

Champions Learning Center Show #12

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > It's another stop in America's heartland for PGA Tour Champions as we near the halfway point of the season. The legends hit Des Moines, Iowa and Wakonda Club for the Principal Charity Classic.

VO > Author Thomas Wolfe once wrote a novel entitled You Can't Go Home Again. Turns out that isn't part of Zach Johnson's book collection. The Iowa native not only went home again, he was a conquering hero.

VO > And the Iowa native playing at the Principle Charity Classic for the first time. And is your 2026 champion.

VO> Johnson made his first Principal Charity Classic, a memorable one. Nailing down his second win on this tour and becoming the fourth player to win here in his first appearance. With more on Zach's impressive weekend, here are Bob Papa and Peter Jacobsen.

OC > Well, thank you Vince. It was the 25th playing of the Principal Charity Classic. All eyes were on Zach Johnson coming into the week, as he was playing in his home state for the first time on the PGA Tour Champions, and Peter got off to a rocky start. But he winds up winning this tournament by four shots.

OC > He starts out on Friday bogey double and then from there he shoots 20 under and ends the week at 17 under. I was so impressed with Zach all week. First of all, he so appreciative of everybody pulling for him. But the way that he gets things out, the up and down we saw at 16, I just I'm always impressed with Zach Johnson. He's a fighter.

VO > Take a look at some of the highlights from the final round. And really hit a poor wedge shot into the green at six. And then erases that poor shot with his long birdie putt.

VO > Yeah he was one back and that which was unexpected. And a huge gift that got him tied with Richard Green.

VO > Then he birdied the eighth. So he went out and 34. And I thought this putt was huge at this point.

VO > Yeah I agree with you. That was hard. It was the wind was really picking up there downhill breaking to the right and speedy.

VO > And then he birdie 13 bogeyed 14 and then hit a great tee shot and able to navigate the par five 15th with a mid-iron in there and give himself a look at eagle.

VO > I was impressed with he and his caddie Brian Smith. They really talked through that shot. Set him up right there for an easy two-foot birdie.

VO > So a spot of bother at the 16th which played as the hardest hole in the golf course misses his second left we're thinking. All right just get it on the green. Give yourself a putt. He knocks it to three feet.

VO > Yeah that was the tournament. That was the one I was talking about. He was really shaky on that second shot. Gets it up and down. And he finishes with a closing birdie.

VO > Whines up shooting a five under par 67 in the final round. Shot bogey free 63 in round number two. And really scratched it out in round one to get to three under as Zach Johnson PGA Tour Champions rookie wins for the second time this year, having won in his debut in Boca and now in his home state of Iowa, wins the Principal Charity Classic. Retief Goosen and Richard Green finish in a tie for second place, but Zach Johnson, what a homecoming. Let's hear from our champion.

OC / VO > Winning in Iowa in Des Moines on this golf course. Now as an honorary member which was a nice little ceremony pre-week. You know you know I don't know what dreams are, but if if I had won this would be one. I mean I am I am so fortunate I feel I feel very honored to to be this year's champion. It's hard it's hard to articulate.

VO > A look at the Charles Schwab Cup standings. Zach Johnson cutting a bit into Stewart Cink's overall lead. Ernie Els up to third and Retief Goosen moving into the top five. The top ten, featuring a wide array of players as the 2026 season continues to entertain.

VO > It was a special week for Charles Schwab Cup number two and Cedar Rapids native Zach Johnson. The tour rookie was back in his home state for his Principal Charity Classic debut. A time to catch up with old friends, reminisce a bit and return to the city where he attended college at Drake University. Then it was time for business and Zach let us tag along for his opening hole.

OC > Zack, do you still get nervous going to the first team?

OC > I think if you don't, then there's something wrong that means it doesn't matter. Yeah. Good nerves. Not not anxious. Just excitement. Nerves.

OC > Play well.

OC > Thanks, brother.

OC > (INAUDIBLE WORDS)

OC > You good? Yeah. Play well. Appreciate you.

OC > On the tee from Cedar Rapids.

OC > Hello, boys,

OC > Please give a warm warm Iowa welcome to Zach Johnson.

OC > Thank you.

