

Champions Learning Center Show #13

VO>> PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO>> It was a weekend to enjoy. Enjoy. Golf course. And the 19th edition of the DICKS Open in Endicott, New York. As PGA Tour champions officially reached the halfway point of the season. On a knockdown drag out Sunday in Endicott, Dickey Pride found his way back to the winner's circle with a closing 65 to outlast World Golf Hall of Famer Padraig Harrington in a playoff. Pride, ends a five year drought on PGA Tour Champions and breaks Harrington's stranglehold on this event with more. Our men who call the action Bob Papa and John Cook.

OC>> Well thanks, Vince. It was a thrilling Dick's Open, only the second playoff in the history of the tournament. In its 19th year. Dickey pride earns his second win on the PGA Tour Champions as he takes down a guy who had never lost the Dick's Open. Padraig Harrington was three and oh, and he had a one shot lead going into the final round but Dickey Pride seemed very relaxed in taking on Harrington.

VO>> Hadn't been in this position in a long time, Bob and he just went toe to toe with the Hall of Famer. There was a lot of players in the mix all the way down to the very, very end. but, Dickey Pride comes out, hits lots of great shots down the stretch. Made some important putts. Congratulations to Dickey Pride.

VO>> He made a clutch birdie putt at the 11th. And then Harrington hit the rock wall. His ball stayed in play. Dickie pride hit the fairway at 15 and sticks the landing this was perfect.

VO>> Absolutely perfect. Use the slope perfectly. Spin control distance control gets it down to just a couple of feet right underneath the hole.

VO>> and that would give him the outright lead at 17 under. Then the drivable par four 16th. And he hits a gem

VO>> And he likes to move the ball left to right which was the call shot here at 16. 273 Right to that spot right there. Could have bounced up further into the green. But he would hit a beautiful tee shot from right there and he would two putt for a birdie.

VO>> Padraig Harrington missed the green well to the left. Hit a gorgeous pitch shot to here. Pours in the birdie putt so he stays within one. They both had good looks at birdie at 17 and just missed. Then on the last hole, Padraig Harrington needed to make birdie to try to force the hand and he hits a wonderful pitch shot in.

VO>> Yeah from 90 yards. Said he's going to go straight out at there Bob and just missed the hole on the right edge. Beautiful shot.

VO>> Now after pride missed his birdie putt to close it out, Harrington had this putt for birdie to force a playoff. Ironically, Harrington bogeyed the last hole of the color guard classic to fall into a playoff with Stephen Alker, which he would lose on the first hole.

VO>> And then in the playoff, Harrington's big mistake his tee shot missed well to the right. Played his third shot to there, missed the par putt. Dickie pride at closing his birdie putt up close and just a release of emotion for Dickie Pride. He shot 63 in the opening round to take the lead and then stares down Harrington. Let's hear from our champion.

OC>>VO I mean I really feel like I kind of wanted yesterday because I hit it awful. I couldn't I think I only hit five fairways and when I finished the round, I looked over at, the replays and was like, oh my God and I was just awful. And I called Todd Anderson, my teacher, and we FaceTimed and we got some good thoughts and straightened it out.

VO>>OC You know, this is the first time I've won two times on a tour. I won on the PGA tour, I went on the Korn Ferry, and I won once out here and I would love to act like it didn't bother me and it really did. And I've worked really hard. It's come together and I'm very excited about it.

VO>> After finishing just outside the top 36 after last season, Dickey Pride wins and secures his playing privileges for next year. The Tuscaloosa, Alabama native closes out his Dick's Open victory with eight birdies in his round of 7 under 65. With top tens at his previous two events, the Pride was trending in the right direction. Congratulations, Dickey.

VO>> Next on the team from Mission Viejo, California, Michael Black. Also over the weekend, the block party rolled into Western New York. Michael Block, the club professional from Mission Viejo, California, who rose to fame at the 2023 PGA Championship at Oak Hill Country Club, was in the Dick's Field on a sponsor's exemption. Block, you may recall, made an ace on the 15th hole well paired with Rory McIlroy in the final round on his way to finishing tied for 15th in that PGA Championship. He turned 50 on June 15th and brought a big blocky personality to enjoy.

