

2025 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #25

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > PGA Tour Champions staged its regular season finale in North Carolina over the weekend. Preston Wood Country Club was a place to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the SAS Championship, as well as those finishing top 72 in the playoff's standings.

OC > Hi everyone, and welcome to a soggy PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini. Those 72 players mentioned now on their way to a three-event playoff, as the SAS Championship was either a springboard to the postseason or heartache for those players on the outside looking in. And oh yes, we crowned a champion in Cary, North Carolina. So, you can Cejka that box with a look back. Our men on the scene, John Swantek and John Cook.

VO OC > It was cold. It was breezy. It was blustery and drizzly throughout the final round of the SAS Championship. Mother nature threw everything at the field in the final regular season events of the year. Alex Cejka had a three-shot lead going into the final round. Cookie. He loves tough conditions. He thrives in them, and he was up to the challenge yet again.

OC > Yeah, it was brutal conditions out there today. Four birdies three bogeys on his round two for a 71. That's how you win golf tournaments.

OC VO > All right we'll check out the highlights from the final day. As Cejka was holding off some proven winners trying to run him down. This was big early in the round at six.

VO > Yeah, an early bogey at the fourth hole there for Alex trying to get one back here at the sixth. Well done.

VO > The lead was three. As I mentioned going into the final round, it was trimmed to one on a couple of occasions and the main competitor trying to hunt him down was Ernie Els.

VO > Played a brilliant front nine and a couple under par makes the turn here at the tough 10th. And that is a bonus birdie there for Ernie.

VO > So Ernie was hanging around trying to apply the pressure and picked up another one here at 12. Tough par five today. Straight into the win. Not reachable by anybody. And Ernie does it the old-fashioned way.

VO > A few bogeys along the way for Cejka. But he always seemed to respond didn't he.

VO > Yeah, a bogey at the 12th hole there for Alex. Bounce back. Birdie opportunity here at the 13th after a beautiful approach shot. Good birdie there.

VO > Just kept giving himself a little more breathing room with each ensuing hole. And had to make for 17.

VO > Downwind par five all week. Everybody just been hammering this hole just off the edge of the green. Chose a putt it and did it nicely.

VO > So that carved out a two-shot lead. It was all he was looking for back at the par five. So, he had three putts at his disposal. We needed him here. Yeah. Played it very conservatively off the just up the front part of the green. And just two putts to win. But why not.

VO > He finishes in style. An emphatic conclusion to the day and the week in North Carolina. And an emotional Alex Cejka wins for the first time this season, and the fourth time in his PGA Tour Champions career. We also determine the 72 players that qualify for the opening leg of the playoffs next week in Richmond, Virginia. So, a lot of storylines we're following closely as we crowned the final regular season champion of the year, Alex Cejka. Let's hear from our winner.

OC > Career win number four for Alex. Much like number three I would think at the Senior Open. In terms of weather, what is it with you grinding through in weather like this?

OC VO > Man I don't know, I thought it was like a lucky shot at the senior British Open a couple of years ago. I guess I confirm that I'm a bad weather player today. I don't know, this week, you know, the first day was great. The last couple days were just tricky. Challenging. It's a beautiful golf course out here. The greens were really fast. You know, and I really played good golf. I hit a lot of fairways. That was the key this week. To hit fairways, when it's, wet, windy, raining. And you have to hit second shots into those, greens from the from the rough. It's really tough. I was lucky that I really drove it well. And, you know, that kind of showed and, I'm I'm glad it's over. And when number four and first three round tournament win for me, some really emotional, very pleased.

OC > How tough was it to really get this home on Saturday and Sunday? And did you find some inspiration in your, your playing competitor, your hero?

OC VO > Yeah. Yesterday. Yesterday I wasn't nervous at all. I really played well yesterday. Today, you know, always last round, last group. You always look a little bit like, on the edge. But I think Bernard calmed me down a little bit. We know each other for so many years now. We've played so many times, so get so many practice round, so many golf rounds out here. Under pressure in final round. So, you know, most of the times he he beat me. It's finally nice to kind of beat him and, all the beat the whole field basically.

OC > How satisfying now to win this final event of the year and have some momentum for the playoffs and the fact that, you know, I know you're banged up a little bit, and you and you came close this year to winning as well.

OC VO > Yeah, I think we all are banged up. You know it's a long season. Everybody has some kind of issues. But, you know, I'm, I'm playing. Well, I love the next three, three weeks we're playing. It's, great tournaments, great golf courses. The form as well. I moved up, a couple spots in the, in the Schwab Cup, after after today. So, we'll see what happens. Hopefully I can have a strong finish.