OC > What's the runout at the tree? 314 no, the right tree. 290 through minus 280 275 through. Thank you.

OC > Good swing Strick.

OC > I've been looking forward to coming here for quite some time when it became, you know, an option, a reality, if you will. This was home for four years of my life. Number one. Two of these grounds. I don't know how many times I played here. It's impossible to count, the course, has evolved and changed, but still the same vibes. And then lastly, it's the people. I mean, that's like all great communities. It starts with the people. And this is one of them. Happy to be in Des Moines.

OC > Strick. It was always a three wood, I saw it, I couldn't see it. I mean, I couldn't see it from way back yonder.

OC > Plenty (INAUDIBLE WORDS). 171. Yes. I mean, for the ball to get here, it's hurting a little you think so? Okay.

OC > Don't don't kick hard. Stop, shoot!

OC > I had 166 actually played a five yards up. So 171 perfect club and got a little aggressive. Not exactly the not exactly what I was having a mind there but that's the first hole. Got some vibes going you know that's all right now. Now I can get the short game out of the way and then get on a green in regulation streak.

OC > That's very lucky as they say. Yeah.

OC > (INAUDIBLE WORDS) Yeah, I was sitting up. I could spin it.

OC > Oh wow.

OC > Golf has a way of even out. So hopefully we can hit some quality shots and actually hit a pretty decent pitch. And I thought I got a good putt but probably misread it a little bit. Can't get aggressive downhill here at Wakanda.

VO > When Learning Center returns. Once again Ernie Els has designs on a new golf course squeezing business between golf events. Els surveys The Sooner State and his latest project in Oklahoma. And we will take you there next.

VO > Ernie Els wears many hats when not starring on this tour. He's monitoring his charity obligations, all the while taking time to head up Ernie Els golf design and his latest project, leaving the American Family Insurance Championship in Wisconsin. Ernie scouted his latest project just outside Oklahoma City called Bridgesong Golf Club, the latest in the Els portfolio stretching around the globe. Oklahoma! Okay, then jetting back to last week's Principal Charity Classic.

OC / VO / OC > So we just finished Madison being a very nice (INAUDIBLE WORDS) and we on our way down to Oklahoma, we're going down to Norman, Oklahoma to look at our golf course, Bridgesong. This is exciting. You know, it's exciting to go see our friends down in Oklahoma. It gets a couple of days off the schedule for me during the week, you know, Monday, Tuesday and then in the exciting stuff, you know we've been doing it the long time.

VO > I don't need a man to show me the way back to Oklahoma.

VO / OC / VO / OC > We're on the move. We were in Wisconsin yesterday. We're here in Oklahoma City, we're in the vicinity. We're in Blanchard. Plenty of time to do some golf course design. I got professionals at work, cottages where the trees are and the clubhouse. You know, I got involved with golf course design more than 20 years ago now we do projects where I can really spend time on them, and I've got one of the best partners I have. The best partner that I could ever think of in Greg Letsche. He was an absolute professional. Look at this range buddy. (INAUDIBLE WORDS)

VO / OC > I've been very fortunate I've been working with Ernie and pushing probably 25 years, and we know each other very well sometimes, probably too well.

OC > Just love spending time out there. You know, we spent a couple of hours out there. We show people around.

OC / VO > His schedule in between tournaments. You know, I'd catch up with him. We review plans where I'm going, you know, when he is needed for the next event.

OC > I may create something that's going to be lasting.

VO > back in Oklahoma.

VO / OC / VO / OC > So there's no water retention in that. Today we're on site reviewing the overall strategy, the placement of bunkers, the greens, shapes, sizes, angles, how they blend in with that natural topography. Some of the topography was existing, some were created. And to get a nice balance of holes.

OC / VO > 18th is coming down with that that machine is the 18th green. The ninth green is on the other side it's a five-par coming down and you got ten up. One goes this way. I come in, you know I get my eyes on it. See how the drawings panned out onto the actual dirt.

VO / OC > throughout the day wow so much was ready to go to the next steps. And that is finishing the greens, finishing bunkers, grassing some drainage.

OC / VO > You get all the the feedback from everybody, but you want to see it yourself. We're going to put this on the light. So the cottage is over here so you can play this range as a par three.