OC>> Yeah, we like that. The fans in 2023 at Oak Hill were so unbelievable. I'll never forget in my life. So a Saturday it's ripping rain right? Saturday I started, I think I was in like maybe eighth place or stop or on 10th or whatever it was. It's pouring rain. I tee off at like 2:10 p.m. and every fan, every single New York fan was out there and in their wetsuits and their umbrellas out there cheering me on and screaming, blockie the entire time. So, the that was an experience that, for a guy that had never had anyone cheer block in their entire life and then all of a sudden have a gigantic crowd from New York cheering block was, a moment I'll never forget in my life when I looked on the, schedule, as soon as I kept on checking the schedule, and as soon as the 2026 schedule came out, and I looked to June 15th, which is my birthday, and what was the first event I could play in? And it was a Dick's Open in Endicott, New York. I was going, I go, you got to be kidding me, right? I go, you have got to be kidding me. So immediately I'm like, I started harassing John Kerry. It's the tournament director here. Going John was there on Friday. You got to get me in, bro. You got to get me in because that's my crowd.

OC>> That's my homies. That's-That's everything for me. All right, I go, this is how it should go down and, I annoy John enough to get into the event. And here I am. So how much we going to see you now? I'm just asking for. So year 50? I already talked to my wife, my club, everyone. They know that year 50. I'm going full out. I want to be in everything I can. I will go wherever I can, and, and do as, as well as I can. Because I know if I play well, I can keep going. You know? I'm not playing. Good. Then it's okay. I'll go back to my job and and be perfectly fine with it. But if I can be out here with these guys who I've looked up to my whole life by playing golf, it's a really cool situation. I'll do it for a couple of years and then retire.

VO>> I get the block party moves to Ohio this week. Is Michael qualified for this week's U.S Senior Open a job? That's how we do it. Make the point though. He told us he also has a few more sponsors exemptions into PGA Tour Champions events later this season.

VO>> When Learning Center returns on the heels of the New York Knicks first NBA title in a half century, former Knicks star John Starks is fired up alongside pro and partner Miguel Angel Jimenez and a sit down with rookie George McNeil making quite a splash on PGA Tour Champions and knocking on the door for that breakthrough win.

VO>> It's been a while, but the New York Knicks are back on top of the NBA mountain, winning their first championship in 53 years, beating the San Antonio Spurs four games to one and led by finals MVP Jalen Brunson. Back in the 1990s, another Knicks guard, an all All-Star John Starks, was part of those great New York teams battling for a title. Last week, Starks played alongside Miguel in the Dicks Pro-Am and was still giddy about his team winning it all.

OC>>After 53 years. It was amazing just to watch those young guys play the way they played and, and watched the fans just really enjoy, throughout this whole playoffs. They was, completely locked in like the players were.

VO>> Starks was a tenacious player, hard nosed, athletic and tough. As for golf, he started playing in 1994. The same year the Knicks were in the finals. It's been quite a journey ever since, and Starks took a moment to compare the similarities between golf and basketball like input.

OC>> You know, same thing with his free throw. You know, you had to, land everything up and you got to have patience. When you shoot, like these type of shots for me, for his, rhythm, the tough shots that you had to have with chipping and putting the same thing. Just like you shoot, you know, you had to have good touch.

OC>> Yeah. Bam, bam. There you go, job Starks.

VO>> Many anticipate George McNeil will also have a victory celebration on this tour. The first year man has put together an outstanding start. Six top tens in nine events heading into the DICKS Open, including two runner up finishes. George has hit the ground running as part of a

freshman class on PGA Tour Champions, one that could tilt the tour. We caught up with him recently to learn more.

OC>>There's no question George McNeil hit the ground running on PGA Tour Champions for sure. He got five and runner up in his first two events. He was seventh at the Mitsubishi Electric Classic as well. So to what do you attribute, this this fast start you had?

OC>> I mean, I've been working at it. I've been working hard glass probably two years. I didn't really expect lead off to this. Good of a start, I guess. But, the stuff I'm working on, I went out and, I played the Korn Ferry Tour last year. I had a 48, 49 category, so I put in starts there. I got, I think I played seven events there. I played six on the PGA tour. So I was trying to get my my game back on repetitive mind back. And, it seems like it's paying off.

OC>> Yeah. But I mean immediately finding that how important is it to be have early success like that go to to make you feel better about yourself? Yeah. Well, I mean, well, it makes you feel better. I just said it. But also to get into events like this, the top four current year money, that aren't exempt, got in. So obviously I'm in that I, that's how I got into this event. Other majors, I'm in to the U.S. open. I mean, everything is obviously shaping up to be a good year. Hopefully. But but to get off to a good start, it makes the year go by a little, little easier. Yeah.

