

2026 PGA TOUR CHAMPIONS LEARNING CENTER SHOW #2

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > After a strong season opener in Hawaii, PGA Tour Champions hits the Sunshine State, a 39th consecutive year in Naples, Florida. For the 2026 edition of the Chubb Classic.

OC > Hi, everyone, and welcome to February. On the over 50 tour. This is PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini. Tiburon Golf Club our host, for the first full field event of the year. And over the Valentine's Day weekend we had a winner and a performance straight from the heart. With more and a recap of the Chubb Classic, the men who call the action Bob Papa and Paul Azinger.

VO OC > Well thanks, Vince. 39 years in Naples, Florida for the PGA Tour Champions and the Chubb Classic from Tiburon Golf Club. The Black Course. This is the sixth year that Tiburon has played host to the PGA Tour Champions, and Zinger David Toms hasn't won since 2023. He started the day with a three shot lead. Now this course normally doesn't give up leads, but the wind today made everything crazy.

OC > Oh my gosh. There was, gusts to 25-30 miles an hour today. And there's a lot of crosswinds today. And, you know, David Toms told us in his interview after the round that his back went out on the second hole. So, for him to hang in there and win, really, I mean, that's amazing to me. I don't know what part of his back went out, but when my back goes out, it's usually that's the end of it. But he hung in there a couple big putts and a great bunker shot at the end.

OC VO > Let's take a look at some of the highlights from the 39th playing of the Chubb Classic. And you know David Toms got off to a rough start. Birdied 1 doubled 2 stabilized things with a birdie at the 12th. Just got it to 13 under par while making a bogey at 13. Boo Weekly, he played brilliantly bogey free in these conditions and made a run. Started the day seven shots off the pace. Just kind of hung in there and then the defending champ Justin Leonard. No bogeys for him. This birdie at 17 you thought who's back to back for J.

VO > Yeah yeah, I thought he would birdie the last hole. He didn't hit a good bunker shot there. And that happened. But this was the one you know we were looking for a big moment, and this was it.

VO > David Toms tee shot well with a laugh at that from afar at the difficult 17th. Knocks it in. And then you liked his chances on this bunker shot to get up and down.

VO > Well it just suits his style. He likes to play these little bumps and runs like this and that. Just hit with the wind helping down grain. What a shot though just epic.

VO > And in the two prior groups Justin Leonard and Boo Weekly failed to get up and down for birdies to post 13 under. Might have freed Toms up a little bit.

VO > Probably did. Yeah, we talked about it, you know, meant a lot harder shot to tie, but to get up and down to win. He was able to handle that. And the biggest moment David Thomas picks up his fifth win on the PGA Tour Champions, his first since 2023. Justin Leonard, Boo Weekley and Michael Wright share second. A shot off the pace. Let's hear David Toms, our champion.

VO > It was a difficult day to play David. You grind it out but that's that's David Toms but 17 that has to be the absolute highlight.

OC VO > Yeah, I mean you know I started on the range this morning by far the best range session I had all week pro-ams whatever. Great little straight down win. Yeah. And then we get to the first day of straight into the wind. I get over on; number two hit a good drive down there. My back goes out on the second shot. It was below my feet. So, an impact the rest of the day just flinching on it. And you can see that with the driver seven iron down I was okay wedge okay. But anything with a long club it was it was a tough day. So, to grind it out and like you said 17. That's just a bonus. It was meant to be. If I make par there for sure.

VO > Go over the bunker shot there at 18.

VO > Well, again, I struggle with anything below my feet. Today I had a really you know, tough time. So, I just dug in and, you know, I had plenty of green to work with, just kind of chunk and run with those shots. So just chunk and run out there. And it got real close.

VO > What a gutsy win for David Toms as he zooms up the Charles Schwab standings to second behind Stewart Cink, Boo Weekly, and Justin Leonard also reached into the top five, just behind Angel Cabrera. Michael Wright was in the mix for his first win of each Tour Championship. He also sits in the top ten. An exciting start to what promises to be a fun season.

VO > The Chubb Classic was a debut in homecoming for Naples, Florida native George McNeil. The two time PGA tour winner turned 50 back in October and made this his first event on PGA Tour Championship. 324 events on the regular tour and yet a first timer here among legends. George finished an impressive T-5 at nine under par. It's a great first step and depending on his play moving forward, an opportunity to be a regular presence here.