VO / OC > Ernie has some great ideas of looking down into these natural riverine areas that you'll see between holes. Also helps the golf course superintendent for air movement.

VO / OC / VO > That machine. Yeah yeah that's going to happen up. Yeah. And that will feel like this goes all the way down. It's one of the really special deal for us. So I want to really make this work and make it really special for this community. So spending a lot of time here. You ready to play 18. Yes. Yeah I'm ready.

VO / OC / VO / OC > You know here in Oklahoma we do have at times a strong wind. So some holes will play downwind. Some will play into the wind crosswind and the features the strategic values will affect all of that.

VO / OC / VO / OC / VO > Come check this out. We are basically there with all our our drawings. So that's as much as it's been about let's get a bit of shock absorption in it as well. The bunker situation is where we want it, where the recovery of the rain was six hours down to three and a half. We know exactly where the fairway lines are and everything like that. So landscapes are limited. Doing a wonderful job for us. And you don't play golf? No, no. It's amazing. Yeah. We're gonna open the 18 holes. So next year, July we'll be playing golf here.

VO / OC / VO > We went through the plan. Ernie hit a lot of shots, gave us a lot of feedback, feedback for me where I place it as an architect. But as a player, you know, we get a real sense of how the course is going to play.

VO / OC / VO / OC / VO > I think we should have some tree, but this is a beauty. Everybody's got their hobbies. You know, family takes a lot of my time, a lot of our time. I would love to have been out here. Samantha's in London at the moment. She's doing her thing. But this is an extension of what I do through the game of golf. So I grew up with these two. Yeah, these guys grew up. I kind of stated this guy grew up a little more.

VO / OC > you know, I know he's also busy with his family, with Ben, with autism. I mean, he's really a busy guy.

VO / OC / VO > What are we in June 2026? July 27th. We're going to open this baby. Put your head out of the out of the crab. There you go.

VO > Els design has 21 projects completed and open worldwide, with another 12 in development. Bridgesong is set to open in 2027 and will be his second course in the continental United States and third overall, including one in Hawaii.

VO > Still to come on Learning Center, it's US open week with a return to Shinnecock Hills Golf Club. We check in with past US open winners at Shinnecock, Corey Pavin and Retief Goosen. Looking back and ahead to the 2026 edition.

VO > This week brings us the 126th US Open, once again being staged at venerable Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton, New York. This will be the sixth US Open at Shinnecock, which opened back in 1891. As always, it will test every aspect of a player's game.

VO > As it did 31 years ago, then a breakthrough for a player whom some wondered would ever get his major championship. Corey Pavin authored an amazing finish to capture the 1995 US open, giving NBC's Johnny Miller an opening for a signature call.

VO > This is a shot of his life.

VO > Some three decades later. Corey takes us through the final holes. That championship Sunday.

VO / OC / VO > I was just very calm, you know, 15. I hit a wedge and I think Johnny Miller, even on the telecast, said, look how relaxed he looks. You know, he just looks focused, relaxed. And you know, I birdied 15 and I got the lead and I got pretty nervous. But but I was still in a very good place mentally. You know I just go through your stuff, do your routine, you know par of the last three holes and I'll probably win and then put that on my mind and just try to execute.

VO / OC / VO / OC > So that's pretty much stock distance for you or is that the best four wood you've ever had in your whole life? Well, it was a good shot under the circumstances, say the least. You know, I made a putt on on 17, which was really critical about a six foot par putt, and it kind of allowed me to play 18 a little more conservatively. That's why I had 228 yards in, but I just wanted to hit the fairway. That was my main concern off the tee. I did it and then I just wanted hit in the middle of the green and two putt and get out of there, and I just hit a great shot. I mean, it just never left the pin from the fairway. It actually looked like it might roll up and actually go into the hole. And it broke off to the right. And fortunately I

didn't need to make the putt. I tried to make it, but I didn't, but I still ended up winning by two. So it was nice.

VO > A couple of cool things. One, obviously U.S. open champion, but then at Shinnecock Hills, which when it's set up for a U.S. open, that's two notches in the belt together.

