

2025 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #27

VO > The PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > It was big business in little Rock over the weekend. Stop number two on the PGA Tour Champions playoff slate. The Simmons Bank Championship featured an A-list field and one last chance to reach the postseason the postseason finale.

OC VO > Hello, and welcome to PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini and this was the penultimate playoff event. 52 players looking to squeeze into a 36 man field and next month's Charles Schwab Cup championship. But first navigating Pleasant Valley Country Club, which wasn't so pleasant for some players, but quite comfortable for the winner. With a recap, our Shane Bacon and Paul Azinger.

VO > Thanks, Vince. Simmons Bank Championship presented by Stephens. Pleasant Valley Country Club the hosts for the second straight year. And really it was Steven Alker from start to finish. Shane Bacon alongside Paul Azinger. And Zinger, I'd say this was the shot of his tournament.

VO > Well, I think so. It wasn't the score of the week, but it was the shot of the week. This was the exclamation point. 44 holes without a bogey. Finally bogeyed the 45th hole, a much improved wedge game with Steven Alker.

VO > He mentioned he was frustrated with that bogey at the nine of a hole out of ten. Now this an 11. Nearly back-to-back hole outs right after his first bogey of the week.

VO > He was having a lot of fun this Sunday. He shot 62 last year in the first round. 61 this year the first round. But last year it ended bad for Steven Alker. But he had that burden I know on his mind especially all night, all day yesterday after the round was over. It's a long wait to today's round.

VO > This was to par. I mean well out of position at 14. And you call it Paul. You said, probably just make if everything else is going in.

VO > You know, every once in a while you have those weeks, and someone says one week they'll all go in. And this was his week.

VO > And one of the putts of the week. Tag ridings local favorite went to college here in Arkansas, just down the hill at 17.

VO > This got him second place a piece for second place with Richard Green, who had a really strong finish. Here's the birdie for Richard Green. He knew what this meant. This really got him solo second at the time.

VO > Tied for low round of the day thanks to that birdie at the 18th. Green with a 66. And Alker this the winning putt. This for par at the last. 61 66 69 for Steven Alker. 10th

win of his career on PGA Tour Champions. Now atop the points list with one event left on a golf course he loves. It was an impressive performance. Seven shot lead Steven Alker so good. We'll send it down to Vince with our champion.

OC > Thank you gentlemen. And what a performance. A record setting performance by Stephen Alker to win. Is this as good as you have played in that PGA Tour Champions event?

OC > Oh, that's pretty close, Vince. I mean scoring wise. Yeah 20 under. Had an amazing week on the greens. That always helps if your shooting 20 under you're making some putts. So, where you golf is you know it's always something that I'm never satisfied, you know, so I like to have a few more fairways, which I'm going to need at Phoenix Country Club. But yeah, I was just pleased with my iron game this week. And then, you know, I was making them, let's go.

VO> This is this is your 10th win in a 97th start on PGA Tour Champions. Could have been a lot more in there. I know you've had other opportunities. What's I mentioned this before. What's your secret sauce? Why is it that you're consistent performer no matter where we travel on PGA Tours?

VO OC > Yeah, I don't know if it's a secret sauce of such. It's just doing the hard. Yeah. It's and that's that's basically it. You know I've got my blueprint especially my golf swing. So, I think that's the difference. It's made the difference in me winning is it's having that blueprint swing right and go to the pins to go to. I don't have to be out there searching for it. So, really pleased about that and I just get to the. I'm like, where I can help my game.

VO OC > You make it look so easy, and now you're going to have a couple of weeks off. We head out to Phoenix, where you had very comfortable. You played well. Two of the last three years, winning the Schwab Cup. What is this process going to be like? Take me inside Steve Alker's blueprint to success for this finale.

OC VO > You know, it's just I got a couple of things to work on, so I'll keep practicing. I'll have a few days off. You know, just rest the body. That's. That's always important. That's huge. But, I'm actually a member at Phoenix Country Club, so I'll sneak out and get a couple of rounds up for the boys, but, it's, you know, I think just focusing on the things that make me play well, that have worked in the past and knowing that, you know, I've done it twice now in Phoenix and won it and done it. And so that's hopefully that helps. Ultimately what we're up golf balls with is hitting the shots just fine.