VO OC > I've been looking forward to this for a while, probably 4 or 5 years, but you don't ever want to get older. But at the same time, for us and golf and PGA Tour and Champions Tour and everything else, it's another bonus. It's another almost kind of a revitalization of our careers and hopefully, to obviously play a little bit longer and not become relevant but at least give us something to do.

VO > What's your schedule going to look like? I'm going to try and play every tournament that I get in.

VO OC > I'm in the 50 year old category two spots every week. It's based on, career wins are the priority rankings and everything. So, I'll get in most weeks, but not everyone. But I also can control that with how I play. The better I play, the more I'll get in. So, yeah, I plan on playing everyone. I get in.

VO > While McNeil is just getting started, Jason Caron has made huge strides on this toward a club professional at Mill River Club on Long Island. Caron earned his card in nine events in 2024 and then broke through last season as a top 25 finisher in the Charles Schwab point standings. This steady climb may mean Caron can't resist the pull of full time play on PGA Tour Champions, where he posted two runner up finishes and seven top tens in 2025. His second chance in golf may be a top priority, but no longer is he sneaking up on the competition.

VO OC > I guess I've shown I can hang out here. So yes, I guess deep down I do believe that. I know I can do it now. It's just trying to get that win. I think that'll be fun to to maybe have that opportunity, hopefully. But, yeah, it's been amazing. Run. I'm, you kidding me? I mean, never thought this would happen. I still get everyone that in the PGA of America always come up to me. And the first thing they'll say, man, this is just been awesome to watch. And it's really cool to represent all of the PGA of America guys out there and girls that are, you know, working every day. Yeah, I think last year was a cool year to go out and play really, really well. I mean, to finish in the top 25 on the money list, I guess, and points lists and playing the World Cup. I mean, that really gave me a boost, if you will, that listen, I do belong out here or so maybe I can, you know, get the job done. Like I said, I'd like to just get one win at least, and then get that, like, monkey off your back, if you will, and then go from there and see what it can happen from there. Who knows?

VO > Yet another player to watch in 26 is Soren Kjeldsen of Denmark, still aged 50, in his first full year, Kjeldsen steady game is effective at most every course. He finished fifth overall in scoring average last year and posted two Runner-Up and seven top ten finishes in just 17 starts. More events in 2026 will mean more opportunities to win, as Soren shared with us his expectations for the upcoming season while embracing the process.

OC VO > I'd love to win here and obviously I'd love to win here many times, so it's on my radar. But at the same time, I'll try and keep my head down and do my stuff and hopefully it'll happen. When you really enjoy yourself, you generally play well and I loved it last year I had so much fun the six months that I played on tour and, and I think it, it showed in my results.

VO > Still to come on PGA Tour Champions Learning Center, we follow Steve Pate on the comeback trail. A health scare just under a year ago made golf seem unlikely, but the stakes were much higher than that. In his own words, next.

VO > Two time PGA Tour Champions winner Rod Pampling is another competitor playing hurt. The 58 year old Aussie posted a single top ten last season, a T3 at the Cologuard Classic in Tucson. Currently dealing with a knee issue that will soon involve surgery that will sideline him for at least three months. Gambling offers some details on the path to wellness and competitive golf.

VO OC > I'm going in for a partial knee replacement, so it's, it's clearly finally wearing out. And, you know, it's been five years. I had the meniscus done, and it, I went home last this, this time last year and also in November and went in and basically confirmed that. Yeah. Inside of my right knee is, left knee, sorry is basically bone on bone and the kneecap is pointing left, which kind of after knowing that I realized what was going on last year because I just I just didn't play good. I just couldn't quite feel it. And so, on the way down, the knee actually just gives way. There's nothing to hold of there. So, once I found that out, came back to the States and did the same thing. Just went in, got it checked out, and it was both guys identical. So, we got lucky. I was expecting it to be a little bit longer wait, but the guy said not. We can do this right now. I said, okay, let's go. So, I'm ready. I'm. I had enough of the pain. Just, I can still hit the golf ball, okay. But it's just the walking in the day to day just getting up and just the how it tightens up so much. And, yeah, it's, you feel older than we already are. Not bad enough. I don't need to feel any old.