OC > Well, congratulations. Great playing.

OC > Thank you, thank you.

VO > A Look at the Charles Schwab Cup point standings. Now at regular season end. The top nine will go unchanged as it is a star-studded list, with Miguel Angel Jimenez remaining number one. The only change Alex Cejka moving up two places into the top ten with a win at the SAS Championship. And now the stakes are even higher.

VO > The road to the Charles Schwab Cup continues this week with the start of the playoffs. The Country Club of Virginia and the Dominion Energy Charity classic hosts the top 72 players in the Schwab Cup standings. Points are doubled and things move very quickly.

VO > This is a look inside and outside the top 72, aka the bubble. Mike Weir is in at 71 and Kirk Triplett is in on the nose and by the smallest of margins. Brandt Jobe was 73 and a mere \$200 behind Triplett. Don't think every shot counts. A season long goal was met for those who qualified, but only disappointment for the players who did not.

OC VO > What now? I'm not sure. I don't know what this is going to look like moving forward. So, maybe done, maybe a golf, maybe over now? Not sure yet. We'll see. It's just getting harder and harder to you can get a start out here.

OC VO > It's been a very difficult year. Dealing with injuries hasn't been fun. It's been frustrating. Kind of like this whole week. And it's that's kind of what it's been. It's been a frustrating week. It's been I'm tired. You know I'm tired. It's it's been a long three years.

OC > You know when it's time and it's time; it's been a whole lot better run than I ever thought it would be. And, looking forward to the next thing, which won't be making three footers that count.

VO OC > We'll see. This is the thing, right? You played 22 events. My partner and I are sitting at the team championship, and I decide, he says, I'm going to go catch a flight, right? I decided to withdraw because it's just inconvenient. I don't want to miss my flight, you know? So, there's a couple grand right there. That's that's throw me up three places, you know. So, the little decisions that you make like that, take one shot off every

day, score and see how much money you and what a difference that makes at the end of the year. One stinking shot.

OC VO > I can't do anything about what the other guys do. I just have to, trying to do my best out here today, and I fear so next week, whenever I play next week, I play good enough to make it on the next play, next week's playoff, which I think is 54.

VO > Following Richmond, 54, will advance in the playoffs to the Simmons Bank Championship and Pleasant Valley Country Club in Little Rock, then the top 36 qualify for the Charles Schwab Cup championship. There a champion will emerge in the event and the overall season. Those 36 will also earn guaranteed playing status for next season. Last year's winner in Richmond, Tim O'Neill, entered the SAS championship at number 35 and hope to improve on that position.

OC VO > Oh, my goal this year was to be more consistent, and it hasn't been exactly how I want it, but I am in a better spot than I was last year. So, you know, I'm just always trying to get better and and and and try and improve on my weaknesses. And all in all, it hasn't been bad, but I wish you would've been a little bit better. You know, golf golf's hard. You know, you think you're playing well and and it just things happen on a golf course.

VO > Tim O'Neil will defend a tournament title for the first time in this week's Dominion Energy Charity Classic. In 2024, O'Neill won in his 50th event on this tour and fired the low round of the week on Sunday, a seven under 65, capturing the biggest victory of his career.

VO > Obviously I love the golf course, you know, I played well there last year, my first win on Champions Tour, so I always remember that.

VO > Two weeks ago, Tommy Gainey went from open qualifier to champion, winning The Constellation Furyk and Friends. With that victory, he not only locked up his cards through the 2026 season, but a few days after that win, PGA Tour Champions president Miller Brady delivered to Gainey another piece of good news he is Hawaii bound.

OC > Hey, listen, congratulations on your win at Constellation Furyk and friends. I got a little something for you from our friends at Mitsubishi Electric at Hualalai.

OC > Can I?

OC > You should open that.

OC > Okay. Yeah, yeah, I'm just want to make sure I can open it as a as a new champion. Get out of here.

OC > Pretty Awesome.

OC > Holy smoke.

OC > Congratulations.

OC > Oh, man.

OC > You're coming to Hualalai.

OC > I mean, can January not get here fast enough?

OC > Let's finish this season first. Well, yeah.

OC > Yeah.

VO > Coming up on Learning Center. Anything for an edge? Cameron Percy is playing some of his finest golf yet. It's go-go gadget to get even better.

OC > I'm like, that'd be really cool to get. I said, you know what? It's too expensive. I'll. If I do really well, I'll do something. I don't get it. I came second the next tournament my son goes, hey, you're going to get it. So, we had to buy it.

