

Champions Learning Center Show #21

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.

VO > After a Labor Day weekend break PGA Tour Champions was back to work in the Mount Rushmore State. It was the Sanford International in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, one of a handful of events remaining before the playoff run. For recap, the men who called the action. John Swantek and John Cook.

OC > Okay. Thank you, Vince. What a scintillating final day it was in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and what a dramatic finishing stretch of holes for the guys jostling for the lead and ultimately the victory.

OC > It was a back-and-forth day, there's no doubt about it, but Zach Johnson just you know, with the birdie on the last hole had to match that birdie on the last hole you know break that tie with Ben Crane, but it was fun to watch.

OC / VO > Crane was pushing him certainly and trying to apply the pressure over the final handful of holes at Minnehaha, including the par five 16th here.

VO > And after a really nice drive on the par five. Second shot in the right bunker. Good bunker shot to there. But hold that 12-footer.

VO > So he had the lead by one until they came to 17. Crane made bogey. Zach Johnson with a two.

VO > Tough hole today 187 yards. Nice six iron into the wind and a beautiful putt. Little left to right curler.

VO > Crane had a long birdie putt from just off the front edge which he ran about 12ft by. Nearly made the three.

VO > Just misses on that left. He was in between clubs off the tee and chose poorly.

VO > And he hit a marvelous wedge shot from the heavy left hand rough to about a dozen feet there at 18 and buried the birdie putt.

VO > He took on that big slope and did it just right, right underneath the hole, a beautiful putt right in the center.

VO > And that put the heat squarely on the shoulders of Zach Johnson.

VO > And a great wedge shot like you would expect from Zach Johnson. And just buries it right in the middle.

VO > What a finish from those two combatants. Good friends through all their years on the PGA Tour and in their rookie seasons out here on the Champions Tour, no one has had a more impactful rookie season than Zach Johnson.66, on the final day in Sioux Falls to win his fifth title of 2026. Let's hear from our champion.

OC / VO > I'm at a loss right now. I mean, I just played against one of my best friends. It felt like, you know, and and he made me earn it. And I don't even love him. I adore him, but he's the first person to hug me.

And that that says everything about Ben. I'm. I'm at a loss. I wish my family was here. But I love them and they know that so.

VO > A duel among tour rookies slash friends shakes out well for both Johnson and Crane. Zach slicing into Stewart Cink's overall lead with his fifth victory of the season, and the season long standings look like this. Top eight remain the same, with Ben Crane moving inside the top ten as runner up Sunday. Still, two men lead the way as we dig into the month of September.

VO > Meanwhile, after a disappointing T-55 finish at The Ally Challenge, Steve Stricker revealed the Sanford International, his sixth event of the season, will likely be his last. Stricker is an 18-time PGA Tour Champions winner and raised the 2023 Charles Schwab Cup. Yet it's been a year of recovery from injury and personal matters. Strick was able to grind to a T-33 finish in Sioux Falls and offers some insight as to what might be next.

VO / OC > We're going to go with Bobby to the first stage of tour school in a couple of weeks. Yeah, and I'll probably just kind of wrap it up. I think it's been one of those years, and I just need to, I think, be home and figure some stuff out, get my life straight, and continue to work on my game and, you know, point towards next year.

VO > While Stricker's season may be winding down, nonmember Jamie Donaldson just got a big boost. The Sanford international marked his seventh start of the season, making his earnings eligible for Charles Schwab Cup points. Donaldson has three top ten finishes after a T8 over the weekend, with those earnings placing him just outside the top 36 in the standings at 43rd in money. Now he lays out what he's chasing next.

VO / OC > You've got a push to try and get in the top 36 at the end of the season. So, playoffs was another one getting the playoffs. And then just play as well as he can to secure top 36 minimum. And go from there. You know it's important to play all the tournament's next year rather than just playing a few. You need a full schedule to be competitive out here because the standard is so high. So, the more tournaments you play, the the better you're going to do.

VO > This is Bo Van Pelt's second full season on PGA Tour Champions, and he is making the incremental climb. He finished second in Sioux Falls a year ago. And this season he boasted four top tens and is holding inside the top 36 in the Charles Schwab standings at 32. His is a golf journey from America's heartland that even includes a link to pro football. We spoke with Bo earlier this season.

OC > We're spending some time with Bo Van Pelt and Bo you're an accomplished player, played all over the world, veteran guy, but when you've got to PGA Tour Champions last season, what was kind of your approach to the whole thing?