VO > All right. State of the process. Thank you, Steven. Great job.

VO > Thank you.

VO > Alker's win means a shake up in the Charles Schwab Cup point standings. Steven moves up three places to number one with his second win of the year. Miguel Angel Jimenez to second, followed by Cink, Els, and Bjorn. Justin Leonard up two spots to seven and Cameron Percy cracks the top ten heading to the finale, but there was more drama on the back end. The final 36 in the Charles Schwab Cup standings move on to Phoenix Country Club, 36 or better, also meant securing playing privileges for next year, so this was extremely important in a season long grind. Several players hung on in Arkansas to advance, including a wounded Weekley and two gloves holding on to 36. Turns out, pride alone was not enough at 37.

OC VO > Wow. I mean, yeah, I'm disappointed. I, I, I accomplished a lot of goals this year. I had a lot of opportunities. You evaluate, you set your goals, you set what you need to do, you make a game plan, and you go from there.

OC VO > Good. Does not come close to, how great of a year I've had with I think this was eight tournaments this week. So, eight tournaments in, I've got one in. I'm in the top 36. I'm going to Phoenix. So, you talking about relief? Not even close to how I feel right now.

OC VO > He just told me I made it good. That's hard. But I love you too. Wow. Then I got a card back.

OC VO > No. it ain't sunk in. It won't sink in till I'm sitting in a tree stand probably till well I got to say I got to go see Wednesday maybe. I'm hoping I get to go hunt soon as we get home, I got a doctor's appointment on Tuesday. I know, you know, we we grind all year for this, you know, to get to this certain atmosphere or tournament to whatever. I mean, it's just, you know, it it ain't just just just this one week that makes or breaks you, you know, you got to do it all year to get yourself and that opportunity to give yourself that opportunity.

VO > All roads on PGA Tour Champions lead to the Arizona Desert. Historic Phoenix Country Club and the Charles Schwab Cup championship, where we will crown a winner and a season long champion. The stage is set for rounds beginning Thursday, November 13th, promising more legendary play.

VO > One of the 36 players who qualified for the Charles Schwab Cup championship is Paul Stankowski. The two time PGA tour winner has competed in 103 PGA Tour Champions events but is still searching for his first win on the over 50 circuit. If he were to win in Phoenix, it will be with his 26 year old son Josh on the bag.

OC > It's going to be really close or better.

VO > This year the two teamed up together, which has resulted in the most top tens in a season in Stankowski's PGA Tour Champions career.

OC VO > 112 to the first tree that I hit it doesn't perfect. You've seen that one. Has been on my bag all year. He was a summertime gig the last few years. Josh has been out all year. He's exactly what I need out here, but what that does is it throws a wrench into when my wife travels, and so it's a little more difficult. I didn't want to stick Josh with hotel bills on his own. I'm hoping that we can kind of help him out to get started in life, you know? And so, I try to keep his expenses at a minimum, I pay him like a regular tour caddie gets the the salary in the normal bonuses and everything. So, it makes it a little more challenging. So, Regina has traveled a little bit less this year. The shot there. And, but the last two weeks I didn't see her. And so, she's here this week, which is great. That's been the hardest part, honestly. But like I say, it's but it's a great thing because I love having my son with me. I love to win out here. I think I've said that a few times. He's 10x. He wants me to win so bad that, he's getting a little bit annoyed. But we're having a heck of a lot of fun.

VO > The PGA Tour Champions schedule for next season has been finalized, and it includes two new tournaments, one event changing to a new course and another changing their format. PGA Tour Champions president Miller Brady explains.

OC VO > We're excited to announce our 2026 Champions Tour schedule. We'll have 28 events, a couple new opportunities for us. We're going to play in Portugal, the Portugal Invitational hosted by Ernie Els in Villa Moura. We also have a new event in the fall Jefferson Lehigh Valley Classic in Allentown, which we're really excited about that opportunity, as well. Couple other, tweaks to our schedule. The Mitsubishi Electric Classic in Atlanta at Sugarloaf is going to have a Stableford format. The players are all really excited about that. And then the Constellation Furyk and Friends event, we're moving venues to Hammock Beach in Palm Coast. So, all in all, we're really excited about what 2026 is shaping up to be for us.