VO > Cameron Percy has three runner up finishes so far in his rookie season, two of those coming in playoffs. Most recently, Percy finished second at The Constellation Furyk and friends. It could have been his first win. It's not for having six three putts that week. Well, Percy is hoping to fix those putting woes by splurging on a new training aid.

OC > I'm playing with the new gadget that Darren Clarke's got and when I saw he had it, I'm like, that'd be really cool to get it. I said, you know what? It's too expensive. If I do really well, I'll do something and I'll get it. I came second the next tournament my son goes dad you're going to get it. So, we had to buy it. Used to be an indoor thing or to draw lines on the greens, but now you can do it on the golf course. I literally tell it what I want to do, where the hole is and it'll scan the green, come back to the ball. So right now, oh look here, I've got a grid of where I want to set up. There's a straight line going about a foot left to the hole. That's the target line. And then there's a line tracking to the hole. And I literally just putt along it. And that just track a little on the line. It's brilliant. So, it's really good. Well worth the investment.

OC > Is it muscle memory or what is it teaching you.

OC > Muscle is teaching you really to trust your eyes. So, you get over it and go like that didn't feel right. And also, to, with the grids here, I can get set up in the exact same spot every day. So, I've got no excuse for my set up to get out. So that's going to be really handy too.

VO > Another player who's trending in the right direction since the beginning of August is Matt Goggle. Goggle was on fire at The Constellation Furyk and friends dipping to 12 under after 36 holes, a tournament scoring record through two rounds. Matt didn't win, carding a three over 75 on Sunday, but did post his best finish on this tour, tying for third. He reflected on taking a big step.

VO OC > So good to be back and I've kind of been that way in the last couple of months. A level of competition, so strong out here. You not going to play well every week, but I'm getting more comfortable being where I think I should be. So, I'm looking forward to the next three weeks and the plan all along was to build the body to get stronger towards the end of the year, and I feel like I'm in a great position right now.

VO > Needs this win desperately. It seems like things are coming apart for Matt. He's going to learn from this. Another long shot for Google here. It's the fifth bogey of the day.

VO OC > I watched the replay on Monday, and I noticed two things. I slowed down way too much. I started taking too much data in, overthinking the shot instead of just number club go. And and I needed to see that. I mean, I didn't realize I was slowing down that much, but that was, again, not being in that position and not that I wasn't trying to screw up. It was just that I was trying to make sure I was hitting the right shot. And in golf, the more we can get that out of play, better off all of us will be. For me, I felt like at the turn, kind of my tournament to lose and I think I just played too tight. And when you do that, you start doing things that are not normal and that gets you out of rhythm. And I let it slip away. And Tommy played great. I was in the group with Tommy and Cam Percy. And both were accelerating and I was, you know, slowing down. And in golf, you have to kind of keep going in. And certainly, on this tour, in this level, guys, you're making birdies and I just need to stay a little more aggressive. So, I had a feeling the last three years I feel like I could be a top 36 guy. I don't play a full schedule, but I'm starting to kind of put the pieces together, and I'm competing now, and it feels great to have chances to win. And I look forward to kind of being back in that position again.

VO > When Learning Center returns, so does Jarmo Sandelin, although with a different approach as far as golf, wear. Jarmo is toning it down for now.

VO > Jarmo Sandelin was in the field for the SAS Championship. It's the first non-major PGA Tour Champions event he's played in since 2021. If you do a Google search for Jarmo Sandelin, the first photo you'll see is the Swede wearing these Oakley over the top sunglasses. We had to check in with Jarmo and his countryman to see what that look was all about. And if Jarmo is still rocking those shades.

OC VO > That's a very humble man. He's 58 years old now and he like to do that little extra.

VO OC > I had a pair like that too. You did? Yeah, but I never played in them though. Yeah, but he did. Yeah, he did. Scandinavian masters. I think I played with him one day and yeah, that was the 90s I think way back when Oakley's I received a pair, but they were a lock them in somewhere.

OC VO > Yeah, the glasses wasn't really my cup of tea. And neither was the sculptures. But I mean, that's him.

VO OC > I mean we came out on tour about the same time in mid 90s, and he loved to play me. I was playing it. I think he was only born out of me playing it was only me and Bernhard Persimmon woods still, and Jorma had this humongous driver that was 50 inch, and then he had another one that was 56in, and he would out drive me by so much, you know, he'd be doing his bench press in the evenings, and I go out and I'll drive you by 50. Loving it.

