

2025 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #4

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > As the calendar flips to the month of March. PGA Tour Champions heads west for event number four on the schedule. Tucson, Arizona. And the Cologuard classic, a unique blend of golf and health awareness. Setting up a beautiful La Paloma Country Club and featuring a star-studded field. It was there the defending Charles Schwab Cup champion Steven Alker, rallied from four down to start the final round to force a playoff. Alker fired a dazzling 30 over his final nine holes of regulation to shoot 5 under 66 and post a 12 under. Matching Alker 66 and reaching the playoff was Jason Caron on the first extra hole. At 18, Karen missed his birdie opportunity. Alker then put things away with a birdie putt to win the Cologuard classic. His ninth victory on this tour and first since January of 2024. Our Bob Papa and Paul Azinger called the action and have more.

OC > Well thank you Vance. The 11th Cologuard classic. What a wild final round it was. As Steven Alker gets the victory, Greg Chalmers had a chance to get his first ever win on the PGA tour champion. Zinger started the day with a one-shot lead over Stewart Cink. But those guys just couldn't make the proper plays when needed.

OC > Well, Chalmers couldn't. He led wire to wire, and the pressure got to him a little bit the final day, and he didn't have his A-game at all. Still, though, he hung in like a bulldog and had a chance to tie on the last hole. So, I think hopefully he'll lead with some confidence. But you have to admire Stephen Alker and what he did today.

VO > And Jason Caron, like Alker, started the day four shots off the lead and after Caron made birdie at 16, what a tee shot at the par three 17th setting up a birdie that would get him to 11 under par. And you know he just didn't flinch.

VO > No he didn't. And he used that split grip. He hit it close on one of the hardest, it ended up being one of the hardest shots of the day actually getting it close there. But this was a swing now that just was so free and so magical. And he'll have he'll have this in his memory bank for a long, long time.

VO > Yeah, at one point during this final round, he was six shots behind Chalmers when Chalmers had gotten it to 13 under. So, he finishes with three straight birdies now Steven Alker, he eagles the 11th hole and then rolls in this birdie putt at 15.

VO > Well we saw putts miss all over the place Ernie Els missed everything today. But Alker was making the putts. And you know we always say it comes down to the punch.

VO > Yeah, it certainly did. He had a two-putt birdie at 16. And that one from off the front of the green at 17. Had a birdie putt at 18 to win or at least post 13 under. Then in the playoff in a wonderful shot and end.

VO > Yeah. And he used a little of that pulling the string back pedal to fist pump. What a great feeling for Alker. He knew it had been about 14 months for him. And what a thrilling moment for Stephen.

VO > Final round 66 Stephen Alker beats Jason Caron with a birdie on the first playoff hole for Alker, his ninth win on the PGA Tour Champions. Let's hear from the Cologuard classic winner.

OC VO > I'm just going to keep knocking on the door, cookie. You know how to is you just, you just grind away. And you know, I've been well, this is a lot of top ten or top fives. Just been in the hunt. It's just been patient, you know, just working hard on the body. I just preseason and, Yeah, I think, Yeah, just just tiny changes you to swing. Got very long and and loose. I think we talked about this in Phoenix. So, you know, I just kind of felt like I was swinging like you might know.

OC VO > Not so long anymore anyway. But going forward, I know you've had a tremendous run out here on this PGA Tour Champions. What does this mean now to get into that? That figure of that many wins.

VO OC > Well was huge. Just, you know, it's been what, 13, 14 months since my last win. So yeah, the game just been feeling good, just consistently week in week out. So, this one I want yeah give myself chances and yeah moving forward I mean I got a shot up to the fence I got to, I got to, I got to get it going.

VO > The Schwab Cup standings look like this Ernie Els say hard luck. Fifth in Tucson holds the lead. Alker moves up to number two in the standings. And his remarkable journey continues to unfold. A25 second and now a victory in three events in 2025. And Jason Caron's runner up in the Cologuard classic, jumps him 20 spots to fifth overall in what promises to be an incredible season long race.

VO > While Hall of Famers were sprinkled into the field, a newcomer made his way to Tucson via Q school, grabbing the fifth and final automatic qualifying spot there. Brennan Jones continues the Aussie influence on this tour, turning 50 just four days before competition and making his PGA Tour Champions debut at the Color Guard Classic. Jones is a welcome addition and though he finished 60 in the event, he's feeling confident about his impact this season.