OC>> Want to talk about you and your background a little bit. You're a Florida guy? Born in Naples. What? Florida state. And you attended North Fort Myers High School, which, looking that up, it's quite a who's who of athletes out of that school. Why don't you name a few guys you look like? Probably the first and foremost, everybody knows Deon Sanders, right? Rimjob. I mean, he was I think he probably was that not only in North for Myers, the Florida State and you know, that that name on the, on the map. But Javon Kearse Javon freak, NFL rookie of the year. Defensive player of the year, same time University of Florida, which, you know, whatever. But, he, another one that just amazing athlete, Noel Devine, another, running back out of North, Mike Greenwell.

OC>> The great Mike Greenwell.

OC>> Actually, he was just before, beyond, but Mike just actually just passed. So he's our are can you. Yeah. Can Commissioner Cosway and late last year, but, you know. Yeah, there's, there's tons of, athletes that come out of there. I don't know if there's any rhyme or reason to it, but I just happen to be, I guess lucky enough to to come from the same ones.

OC>> Yeah. You're riding the wave, that's for sure. The two time winner on, PGA tour and also a former medalist at CU school. So that means that you you're you're pretty good. And rising up to the occasion and playing under pressure. You take a lot of pride in that?

OC>> So far. So far. Yeah. Yeah I do I don't well that and I don't want all my friends at home to laugh at me, so, so it's, Yeah, I mean, I like it in the moment. Obviously, nerves are good. If you're not nervous, I

mean, it doesn't mean anything. So, that you're out there nervous, so you're putting your time in, you're putting your work in, and to be nervous. Is it means you earned it. You earned that right to be there. So, and and performing under pressure and, just the, you know, see where you're see what you're made of. You know.

OC>> We kind of touched on this in the beginning, but this is that settling in even more like event to event now you feel like more of a a rhythm, I.Guess maybe?

OC>> Yeah. When you play a couple weeks in a row, you get to work with a rhythm. So that was nice playing, decent at the, PGA. Getting in that rhythm is nice. Not out here for me, though. I'm trying to earn it every single week because I'm not. I don't have the career money to be exempt for for life. Basically out here I don't have the career winds to be out here. So I have to earn it every week. So that's why I kind of put my head down and just go and so I try and make it work.

OC>> You know, it's interesting. These guys are turning 50 and they've come on PGA Tour Champions. It feels like they're kind of tilting the tour. There's a new vibe to it. There's a new feel to it. You sense that as well. From the guys that are in your peer group.

OC>> Yeah I do there's guys up in Crane, obviously. He's he's a hell of a player. Zach Johnson, you know, world class player, me, two time major champion, and, I don't know, eight or 9 or 12 or however many tour wins. A bunch. So Vaughn Taylor, another one. Ryder Cup for, I think 3 or 4 time winner.

OC>> And, so, yeah, there's some younger guys, obviously, a lot of players that are well known, some that are probably less known, so maybe like myself, but, you know, Charlie Hoffman going to be coming out here soon. Ryan Palmer going to be coming out here soon. So guys who have the credentials have the, the game obviously to still compete and and I don't want to say push out some of the older guys, but it's that's kind of just the way to go.

OC>> You guys have kind of camaraderie almost like a pledge class or something like that. You know, or you know, you know? -

OC>> I mean, a little bit we obviously we know who the, the young guys are. And so of the, older guys around here, they know you guys are.

OC>> Let's, let's move forward here. And, it looks like you're really on track. What, what are some, some goals and expectations for yourself?

OC>> Well, I mean, obviously this week I'd love to play. Well, I'd love to get a win. You know, any way you can get away, I think. Fantastic. Continue to improve. I know the things I'm working are the correct things to do. You can't force it. I know that that comes with any anything like you have force. You just let it happen. So hopefully, that will happen at all. We'll see what other guys we have. Like I said, I feel like I'm working on the right things and moving in the right direction.

VO>> Yeah. It feels like it's going to have to face your spring out. Continuing. You still to come on? Learning Center Padraig Harrington reveals his unique preparation strategy as he prepares to defend this week's U.S Senior Open. Pat him in major mode again. That's next.

VO>> A year ago, Padraig Harrington secured his second U.S Senior Open, firing a final round three under 67 to edge Stewart Cink by one shot at the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs. It marked Patti's 10th PGA Tour Champions win, as the World Golf Hall of Famer again staged a big time, big event performance. Could a hat trick be in the offing?

VO>> That opportunity awaits this week near Columbus, Ohio, as venerable Scioto Country Club plays host to the 46th U.S. Senior Open for a third time. Founded in 1916, the par 70 layout has also hosted a U.S. open, PGA Championship and Ryder Cup in its illustrious history. That said, Harrington defends it. Of course, he hasn't played competitively. His thoughts.