OC / VO > You know, obviously I was looking forward to it. You know, I was I was out of the game for almost four years. I got hurt. And so, I never thought I was going to really play again. And then, got back and played some on the PGA Tour, played some on the Korn Ferry leading up to it. And just by dumb luck, you know, my youngest graduated high school the week I turned 50. So, it was kind of like this new chapter for my wife and I and my kids. And, you know, I was fortunate enough to get on the PGA Tour when I was pretty young. So, a lot of my close friends had already been out here for 5 or 6 years, and I knew how much fun they were having. I knew how good they still played, and so I was just excited. I think it was just an excitement level, to get to play with guys, that I've known for so long. You know, my son, both of my sons caddied for me some last summer. So, it was fun for them because they were so young. When I was playing on the PGA Tour, they got to see me be around guys. I've known that long, and it's just been a great experience so far.

OC > So as we move into year two and you've had that complete season, including getting into the playoffs, it's a little different now. Is there more of a comfort level?

OC / VO > Yeah, I think it you know golf it's all about how your game feels. And I think, you know, my game felt a lot better at the start of this year. Felt like I was. And it was nice to get on a repeatable schedule, you know, playing at a consistent level. And I think most guys agree with that out here. You know, it's it's hard to like play a week and then have a month off and whatever. So last summer was the first time in a couple of years I really felt like I was focused on golf and playing week in and week out. And and that's where we, I think, do our best.

OC > So you grew up in Richmond, Indiana. I did a little background on you. Your dad was a great athlete. Played for Indiana. A lineman and was drafted by the Philadelphia Eagles in the late 60s. So how did you gravitate to golf? You're in an athletic family growing up.

OC / VO > Yeah, it was, you know, my dad didn't pick up the game so afterwards. And I was so fortunate to grow up in Richmond. It was it was a unique small town where; our head pros were really kind of involved in junior golf. I came along right at the time, like the Indiana

Junior tour started, and I played basketball, played football, but I just kind of gravitated towards golf. And a lot of my friends, we'd we'd play golf all day and then we'd go play basketball at night. And he was just an amazing sports dad. I think it helped me out a lot that he had been successful. He knew what it took and he wasn't trying to live his dreams through me. He was just trying to support me. And yeah, athletics was always a big part of it. I mean, my kids all played sports. My daughter cheered at Texas. I got a son that's playing lacrosse in college. My nephew played at Indiana last year in football. Wow. You know, sports is just a big part of our family. And, yeah, golf. It's not something that really anybody else in my family did. So it was just one of those things that I loved it from the beginning. Had some success early on. And, yeah, it's taken me all over the world, very, very fortunate.

OC > And that's where we'll pick it up here. Because you won on the PGA Tour, Korn Ferry Tour, European Tour, Asian Tour, all of that experience going around the globe and playing. Does that make you feel like you can you can really be in any venue and kind of find your way?

OC / VO > I've just always enjoyed going to other places and kind of challenging your game. You know, the first Open Championship I played at Troon, I just I felt like it was such a unique test because it wasn't the links golf was so different. And then going over to Asia and playing in Australia and then playing like the Legends Tour last year was like, I've met friends from all over the world. I grew up in a small town, you know, and so for me, I just feel like it's another benefit of golf. What it's given to me and my family is, and it's something I take a lot of pride in, you know, that I've been able to win on different tours around the world because golf's a global game and there's great players all over the world. So, it's it's been a lot of fun.

OC > Yeah. And this last one's kind of difficult question in some ways. But what what does it take to kind of breakthrough on this tour and get yourself on top.

OC / VO > Yeah. No, I mean, I think you just got to play well, you know, it's especially the three round tournaments. It's kind of a sprint. You know, you can't get too far behind because guys are really good out here. Had a good chance in South Dakota last year and, you know was Retief got me there at the end. But I think that week proved to me that my game was still good enough. Winning on the legends last year helped me. And then I think, yeah, just continue to work on your game and, put yourself up there.

OC > Yeah. Give yourself a chance.

OC > Yeah.

OC > Thanks, Bo. Appreciate it.

OC > Thank you. Have a great year.

OC > Thank you.

VO > When Learning Center returns another health update from our tour. Steve Pate finding new direction from a serious setback. Not necessarily looking to win at golf, but rather to win at life. Stay with us.

VO > The Sanford International's impact reaches well beyond the golf course ahead of this week's event. PGA Tour Champions winner Tim O'Neil took Sanford Children's Hospital and Owen Ragsdale on a shopping spree at Shields Sporting Goods, with Owen calling the shots and leaving no stone unturned. Learning center was there.

OC > Hello.

OC > How's it going, Owen?

OC > How are you?

