? That week.

OC VO > Exactly no, I, I was struggling with my game a little bit. I remember we rented a house for two weeks, because the week before was, in Andondale. And then I missed the cut there and then myself and Ricky Roberts, my caddie. Then, we actually started working at congressional from the Sunday. We kind of took Saturday off, but then Sunday we started working and we really worked on the yardage of every single club on my bag because we were kind of struggling,

getting the right yardage. So, I was by it. Thursday, I knew exactly where every piece of grass was growing on, Congressional.

OC > And it was kind of a, a strange finish, a congressional right, because because of weather, you had to finish the third round on Sunday. And let's talk a little bit about that that day. What you recall.

OC > Yeah, this Saturday, I remember I play with Stewart Cink. You know, he was he was really one of the younger guys coming through. I can't remember. The third was in our group, but we got stuck on the golf course. We played our third round, and we had to come back, Sunday morning. I didn't have a great finish to my, Saturday afternoon round, so I wasn't in a really great mood going in. You know, having to come back in the morning, but I I birdied some holes.

OC > You got you got hot.

OC > Yeah. Birdied the par five and I birdied, 17 somehow and got me really back into the tournament, you know, got me into the second last group into the Sunday afternoon round. So, it was a big finish for me in that morning to get back into things.

OC > Yeah. And then in the final run, there's always a key moment. Would it be, would it be a ten maybe. The key.

OC VO > Yeah. Ten was a chip in long par for up the hill. There was 4 or 5 of us in real in contention, you know, with Tom Lehman again. You know, seems like he was in contention every year. Jeff Maggert, myself, Colin Montgomerie, you know, one of us were going to win or lose the open, which basically happened.

OC > How much did being in that position help you for the next time around?

OC VO > It's really help because I mean, in 94, you know, we went 90 holes, 92 holes. So, I was comfortable in the heat of stuff. You know, I felt I was patient. And I was patient again that's Sunday afternoon wasn't playing my greatest golf. I was playing solidly. And I just felt I needed to just kind of stay in the moment. And we always thought 17 was going to be the the pivotal hole, which we did turn out to be 17 and really 18.

OC > So now as we move forward, what types of challenges will Congressional present for the senior PGA Championship?

OC VO > Well, let me tell you, I think they've changed the whole golf course. I mean, it was a tree lined course, very much like Oakmont was back in 94. I think both golf courses really change as new golf courses. So, I'm going to be, you know, like every other play, I'm going to try and figure out how to play it again because, they played a ladies event and I was trying to figure out where they are. And when I saw the clubhouse, I couldn't believe it was Congressional. So, it's it's going to be a new look for us and I what I've heard, it's a great look. So, we'll see.

OC > What would it mean to go back there and win again at Congressional?

OC VO > Well it's so many great fond memories. And you know, we played some PGA tour events there. And, you know, I went back, you know, for another U.S. open I think where Rory won. But just just to go into the clubhouse. And I know there's some photos from from back in

97. And Mike Leermaze was a fellow South African used to run the club for almost 20 years. Hopefully he'll be around. I know he's not there anymore, but you know, just to see some of the members again and see the nice swimming pool down there. Hopefully that's the layout and and see the locker room. It's going to be great memories.

OC > What would you tell if you were talking to young Ernie Els in 1997? You would you do you think he would say he he'd still be playing for major championships all these years later?

OC VO > No, I almost have been in Rory shoes. What he said a couple of months ago. Like, no way I'll play when I'm 50, but I'm. Yeah, I'm still enjoying it and still trying to figure it out in many ways. So very fortunate to still be playing the game and having the opportunity to play. It's amazing how time changes your view and views on many things.

OC > Yes it does. Time and reaching a certain age you start to get a new perspective.

OC > Yeah, I mean I am running out of I'm 55. I don't think I'll be doing he doing it like Bernhard Langer has. Who knows. But I don't think so. But at the moment I'm enjoying it, and the competition is good and we're playing great golf courses like Congressional, so it should be really in a good space.

OC > I'm glad you're still here. We're we're all happy.

OC > Same here.

OC > Thank you brother. Good luck.

VO > Well that was easy. This week not so much more major entertainment is on the way. And as always, we will be there to deliver for all of us at learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini, and we thank you for watching.