VO > It was a far more dire prognosis for six time PGA tour winner Steve Pate, who back in April of last year was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma of the lungs. By June, he was undergoing

chemotherapy treatment. Playing in the Chubb Classic wasn't on Pat's radar as he navigated through a frightening healing process, Steve shared with Learning Center. This emotional journey and his return to the game.

OC VO > I had a lot of a persistent cough last year. Starting in February, were played a couple times. Then got a respiratory infection that cleared up, but I was still coughing a lot, so pulmonologist recommended a PET scan. I got that. They found, an alien living in my chest. Didn't know what it was. Thy had to get it biopsy found out it was cancer. And asked what kind? They said nut carcinoma. Something I've never heard of. And most people have it. It's pretty rare and pretty aggressive. So, the first thing I did after diagnosis was go online and see what the prognosis was. And it said one year survival rate is 10%. Really not very encouraging. Then I talked to a surgeon, guy who was in surge. The surgical option wasn't good. It was a high risk, low reward surgery. And I asked him afterwards. I said after he described the surgery, I said, well, you know what? What's the problem? What's the successful surgery look like? He said, five years and this is my word. It kind of as an invalid. I said, what is chemo and radiation look like? He said, one year and I said was doing nothing look like he said three, three months, which I believe that one because I couldn't breathe. It was in my lung at the time. And then I met with my oncologist, who's leading my case right now. He said, don't believe that. He goes we don't know enough about what you have. And things are changing rapidly. And so went from there, went through chemo and radiation route. And in the process, I've met some really remarkable people that were given a year to live, you know, ten excuse me, 20, 30 years ago. So that was, you are right this is serious interview. So yeah, that that was encouraging. And, you know, I'm asking them, you know, what did you do? You know, what what did they do? And and, so yeah, the chemo and radiation was very successful and shrunk it from 8.5cm to just over four immediately. And then the scans since treatment have shown it can continue to shrink. So yeah, I'm doing a couple things outside of Western medicine not to take the place of chemo and radiation, but to enhance it, kind of boost my own immune system. And so far, so good. It keeps shrinking. It's kind of a really kind of a victory to be here. And the people that I hung around with that have had cancer, they inspired me to be better. And if I could have that effect on somebody else, it would be it would be nice. You know, attitude is everything. And even even the doctors, which surprised me. Western medicine, in my opinion, over in the past, really hasn't has an emphasis on that. And they really have, you know, we know negative emotions and stress have bad effects on your health. So, I don't think it's a big stretch to think of reducing stress and having positive emotions will improve your health. And that's really what I'm focused on more than anything.

VO > We wish Steve all the best in his recovery. And coming up, another newcomer on the tour, Tag Ridings earned his way to a tour card after a strong finish last fall is looking for more. He stops by next.

VO > If you're looking to play tag, he may beat you. Tag ridings is a PGA Tour Champions player to watch as he stormed into the fall playoffs and earned full playing status for 2026. Ridings was so used to Monday qualifying, he showed up unnecessarily on Saturday before the Chubb Classic, five top tens in 2025 and going from outside looking in to card carrying member this year is a very different landscape.

OC > Tag ridings is kind enough to join us now. Tag I do want to talk about the big finish last year since. But let's go back to the beginning when you did not have stats on the tour at all. And I kind of wanted to know how you felt about yourself as a player and what your confidence level was going in?

OC VO > Very low confidence, you know, spent a few years coming down the stretch of that, you know, late 40s on the Korn Ferry Tour wasn't very healthy the last couple of years. And really wasn't playing well, partially because of that, but it just wasn't wasn't getting the job done either. I was getting healthier, and I still wasn't getting the job done. I was working on a lot of stuff, trying to make some changes and make things work. And, you know, I was working on the right stuff, but you didn't know that because I wasn't putting up the scores, you know? And here we are in Naples. I came here to Naples to try to Monday I got, I think I was three under through four holes. Didn't even sniff, you know, just kind of threw it away coming, coming down on the Monday qualifier and, you know, it was it was like, wow this is not going to be easy. You know, I'm not going to get through these things. You know, you see these names out here is an amazing list of names, right? You got multiple major champions on your right and left on the driving range at all times. And and it's great. But I'm playing in the Monday qualifier against guys that have been winning tour events right and left. And you know I had to put up the numbers. So, you know it took me a while to break through. It was a great break through at Palm Springs finishing second that week after Monday. And it was, an incredible week.