OC VO > I grew up with him. He's a little bit older than I am, but we played together on the Swedish Golf Tour. That was the first time I sort of bumped into him. And he's always been a personality.

VO > Like you see now. Yeah. You're a very traditional.

VO > You are. I didn't recognize you. You don't have the crazy shoes on.

OC VO > Oh, no, it's snakeskin boots. Not the see through shirt, not the tee peg that used to be that long. So, a lot of things. I'm settled down.

OC > So pleased to welcome in my colleague John Cook is outstanding player and certainly an announcer on PGA Tour Champions and also pride of the Ohio State University.

OC > Oh, yeah. Got it everywhere.

OC > Yeah, absolutely.

OC > Cookie. Let's start out with just the season in general. How would you describe this particular season?

OC VO > It's interesting, Vince. I mean, I mean, Jimenez has had a great season. Ernie Els has kind of quietly had a really good season. Stewart sinks quietly had a pretty good season. But then you have Thomas Bjorn coming coming through. You've got, you know, Padraig, of course, winning some more. So, I mean, it's it's been a very interesting one kind of spread around a little bit and which is, pretty interesting to me.

OC > Well, I think the one thing too is we always look for playoff dark horses. So, who are some players that maybe don't come to mind immediately, but somebody come in there and really, you know, tip over the Apple Card, so to speak.

OC VO > Yeah. It's you know, Phoenix Country Club is such a great golf course. It doesn't really favor anybody. It favors, you know, whoever is really playing well. You know Alker I mean he just his game really fits their. Like it fits everywhere obviously. But you know Ernie I think is ready to, you know, to win some more. I think Stewart Cink is is ready to win some more. There's just so many good names up there. Jimenez is

not a dark horse. Cabrera is not a dark horse. They just have had great seasons. But I look the guys, you know, maybe have won or have won, but, you know, seem to need another one. And I think that would probably be Ernie and and Stewart Cink.

OC > Yeah. It's just it just makes it so exciting and wide open for sure. Kind of a something down the road here. But Bernhard Langer turned 68. And I'm just wondering who you think might be that player if he exists, that could take the mantle of a of a of a Langer on this tour and maybe become sort of that guy.

OC > I'm not sure it exists, Vince. I mean, he's 68. He's winning in his 60s and he's winning a lot in his 60s, not just once or twice. But he won every single year up until this year. And this year's not over with.

OC > Right.

OC VO > They thought, you know, he wasn't going to win last year. What did he do? He waited till the very end to win. So, I'm not sure that there is. I don't think there's anybody that is as prepared or can prepare like Bernhard. He takes it, I mean, religiously to heart about being the most prepared player out there. Everybody prepares and plays and works and trains, but I don't. They broke the mold when, Bernhard Langer. So, if and when he says it goodbye, I'm not sure that there will be anybody that can play with that longevity and that. Well for that long.

VO OC > Yeah, he's certainly unique. Finally, it's interesting because players are winning into their 60s like Bernhard. And I think it was probably a time when you were a young player when if a guy seemed 55 or 60, that seemed ancient, didn't it? When you back then, not so much now. But I mean, what you think about, you know, where we've come with with competition. I think it's interesting. Do you?

OC VO > Yeah. I, I remember playing the PGA tour and looking, you know at 50 and just go I, I don't know if I'll ever get there. And once I got there I couldn't wait to go play. Just I think guys. We've done this all our lives. We've played and we've competed since we were teenagers against the same guys, basically. And I think you just get the sense of; I'm just going to ride this out as long as I can. I told myself; I'm going to play every single event till I'm 55, then I'm going to reevaluate. Then I'm going to play every single event till I was 58, basically, and I won when I was, you know, in my late 50s, could I do it now in my 60s, or could I have, you know, eight years ago, probably, maybe, maybe if I'd had taken it, you know, a little more seriously and trained a little bit harder and, you know, played more of a schedule. But I think because we've done it for so long and you love the competition, that you're going to keep yourself going and you're going to do everything that you can to ride this little window out, whether it's 55, 58, 68. So I just think that guys are better prepared for 50. They're just walking off the regular tour on the PGA Tour Champions, and they're ready to keep going, and they'll keep going as long as they can.

OC > You know what doesn't age your commentary? I'm looking forward to that.

OC > I appreciate I work with great people. I work with real pros. Thank you.

OC > Thanks, Cookie. Thanks for your time, buddy.

VO > And with that, the playoffs are here, and we are off to the Commonwealth of Virginia. Just like the regular season, anything can happen now and probably will. I'm Vince Cellini. We will see you next time on learning center.