OC > Owen, I want to introduce you to. This is Tim O'Neil. He's one of the guys (INAUDIBLE WORDS).

OC > Hey. How you doing, Owen? you ready to get some clothes today?

OC > What do you think, Owen? You like it?

OC > Yeah.

OC > I like it, too. That's a keeper. Yeah. Yeah. Nice. Yeah, it looks really good.

OC > Here's some hats, Owen. I don't know if that could possibly match your outfits. You can take a look at those. What do you think of those? This one. Nice. Nice. Good choices.

OC > Try this one. All right.

OC > All right.

OC > You picking out some good stuff?

OC > Heck yeah man.

OC> I'm jealous.

OC > Yeah, this is light enough so you can swing and hit that bomb.

OC > I used to have Hot Wheels when I was a kid. So much to choose from.

OC > You can just pile them all in there. Whatever you. There you go. Keep piling them in.

OC > What's his name?

OC > Patrick.

OC > This is Patrick.

OC > And SpongeBob.

OC > Well, I like SpongeBob.

OC > Oh, this is awesome. You know, this is this is what the Champions Tour is all about, you know, being able to give back. Owen, here and have a day like this at Shields where you can pick out stuff and go toys shopping and.

OC > This is just as fun for me too.

VO > (INAUDIBLE WORDS) Look at this.

VO > Steve Pate made his name as one of golf's toughest competitors, a six-time PGA Tour winner, two-time U.S. Ryder Cup and a player who never backed away from pressure earlier this year. That fight moved far beyond the golf course. When Pate revealed he was battling squamous cell carcinoma in his lungs after chemotherapy and radiation, he's back around the game, not with an all clear but with an encouraging update.

VO / OC > Yeah. A lot of uncertainty. The tumor shrunk to the point where it's hiding behind scar tissue from the radiation. And doing a biopsy would be major surgery, so there's no point in doing that.

VO > Treatment often left Pate nauseous, dizzy and drained. He still went to the gym five days a week doing whatever his body would allow. He also drew strength from five friends at Seagate in Florida, all touched by cancer and all still here years after receiving difficult diagnoses. For Pate returning to golf wasn't about chasing a trophy. It was about giving all that work somewhere to lead.

VO / OC > You know, my golf game sucks, but that's really not that important. Well, my doctor early on said the two things you can do to improve your outcome is stay physically active and keep a good attitude. I've only played four times to spread them out. You know, it keeps me, gives me something extra motivation to stay healthy and to keep active.

VO > The fight has been mental as well as physical. Early in his treatment, he came across two lines that changed the way he looked at his diagnosis and have helped guide him ever since.

VO / OC > One of them said, if you think of yourself as a victim, you're telling yourself that you have no impact on your outcome. I was like, okay, that makes sense. And the other one

I read was, if you if you kill fear and worry, will die of malnutrition. So, the fear is death. Nobody, nobody wants to die. But I'm not afraid of it. The visualization is something that I've done with golf forever. Well, I've started doing it without. And do it every day. You got to put in the work. I want people to be aware of what I've gone through and hopefully inspire them, because it doesn't have to be a death sentence. Yeah, there are things you can do to improve your outcome whether that's a few more months, a few more years becoming cancer free. I don't know, and but it's certainly makes, you know, the present much more enjoyable. Know if you sit around and wait to die, you will succeed.

VO > Please welcome from Delray Beach, Florida. Steve Pate.

VO / OC > I'm not there yet. Just wake up and keep moving forward.

VO > Still to come on Learning Center. It's off to a true jewel of American golf legendary Pebble Beach. The Pure Insurance Championship sets up this week, so come along.

VO > He is an absolute treasure of American golf. The great Bob Toski, a former player, longtime instructor, philosopher and historian and this Friday will celebrate his 100th birthday. Getting to know this man, affectionately known as the mouse, has been one of the greatest thrills of my career. Still sharp as a tack connection to the 20th century's greatest athletes and performers. He has formed a special bond while working with Ken Duke.

VO / OC > He made me understand how to play the game instead of how. Gave me a little nicks and pieces. The simple thing he's all about the little things, not about the big things. Made me a lot more consistent. Driving the golf ball and iron play as well. I was not a very consistent player, and to be on any tour, you have to be a consistent player. And he made that change for me in 2006. He lives in Boca, about an hour away from me. I go down to see him all the time. We hardly ever hit golf balls. We eat lunch or eat breakfast and it's him talking. I'm listening. Always. I'm never had much to say. I just say thank you very much. But he's worked with so many, so many people, so many club pros, so many amateurs, so many other pros. But to turn my game from a just an average golfer, a guy that can compete on the the highest level and win on the PGA Tour and the PGA Tour Champions, it's priceless. This guy is priceless. And still to this day, he's pretty sharp at 100 years old.