OC>> You've got to be very conscious that you're preparing for Sunday, not Thursday. So. Even though if you don't know the golf course, you're not to panic on the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday due to much work and the entire south. So for Thursday, Friday, Saturday is on the especially Sunday. So you have to first and foremost say, what if I was guaranteed being in contention on Sunday, what would I do to be ready for that?

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Speaker 6

And you would obviously not overdo things. So normally I just do nine holes a day. If I knew the course this time round, I'd probably try and play every hole twice. So, you know, 12 holes a day, something like that. You know, maybe that turns into 14 just to get the right cross over, but certainly won't be doing 18 holes or 54 holes practice. So yeah, do a little bit work and pin positions, get a feel for a chip and get a feel for the bunkers. Get a feel for pace and get a feel for putt. And through the fringes. Hey, get a feel for the rough, how the ball is coming out, if it's coming out. Fliers are not, not that much about playing the golf course.

The golf course is it's it's just understanding how each ball comes out, a rough and things like that, rather than necessarily playing to the holes over and over because they change, they move tees box around, wind changes. So, you need to know the general hole, but you don't have to. Yeah, that's what's changed from years. A couple years ago we played the golf course over and over.

Now we just get a feel for the different conditions that we expect to get during the week.

VO>> So you will get weather, I would imagine.

VO>> No, no, no, I can't control the weather.

VO>> Yeah, but you know what?

VO>> Maybe you're playing.

OC>> No no no I've never I've never I look out the window and that's honestly that's all I've ever done. I've never been one for the, the, the conditions. And every time somebody predicts the conditions like last week, they predicted that the early, early, late draw was the best draw last week. And it was the worst draw. Every time they predict something like this, just you don't have it.

OC>> If I could control the weather, I probably wouldn't play golf. I'd have a different business. So I guess I could just, Because you're imagine how big my ego would be if I could control the weather.

VO>> Harrington also helps to illustrate one of the less talked about yet very special things about PGA Tour Champions that is making the Pro-Am experience a magnificent one. Drawing Paddy means amateurs not only get a great storyteller in their group, but a teacher as well, helping them to improve their games. As seen last week at the Dick's Open.

OC>> Now this is a man who keeps his head down too much. Too much? Oh yeah. His head stuck in the head. He turned his head in the backswing and he actually makes a nice practice swing. If he turned his head in the backswing and the follow through a little bit, he'd have a much better time. Swing is sequences.

OC>>VO Coordination would be a lot better. So struggling players, the worst thing they can do is try. I'm beginners. Keep your head down. It's a horrible, tough really. Your head should not be fixed. It should flow. It should be relaxed. But that's a classic there of, you know, I'm don't want to say it to him too early, but he would be.

OC>>He's going home with that tip. You got to move your head a little bit. Let it turn. Let it float. I have to keep my mouth shut for four holes now. That's hard for me. Yeah, I, I have my tips for everybody already. I have my work done for the day. You try not to give the lessons too early, because obviously people have expectations when you give them lessons.

OC>> The amount of times you give a lesson that's genuinely correct. But because it doesn't automatically give a perfect shot straight away, are all the time, you know, they'll go back to some sort of piece of rubbish, instead of sticking to something that will gradually improve your game over time.

VO>>OC When you see this, when you're playing, do them. When you do want to tip added that you still concentrate on your game.

VO>>OC Golf is only an in and out game. You know, you chat between shots, you talk about stuff, you gossip, you know, afterwards, you know, that sort of stuff. And then you get over your ball. Yeah, you pick your shot. The only thing you have to do in golf is the end. Your routine has to be really good.

OC>> So if you do all your work, you design the club beside your shot. You do whatever prep you do. And once you step forward and then you should never, ever change your mind. So you should not anything in you shouldn't hit a hard or shouldn't hit it further, right? Shouldn't change anything. So you make a decision and once you step forward to hit the shot, that's best.

OC>> From there in should be really should be quite quick, very quick and very. It starts the routine that needs to be consistent that you see with change under pressure, somebody stands over the ball longer than normal. That's them choking. Whereas if they've made the decision, once you step over that imaginary line, you actually aren't adding anything in. It's all a it's actually routine from there.

VO>> Thank you, professor Patty, and best of luck to you and the field in the upcoming US Senior Open. Until then, congratulations to our winner at the Dick's Open. Closing out the month of June I'm Vince Cellini. Thank you for watching PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. We'll see you next time.