VO > Please join me in welcoming from Canberra, Australia, Brendan Jones.

OC VO > Yeah, I was 49 back then. I'm now 50 so time to get excited. It's a new step in my in my career, a new stage in the career and one that I'm really looking forward to. I've earned the right to be out here, so I feel that my game's good enough to compete. And, hopefully by the end of the year, I'll have had a few good results.

VO > Competition aside, the real focus of the Cologuard Classic is health, sponsored by Exact Sciences. The event has players competing on behalf of colon cancer patients, survivors who are present for the tournament or, in some cases, in the memory of those who have been affected. It is a stark reminder.

VO > As it was, cancer took the life of long-time national golf writer Steve DiMeglio back on December 31st after a two-and-a-half-year battle. A constant presence at big golf events, DiMeglio was only 63 years old. In his honor, Stewart Cink wore a blue-ribbon last week and shared with us some thoughts about Steve, who was a friend to many players.

OC VO > Well, I mean, I knew him from the media. And then when he got his diagnosis, when that long after my wife Lisa got diagnosed. So, we had that further connection to the kind of connection you really don't want to have with somebody. And we talked about all the, you know, the experiences and everything. So yeah, we ended up with. A connection so. I just remember he was

always upbeat; you know, I remember his, attitude was always positive. And he was, just he was always in attack formation. I just remember that. And, you know, it's a hard thing. And he fought hard.

VO > At last year's Cologuard Classic Learning Center told you the story of Marcum Rollins, who took on stage four colon cancer and beat it. We caught up with Rollins, who returned this year and asked about his current health status and his plans to raise funding for colorectal cancer. He bravely discussed what is ahead.

VO OC > And the unfortunate news is that I've had some recurrence and progression. So instead of just being in my lungs, it's now also in my liver, my kidneys. So, I've switched up my routine. I'm on a new drug team feels good fighting day in and day out and enjoying my time in between. I'm red eyeing going straight to DC to meet with my state representatives, to try and get them to support a budget in the Department of Defense for colorectal cancer research. Then I finally go home, and I have treatment the very next day. Back to chemo.

VO > Marcum Rollins is a champion by any definition. And we continue to send support and positive energy his way in his fight to beat cancer again. Also on hand, old friend Charlie Rhymer, himself a colon cancer survivor. In 2022, a section of his colon was resected with the diagnosis stage three colon cancer. Yet there he was. The 57-year-old former tour pro was on hand greeting old friends and sharing his story to help others be here.

OC > I'm cancer free now for that. A little over three years and so prognosis is great. So, I'm very blessed with that. But, you know, a lot of folks are still very much right in the middle of the battle. And, and I can tell you when you're going through treatment, especially the stern chemo. I mean, chemo is chemo is no good. You know, if, you know, six months in advance. Hey, I'm going to get to go to Tucson, and I'm gonna get to play in the Pro-am, with, with with one of the members of the Champions Tour and the weather's going to be like this, and I want to be outside, and you're in the middle of chemo treatments. What it does for those folks, it gives them something to look forward to. Because I was in that same boat and and, so it's it's really nice to see that opportunity. And then the other thing that's really cool about getting out here is, is, you can't cancer. And I didn't know this until I had it. It's a team sport, and it takes it takes a lot of folks. It's doctors. It's, you know, the research, the companies like Exact Science that are doing amazing things for early detection, which, by the way, everyone for early detection. I wouldn't be here, had no family history, no symptoms, nothing, they caught it. in, in a, just a normal physical and, and, so, you got patients here, you've got caregivers here, you've got doctors, you got researchers here, you got companies, you got patients, that that are, as I said, in the battle, patients like me who are cleared, and then and then you have a lot of advocates. There's a lot that goes on with cancer. People don't realize, you know, they can cure you. The cancer. And they've done that for me. But it takes a little while to cure yourself with the cure for cancer. And so you need a little bit of help and, and, you know, with things like neuropathy and nutrition and there's all kinds of things that, you know, when you're a cancer survivor that you have to deal with even once the cancer's gone and all of those folks are here. And that's what makes this event such a cool event.

VO > Coming up on Learning Center. Learn from the best Ernie Els. Reaching out to help a young South African player avoid future short game mistakes. Easy does it that that's next.