VO > Straight ahead on Learning Center. He is not only a tour star, but a top instructor as well. Come inside the ropes for a little bit of both from Professor Patty, two time defending champ Padraig Harrington kicks off his tournament with you and that's next.

VO > During Thursday's pro-am at the Simmons Bank Championship, six year old Locke Keller walked the hole with Steve Flesch.

OC > Me and my dad go golfing. Yeah.

VO > At just six hours old, Locke was diagnosed with a complicated heart defect.

OC > Here you go.

VO > Adopted by Ben and Mandy Keller, he faced two high risk, open heart surgeries and multiple procedures at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

OC > Oh, way over.

VO > Now a vibrant six year old. Locke serves as the hospital's ambassador, inspiring others with his resilience and zest for life.

OC > You were so close.

VO > So glad we could share Locke's story.

OC > Good job.

VO > And praise the great work for decades being done at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

OC > Hey, it was nice meeting you.

VO > Pdraig Harrington's play could do the talking, but we wanted a bit more from the two time Simmons bank champion, and Paddy was more than happy to oblige.

OC > Something nice.

VO > Ever wonder what it's like for players stepping up to begin tournament play? Well, here's your answer. Harrington was mic'd up and takes us inside the ropes on the opening hole in Little Rock.

OC > I do get nervous. Not not now. I'm grumpy now. I seem to be playing really well the last couple of days, and I've had a bad warm up, so just just grumpy, not nervous. That's just the way it is, you know? You got to make sure I got to walk to make sure I spend time with my caddie to watch my attitude rather than ride the cart and be on my own. And so it can be, you know, so just I can see, my attitude needs an adjustment, so I've got to get on it.

OC > How are we doing?

OC > Great looking for the card.

OC > Oh, Corey's got it.

OC > Here we are. Thank you. Have a great day, John Lucas. Enjoy it.

OC > Yeah, Steve.

OC > I'm Julie.

OC > Can I be in the middle?

OC > Sure. Come on in.

OC > Let's go.

OC > Could never have been two minutes early for making time in my life. It's never. You got to tie your shoes with your foot expand. So that's why I lift it up. So, if you tie it

on the ground, your foot, it could be too tight when you're expands or when I'm tying it, my foot is already expanded. So, it loosens a little bit when I put it back down.

OC > Please welcome to the tee the World Golf of Fame member and the defending champion, Padraig Harrington.

OC > Thank you. I can't. I can't believe I changed my mind at the target. As I stood over. I didn't see my target. My target was the chair at the back of the green. And then when I looked up, I couldn't see it. So, I used the walk away. But that's a change you never want to change. And I knew I should have stood off and picked a different target that I could see. You always want to win tournaments, and you want to come back to them and enjoy them, but it does add a level of stress during the week. The expectation is like you're already leading the tournament, which I clearly is not the case. That's the great thing about golf. Nobody gives you anything. You gotta you gotta air in every shot on the golf course. So even though there is an expectation and people are saying, oh, you're going to go and do it again, that doesn't make any difference here. You have to get out there and play the golf. I'm walking down here, and my ball is in the right rough. God it was a pretty ropey tee shot. 125. That's not good about this. You say 111 times. It's okay. Kind of go under the first over and left of the second one. What did you say? What you got there and coming like a ten and a half. 52. You. I thought it was really good. Can't believe I well, I can't now see, we rely on the crowds to tell us where the ball is. Yeah. You know, that's always. Yeah. You're looking for the interpretation of what's good and what's bad. I'm hoping that everybody had hit it stone dead over here so that my ball is actually 15ft and they thought it was a bad shot. And I always be careful. Like if that's the lone person out there and he claps vigorously, you think you've hit it stone dead. And then you go up and it's 25ft. Here you go, guys. Catch.

OC > Thank you.

VO > And more PGA tour champion star power now in the person of Ernie Els, the Big Easy pulled out all the tricks at the Dominion Energy Charity Classic, including driver off the deck. A daring play for mere mortals. But the Hall of Famer shows us how it's done. Step one swing like Ernie.