OC > Yeah. I want to ask you how much of a sprint, how much that had to build a lot of confidence for it.?

OC VO > Yeah. It did, this class with that book, the gallery class in Palm Springs. Yes. Just a wonderful week. I have some great friends out there. They're kind of good luck charms for me for since, they stayed with them one night with them and hung out and, you know, just as a full week, just something unexpected, right? I played well and gotten in Tucson and didn't play great in the tournament but just having that little bump gave me a little more confidence as well. So, it it started to build quite a bit from that point.

OC > Let's fast forward to the playoffs. So, before we get to the first playoff, the SAS this wasn't a great week for you right before that. So is that just golf because things absolutely clicked in after that. Once you got to Richmond.

OC VO > Well yeah. You know that's a good test. And the greens are quick and quicker than quick. Be honest with you. They're really quick. And the weather wasn't really great that week. We had a lot of wind and a lot of rain. And if anything, it's, something I struggle with compared to most of these guys. I don't hit my irons very low through the wind very easily, and I hit about four iron shots, you know, first and second round, especially in the second round that I just ended up making double bogey just because I deserved it. You know, I had a couple really bad shots and, but the final round, I got paired with Tiziani and, you know, we're both grinding for every dollar at that point because we're trying to eke into the playoffs and, kind of that good and good focused, positive energy, you know, no love between us, really, but we're both grinding. It was a great steppingstone because we both played really well that day. And that really set me in motion for the playoffs.

OC > You do well at Dominion go to T5. And then Simmons Bank you are back in Arkansas where you went to school. And you're in your card there.

OC > Yes.

OC > That was quite a moment.

OC VO > That was incredible. Yeah. And getting the hogs called for me was like what do you do. And that's amazing right. But just not a golf course. I thought I would do. Well, I'm to be honest with you, but I just played really well and putted fantastic.

OC > Tied for second. So. All right. You have all these accomplishments. What's next? What's the next step in 2026?

OC VO > You know, try to keep the momentum. I'm still playing well and doing exactly kind of what I was playing like at the end of the year. But I'm in a new position, and I got to manage that thought process a little bit differently. You know, I still showed up here last Saturday. You know, could have Monday call. I was here. But, you know, it was nice to get out here in the warm weather and get a little work in, but, you know, I think I'll learn to manage that as we go. And and, you know, playing most of them with just one pro-am. and that's a big advantage as well. So, just to stay, I'm really trying to kind of push myself to feel like my backs against the wall right now. You know, my whole career, I've kind of been a fall player for that reason. You know? Many times, I I squeeze through Q school or graduated off the Korn Ferry to a run at the last second. You know, the mentality of putting your back against the wall is useful for most people, and I need to use that now.

OC > Is there a part of you, too? And I'm not sure how each individual player thinks, but you're like, you know what? I, I had a shot I could have won this thing. And now kind of take that mentality into this year knowing that I'm good enough to win out here

OC > That's a that is a goal. And, you know, trying not to get so caught up in it because sometimes some friends who are we talk about a little too much and I go, hey, hey, hold on, you know, back off. Just go play some golf. You know, we'll remember the mantra is, Zen mode is the way to go, you know? But yeah, that's definitely a part of this, part of the goal out here, for sure.

OC > What is it that makes Dak Ridings competitive and effective way to reach out here? What do you have to do to be the absolute best to get that done?

OC VO > Continue to work on putting, not just not get too lazy, you know, being in the position I'm at. That's why I want that back against the wall mentality. You know, ball striking I'm, I'm pretty concerned about constantly and I do okay there. But I need to just keep focused on preparing like it's the last week of the year.

OC > You feel like you belong.

OC > Absolutely. Yeah. So, it's what I love being around these guys that, elevate your mentality too, because it's it's pretty incredible the professionalism and, the hard work and, just the, you know, they're fierce and it's awesome.

OC > Well, looking forward to big thanks. Thanks, Tags. Yeah.

OC> Thank you. Appreciate you.

VO > And with that, we bid you farewell from Naples and the Chubb Classic. Event two of 28 in the books. As always, we thank you for watching PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini and we'll see you next time where legends play.