VO > From one milestone birthday to another. The day after Bob Toski turns 100, Ryan Palmer hits the PGA Tour Champions Magic number. The four-time PGA tour winner turns 50 on Saturday, and after more than two decades and 500 starts on tour, the Texan is ready to begin a new chapter.

VO > And as Palmer prepares for that next chapter, PGA Tour Champions heads to a place where plenty of golf history has already been written. This week, the Pure Insurance Championship returns to the Monterey Peninsula, with Pebble Beach Golf Links and

Spyglass Hill sharing host duties. The unique event pairs 80 PGA Tour Champions players with 80 First Tee Juniors.

VO > Last year Margaret Kerr of the First Tee, Greater Houston was one of those teenagers who competed in the Pure Insurance Championship, teaming up with Steven Alker. They combined to win the Pro Junior girls title at 18 under par. Recently, the duo joined Rex Hoggard and Ryan Lavender on Golf Today to discuss the overall experience.

VO / OC > It's great to be joined by the Championship team now and Stephen, it's great to see you. I want to start with you first and foremost. What are some of your favorite memories from that week? A year ago, at Pebble Beach.

OC > Oh well, I mean, it's always great to get back to Pebble Beach and Spyglass, but I first of all, I just wanted to say, Margaret Kerr, I mean, first class young lady. What she has achieved in such a short amount of time and her age, she's well beyond the years and we had a blast last year. So just just going back there and being part of it and what the whole mentorship and the first tee means is very special.

OC > Margaret, what do you remember about this experience and what did you learn playing alongside Steven Alker.

OC > Well, the week itself was incredible, but I think what I learned most is how he balanced being able to play some great golf but also be there for me in the tournament round. I mean, I was blessed to have him as a pro, and he made sure that he helped me read putts with iron choices, just everything along the week. But then being able to focus in on that 30 to 60 second that it took him to hit his shot and still be able to execute that. It was something that I took away and, you know, used for my game.

OC > Steven, from your own experience in your own career journey, what sort of advice or lessons are you hoping to pass down to the teenagers who are competing in these sorts of tournaments?

OC / VO > Well, I think, you know, this event is just so different to a normal event they would play. So, you know, it's just about I get them to soak in the whole week. You know, there's so much going on. There's events. There's the golf course you're playing. There's your partner. You're trying to compete as well. So, take all that in and enjoy it and get out of it what you can.

VO/ OC > Margaret Steve just kind of touched on the pressure, pressure you must have felt coming down the stretch. What did you learn about yourself? I'm sure playing in front of not only PGA Tour Champions players, but there was a gallery there, everything that goes into it. How did you deal with the pressure and how has that helped you moving forward?

OC / VO > I was nervous. I mean, I remember on 18, I said, I just want to get it on the green on my approach shot. And I think I definitely learned that although it's scary and there's cameras that are really close to just to remember to breathe, because at the end of the day, you know, anything could have happened. And I just reminded myself that it was all going to be okay. And just to take a deep breath in to remember that no matter what happens, that I'm on the last group at Pebble Beach on hole 18 to just have fun.

VO > Back to the subject of birthdays. The National Football League turned 106 last week after the opening of the 2026 schedule. This included a Super Bowl rematch of the Patriots and Seahawks. Seattle native and Seahawks fan Fred Couples, as always, was locked on the defending world champions and had this to say about the Super Bowl ring the Seahawks were awarded.

VO / OC > Got the ring? Have you seen this ring? Yeah. Big. Huge. Well, deserved. They're going to be good again. You know I was the 12th man once. Maybe honestly maybe the most jittery I've ever been. Because at that time no one had ever lost. We had the Saints. You go up so high up there and we had a little trick. I broke a club that was already broken because I'm not strong enough to break it over my knee. And then you get them all riled up. You know, you feel like you're the king of 74,000 people. By the time I got to my seat, it was 16 nothing. So, I felt pretty good about it. I thought we were going to get a W, but, you know, there have been unbelievable 12 men that have done it. And I just happened to. I don't know how many years ago that was. Do you know?

OC > 13. So, 13 years.

OC > Okay. But it was a lot of fun.

VO > As the NFL begins, the PGA Tour Champions approaches postseason with another Sanford international in the books. Congratulations to our winner and we will see you next time from beautiful Pebble Beach Golf Links. I'm Vince Cellini and this has been PGA Tour Champions Learning Center.