OC VO > All right, we are here on the fairway. I've got to drive it out. Par five. Just like at the Dominion Energy Charity Classic. I like to use this club every now and again. I've got nine degrees on my driver. The trick here is keep the face from closing down on you. Okay? I'm going to keep that face nice and square and almost open. And you want to absolutely hit, the heat down on it, but sweep through it and you get a little bit of a fade. And the nine, the grease ball is going to come out a little bit lower. There's going to be a lot of velocity on the, on the ball. And you know, you should have it, come out a little left-to-right. All right. So normal stance. Grip down maybe just half an inch in the grip.

Make your normal swing. Keep that club face nice and square. There you go, guys. Little fade on it. Use that shot that helps in the wind.

VO > Still to come on learning center. It's very scary, kids. Halloween tales from the legends. Our players harken back to their trick or treat days, including their candies of choice and those failing to make the cut.

OC VO > Welcome back. Arkansas is a lovely place to visit and that goes beyond just playing golf. There's lots to do here in a place nicknamed the Natural State, including exploring the great outdoors. Our tour player, Ken Duke, is a native of Hope, Arkansas, and recently enjoyed some recreation away from the course, finding a lake and putting a line in the water.

OC > Right there. Perfect.

OC > Ken, what does it feel like to catch a fish like that versus making a birdie or something on the golf course?

OC VO > You know, it's just, it's a job, you know, and that's what you're trying to do. You're trying to present the bait in front of the fish and make it hit. You're not going. You don't know if he's going to do it or not, but it just feels like like, hit the perfect chip, perfect drive. It's a vision that you're trying to do. You're trying to spot and put it to present to bait for them and see if they do it. Same thing with us. We try to get a great shot in there and try to make the putt on top of it.

VO > Golf is kind of a Halloween sport. It's often trick or treat. I mean, what's scarier than being short sighted near the green with water on the other side? As such, we got into the Halloween spirit with our players, asking them to recall some of their favorite costumes as kids and the candy they desired most, as well as the candy they just as soon leave in the bowl. You know, the ones that still haunt them.

OC > Halloween costume growing up sports.

O C> As a kid, I remember my go to Halloween costume was involved with hockey, but probably my favorite was Bobby Orr.

OC > You know, if it was a Red Sox player, you know, a Patriots player, you know, Bobby Orr is a Bruins player, you know.

OC > I don't know. But I would have to go with Alabama football player.

OC > I was a Miami Dolphins fan. You know back in this. What's when they were what they were. So yeah, had the helmet on and the Dolphins jersey.

OC > I think I was Superman a couple of times.

OC > Probably like a ghost, you know easy. Put a sheet over your head, cut the eyes out and go about it.

OC > I mean, I put a sheet on, you know, cut some holes out when I was a little kid. I mean, that was like, you know, the ghost, the character Boo.

OC > Then I became, Fred Flintstone.

OC > You know what? I did not like Halloween, to be honest with you. So, I never really dressed up.

OC > I had just a scary mask that I probably wore, like, 4 or 5 years and a sweatshirt so.

OC > Go to, Tin Man. The Tin Man. Yeah.

OC > Me and my roommates dressed up as kissing in college.

OC > We always had, like, a Batman and Robin.

OC > I have no clue, I guess, what my mother got me.

OC > I mean, I know I dressed up at some point, but I don't know what I was.

OC > Go to candy.

OC > Twix is an absolute yes.

OC > Got to be like Starburst.

OC > I say Reese's, KitKats.

OC > I loved, like, Juicyfruits and Skittles and things like that.

OC > Candy corn throw that out.

OC > The candy corn was a no.

OC > Almond Joy was a no.

OC > I have yet to meet the candy that I would pass over and put back.

OC > And the yes was the jawbreakers.

OC > Go to is Three Musketeers.

OC > More of the sugary candy rather than the chocolate stuff?

OC > I'm a Reese Cup guy, so I was always trading Reese Cups.\

OC > Anytime in Canada. Anytime. You got a coffee crisp? Bar. That was the score.

OC > The chocolate bars, Mars bar. Snickers. Yeah. And I still go to them today.

OC > Now that's the spirit. And that's our show. The real treat awaits. Crowning a season long champion. Happy Halloween week from a tour that features a fellow named Boo. And we'll see you next time.