VO > Proving once again, winning golf is found in the short game. Young Aldrich Potgieter of South Africa made a fatal error during the final round of the Mexico Open. These poor chips were ultimately a factor in Potgieter going to a playoff, where he finished second to Brian Campbell. It was mentioned during the telecast that Aldrich is working with Ernie Els to improve that area of his game, and The Big Easy has more on his country.

OC > Well, I mean, Aldrich, you know, we all play differently, but as you get older, you know, you look at really the good ones play these shots, and they always have the back of the club that they can throw at the ball. And you got to. And I've had to weaken my left hand on my grip for the chipping quite a bit. So, I can feel I can really open the blade and keep it open and get the back into the club just to slide under the ball, basically. And there's a very strong grip on the left hand. Sometimes tough to to get the club up when you have a strong grip. You almost have to play the the blade back of the ball, you know, because you're not releasing it. You've kind of just holding on to it. But there's the, the the weaker grip. You can really release the club. So, I'm trying to get him to get this way. Well, outside. He drops that club right underneath the ball.

OC > And what was he doing?

OC > He was just a little bit too square and a little bit closed. So, you know, we work on it. But he's got so much talent. It's going to come.

VO > And now a player update. Not in golf but rather Major League Baseball. Grant Jobe's son Jackson is trying to crack the Detroit Tigers pitching rotation following a September call up last year. The former number three overall selection in the 2021 MLB First Year Player Draft. He's a hard throwing right hander and could be the final piece to help the Tigers take the next playoff step. His proud papa knows all about what it takes to be a pro.

OC VO > He's competing for a rotation spot and a five-man rotation. He's pitching every five days. He's starting. He's not a reliever. So, they used him last year. So, the first two outings have been good. Except for one pitch in each outing. But they so far, they've been very happy with what he's done. I just like that he's you know, he's putting the work in. I saw how hard he worked this offseason, you know, developed a couple new pitches and you're a proud dad when you see your kids working hard now its success comes from hard work in my opinion. And so, I think he's doing the right thing. So, it's just it's time to go execute.

VO > Up next on Learning Center it's players week and our tour has made an impact. You'll hear from the oldest man to make the cut in tournament history. A guy who thinks he can perform well there again. And an unlikely winner from 20 years ago. The zenith of his professional career. Plus, the hole in three on the island green that became legend.

VO > It's Players Championship week, and that means the stadium course at TPC Sawgrass and the famous par three 17th Island Green again in the spotlight. You may know the winner of the Kaulig Championship on this tour receives an invitation to the players. Last year's winner, Ernie Els, declined, but the 2022 winner, Jerry Kelly, took full advantage and competed in this high-level event, becoming the oldest player ever to make the cut in tournament history. But that doesn't satisfy Kelly. He believes there's unfinished business at The Players Championship and explains how and why that could happen.

VO OC > I'm hitting it about the same distance as I was when the golf course is pretty much the same. Yes. They've lengthened, you know, 4 or 5, six, ten, 12 holes, but it still seems to play very similar to the way it did. That's why I still have this thing in my head that I can shoot 15 to 18 under on that golf course. I know I can. Now if it's cold, if it's wet, I've got no chance. But I still feel like those numbers are possible because I've done them. Is it unrealistic for me to shoot for a that? Probably unrealistic, but get it happen. I just got to win at Bridgestone again.

VO > Jack Nicklaus, his incredible win at the 86 Masters at age 46, is one of golf's great stories. But back in 2005 at the players Championship, Fred Funk, at the age of 48 years, nine months, stunned everyone, taking down one of the deepest fields in golf and scoring his greatest victory. It wasn't easy. Starting four down in the final round with a Monday finish due to weather, he shot 71 in the final round. When the field average was 76.5. What a high court!

OC > A little bit of a for me is definitely my signature win. I say the U.S. Senior Open was my second, but Players Championship with that kind of field and coming out on top, especially on a a day where a lot of people normally finish on a Monday, I had to play 32 holes. It was blowing 30 plus miles an hour, which ended up playing right into my hands a lot better than I thought it would. I didn't want to tee it up that morning but ended up all the bombers hitting it high. There were hitting that, losing control of their drives, and I was hitting a little pea shooter thing down below the trees and, and kept the ball in play all day, which was the name of the game. And really look at the guys that have won or not won, but the guys that finished just behind me was Tom Lehman, Luke Donald and Scott Verplank, and all of them were ball control type players and, had a good, good day for us, is what it was. To know that I'm part of the history of TPC is and The Players Championship is really cool. So, I can't take that one. For me. That's, I didn't take anything from anybody, but, that that's I still get goosebumps thinking about it. And that was a biggie.