OC / VO / OC / VO > Well, it's a cool course to win anything on, especially U.S. open. So it was you know, the course I think is one of the best in the world. I still feel that way, and not just because I won. I played there in 86 and I love the course the second I saw it and I missed the cut by a bunch, so I was excited to win there. I think it was the 100th playing of the US open, so there was a lot of things that came together. It was pretty cool.

VO > In 2004 Retief Goosen authored a remarkable finish when Shinnecock greens were incredibly fast due to dry, stiff winds yet and still, Goosen one putted 11 greens in the final round to edge Phil Mickelson and win our national championship for a second time. Several years ago, Goose reflected back on that stellar performance.

VO / OC > Two decades ago, Goosen put together a high wire act at Shinnecock Hills that was absolutely epic in winning his second US open, and we will get to that. But first of all, 20 years ago. What do you remember about that version of Retief Goosen, that two time U.S. open winner?

OC / VO > I was quite mentally strong that week. You know, U.S. open really takes it out of your mentally wise and the golf course, every shot. You can eat so many good shots that end up pretty bad. And for me that week, it was a great putting display. Obviously, you always need to put well too if you want to win a tournament. I felt very comfortable when I got there in the beginning of the week.

VO > Did you believe as a young player that the U.S. open would be your avenue to a major championship?

VO / OC / VO / OC > Not really. I always thought the British Open is the one I was going to win first. You know, starting my career in Europe, playing on a European tour, British Open. I've been in the top ten quite a few times over the years, and I always felt like it probably suits my game a little better now. But and I love Augusta, obviously too. The PGA is probably the one I've never really done too great in, but I'll take any major win, that's for sure.

VO > Well, 2004 on that Sunday in the final round, it was just an absolutely unbelievable set of circumstances in terms of conditions on that day, par 70, you shoot 71. The field scoring average on Sunday was 78.7.

OC > Yeah almost 79. So what do you recall about just the conditions of that day and grinding through it now?

OC / VO > I mean the golf course changed when I, when I got there early in the week. It was beautiful. I loved the golf course, I loved the feel of it. And then we woke up Saturday and the golf course has disappeared. It was brown, rock hard and dead. It was amazing how they changed the course in two days. And then Sunday was no different to when the wind blew pretty strong. You know, we already had issues on number seven with the ball struggling to stay on the green.

VO / OC > They had actually watered that green mid round. So by the time you got there it the watering has taken place. Yes. Correct. Yeah. Luckily luckily which caused quite a stir among the theater. Yeah. You know that golf course. You know even the last time when Brooks one there was also issues on the greens. You know, that's the thing about the U.S. open and trying to push the limits of what can be done in golf. And, and then sometimes some holes could get a little stupid in a way. But I made four pars on that hole I'll take it any day.

VO > Absolutely. And during that week, of course, there's a huge pro Phil Mickelson contingent as well as the two of you are. Yeah. So do you actually do you acknowledge or hear that or are you so locked into your game you don't know?

VO / OC > I was pretty focused. New Yorker with Phil Mickelson is going to be loud. And I, I told myself, you know, it's going to be loud. Just block out what's going on. And my focusing was so good. A couple of times my caddie said, did you hear what that guy just said to you. And I'm like, no, no, what? You know, I didn't here. Yeah, I was just so in a zone and not trying to get caught up in things that goes on outside the ropes.

OC / VO > Would you say more impressive, the up and down at 13 or your birdie at 16. The up and down at 13 definitely that was amazing the birdie is plus on 16. But yeah I mean the up and down on 17 to have a two short lead going down the last is huge.

VO / OC / VO > Would you say that the US open still checks all those boxes as the most the biggest challenge in golf from the major championships. Definitely. I mean they're trying to get an even winning score. I think the days of over par winning a U.S. open is gone. The guys are just too good now and and they're hitting in a mile and the guys are athletes. You know, it's it's even the caddies work out you know. So it's it's amazing how the game has become such a athletic sport.

VO > Well thank you for spending time with us.

VO > Thanks.

VO > Appreciate it Retief.

VO > With that we salute our winner in Des Moines and look forward to another demanding and entertaining week of golf and crowning a US open champion. I'm Vince Giuliani. We thank you for watching this edition of PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.