VO > Have fun with it.

VO > Fred Couples has had his share of success at the Island Green. He made a hole in one there in 1997, using a nine iron in the final round.

OC > Watch out for that one, Dean. Looky here, looky here.

VO > Two years later, in the opening round of the players, couples tee shot at 17, came up short of the green and found the water. He reteed, hit a nine iron again. And

VO > Same club. That's a nine iron again in. Wait a minute. Tough ball. Well, that's the All-American par, Gary. Unbelievable. Fred Couples with some magic at 17.

VO > Prior to those memorable moments, he won the event in 1996. Couples reminisces about these career highlights in this week's Couples Chronicles.

OC > Hey, everybody. Fred Couples here stories again with myself. We're talking Players Championship or back when I played the TPC, which I was lucky enough to win in 84 and 96 and in 96, a couple fun things happen. And this guy coming in here was part of it.

OC > Hey everybody, what's happening?

OC > So he saw it all. But there's one story before we get to 96 and 99. I was five over after 16 and everyone knows the shot and it was the pin on the front. It's a pretty simple shot. And I hadn't hidden the water too many times.

OC > No, as in no.

OC VO > I actually loved the hole. And so, I stepped up there and I hit a pretty good shot. Soup. And then you tell. What did you say to me after that?

VO > Well, basically I'm trying to, you know, kind of regroup a little bit, right?

VO > Yeah. I'm five over.

VO OC > I'm looking to clean the club, and I have a ball ready. And then in my mind, I'm trying to think we go to the drop zone, which could be a dicey shot. Where are we? Stay right there. But I had no say in anything at that point. He just gave me the look like, give me the F and ball and shut the f up. So, I tossed Fred a ball and he kind of grabs it and goes down and grabs a little half tee no clean club kind of swings, you know, that swing and that attitude like, get me out of here. And as he hits, it looks pretty good in the air. But the first one didn't look bad either. Just come up a hair short. So, it's looking pretty good in the air. And then you know Fred as the ball's halfway there is probably 20 yards that way. As you know the tee kind of goes that way. And he's already done. He's really kind of not paying attention, not paying attention. And I'm back at the bag, you know.

OC > Where do I hit in the stick?

VO > I mean, I get hit right, right in the cup didn't it.

VO > Yeah. So right in the cup.

VO > Hole in three. And so, I think you pared 18.

VO OV > Yes. But there's more to the story. So, I'm walking up and everyone would be all excited. And he's again behind me because I had left, I'd left him on the tee because it's going in the there. So, we get up there and I go get the ball, I think. And you when you stood way in the back because we're done. So, we he didn't come up over the bridge and we go back. And it was such a surreal thing because it's my favorite event here and I wasn't even happy about it. But then three days later,

OC > You play pretty solid when it got, you know, like unplayable, right? One playable golf. And I like I said, I think you shot 77. So now we're thinking probably not going to cut it to say bye bye because I think that day the scores weren't that bad, but it got worse every day. It seemed like I think the course got a little away from the boys, and I don't remember the exact score you shot, but I know you finished somewhere in the top five and had a really good last day and passed the world.

VO OC > Yeah, and that's the year Duvall won. So now we have some other fun stuff. At 96, I ended up beating Tommy Tolls and Montgomery and I'll go back to that. But in 84 I beat for me. I beat them all, I beat Sevy, I beat Trevino, I beat Watkins, I think Thorpe was up there. I would like to say Jack Nicklaus. I was tied with him. We won to play. But that's not how it went. But that was unreal for me. And as I said, even I've had a lot of other good finishes there. But 96, I played really well every single round.

VO > Yeah. No, you played very, very solid. And to shoot 60 for the last day, I think, I don't remember every shot, six birdies and an eagle Do I have that right.

VO > That's about right. Yeah.

VO > And then you made the two things that stand up to me was the I don't remember a three. Arnie the number eight. These guys are going to last and are now but 2 or 300 the back to not eight to about six feet and buried that. Yeah. And then I think you had a layup on 11 to that back left ten which is no bueno. No fun.

VO > No. And you stuffed it up your three feet or whatever and then well, on your way out, correct.

VO > And that will do it for this week, marching into the third month of the year with so much excitement ahead. I'm Vince Cellini and we thank you for watching PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.