

PGA Tour Champions Learning Center Show 23

VO > What's new on PGA Tour Champions? Well, the legends just lived it. The inaugural Jefferson Lehigh Valley Classic in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Lehigh Country Club was the site as we ushered in October in the Keystone State. New layout, old layout. He tames them all. Stephen Alker did it again. A Sunday rally for his fourth win of the season, and once again putting together a late season push for the playoffs. Alker closed with birdies on two of his final three holes for a 14 under finish and career win, number 14. The New Zealand native and two time Charles Schwab Cup winner was outstanding. John Swanton and Peter Jacobsen called it and have more.

OC > Well Vince, then there was certainly a lot of anticipation and excitement leading up to the launch of this brand-new event on the Champions Tour. Fans were into it. The golf course was superb. The players loved it, especially Steven Alker. And off to a rousing start in this new era in the Lehigh Valley.

OC > Anytime a player comes to a new tournament, first thing they think about is how's the course going to fit me? And so many players are familiar with William Flynn designs; Cherry Hills, Marion, Shinnecock Hills, Westchester. But most importantly, anytime you see a new event pop up, there's so much excitement with the charities and the community. And this week was just an incredible display of great golf.

OC / VO > And there was a lot of excitement coming down the stretch on Sunday, let me tell you. And Steven Alker certainly produced his share of it, as he often does late in the final round.

VO > He was kind of treading water most of the day. He had a lot of looks at birdie, but he didn't make the putts until right here. He had a wonderful shot. That's Michael Block's ball right next door to him. But Alker had a chance to get it in first. He putted even though that Michael was just outside of it. Michael Block would have been standing on his coin.

VO > And he snuck in there. Michael Block for a little preview of what he just saw, and he put the information to good use.

VO > Yeah. Boy, I tell you, Michael Block was clutch. Or he's. I should say he's been clutch in the seven tournaments he's played on the Champions Tour. He's an impressive player.

VO > Tag Ridings was mounting a final round charge in his bid to win for the first time on the Champions Tour. Picked up a big birdie there at 17.

VO > Yeah he, he really played well coming down the stretch.

VO > Ridings came up just short. So did Stewart Cink. Alker made it two in a row when he dropped this one in at 17.

VO > Yeah this was the tournament right there. Just enough to drop over the front lip. Michael Block would also birdie 17. And they came to the last. And Alker hit two quality shots. Lagged one up there to a couple of feet. What a heater he has been on, three victories in his last four starts. Four on the season and 14 in his Champions Tour career. He wins the inaugural Jefferson Lehigh Valley Classic. Vince, let's hear from our champion, Stephen Alker.

OC > I mean, how do you feel about number four?

OC / VO > Yeah, it's pretty special. I haven't done it since '22. So yeah, kind of a little bit surprised. I mean, I just I've been playing so well and put myself in position and then, you know, you're just you're just trying so hard your kind of expectations go up. Trying to get those expectations down a little bit. Stay patient. You know if I make a birdie here and there. I'm playing power on the front. We've still got time you know. So yeah I think that's the big difference. We don't play golf courses like this every day and every week. So this was kind of special, I enjoyed it. I had a blast.

VO > So a look at the Charles Schwab standings. Leader Stewart Cink was T-4 in Allentown and remains in front with Zach Johnson, his closest pursuer. However, Alker is making it very interesting as points are doubled in the playoffs. So hang on. And the numbers say so much about the tour's best as the age limit hasn't changed. But the level of competition has, with another wave of PGA tour winners arriving each season. The players explain why winning out here has become harder than ever.

VO > There it is. Win number six of the season.

VO / OC > This year it's been tough. I mean I think Zach won what, six now? Stewart another 4 or 5. Then you have Padraig Harrington. Steven Alker, there's not really that many tournaments left for other players who who are winning so.

VO > And Stewart Cink soars high yet again.

VO > They're playing good I think everybody still grinds out here; wants to play good. Wants to be up there. Obviously winning but want to be up there.

VO > Victory number five of the season for the Schwab Cup points leader.

OC / VO > I think guys are just you know working harder. They're coming out fitter and stronger and wanting to play, wanting to win. The guys are just, you know, getting just a little bit better. And you've just got to step up and get your game a bit better to compete.

OC / VO > It makes a huge difference if you're like 50/51 or if you're like Bernard, you know, close to 70. That makes a huge difference on, on your body, on your game, on your distance, on everything. So what I noticed in the past out here, everybody who was a rookie or a new 50 out here on this tour is has like a 2 or 3 year window where you can ride the wave. And, that's what most of the guys doing, including me.

OC > It's similar to the PGA tour, right, that the depth and the quality of play is elevated on the PGA tour as well. I think here as well, you know, as, as some of these 50 year olds get out here, say younger guys. But if the 50 year olds on our tour, younger guys...

VO > Six wins and 15 starts for Zach.

OC > The trailers are full each day. You're able to keep up for a longer period of time because of that, and probably elevate yourself if, as long as you keep working.

VO > Their season. The guys have been playing a lot. Guys like Zach played on the PGA tour right up until he's 50. He's he's ready to go and you know it's getting a little bit longer. Players are getting a little bit longer out here. I think you just can't get off to a slow start, a three rounder. But I'd say overall yeah the depth is is much better even than, you know, five years ago when I started.

OC / VO > It's still a job to us that we love. So we do the job. It's not like we're out here, just kind of maybe I'll hit some balls. Maybe I won't. I mean, I'm in the exact same routine that I was on the PGA tour, except for I can't really beat three buckets of balls after I play that. That's kind of over. Unless I'm really mad. Got to dig it out of the dirt. But no, it's it's competitive. It's it's a really solid tour and it's really fun.

VO > Only two regular season events remain before the playoffs begin, with stops in Palm Coast, Florida and Kerry, North Carolina. Before we hit Saint Louis and the first postseason event, the Stifel Charity Classic and Simmons Bank Championship lead us to Phoenix and the finale, the Charles Schwab Cup championship. The top 72 qualify for the playoffs. Time is short for those on the bubble and trying to secure their spot.

OC / VO > I've just got to, you know, get better at transitioning from the range. And you know, I can hit it great. And then I just hit it poor. It's just inconsistent you know. So and then mentally you're inconsistent. So what's your scorecard going to look like? Inconsistent. So I've relied a lot on my short game. And I really need to hit the ball better. The quality of strikers. You can see them out here on the range. You know who's playing well and how to play. And that's where I've got to get to for sure.

OC > I think the game of golf is frustrating to all of us. We all expect and want to do better than we do most of the time. So yeah, you put in hard work and you, you know, you're always looking for the results and they don't always come right away. So you have to be

somewhat patient. Hasn't been very good. But you know it's trending in the right direction. So you just continue to prepare and hope that you know it starts playing good. the last 4 or 5 weeks.

OC > I feel like I've tried to be too perfect all year for whatever reason. And that certainly wasn't my game plan to start the year. But, and then things started snowballing sideways. And then you just you, you press, you press, and then just bad things happen from there. So, I mean, my game is not perfect right now, and it hasn't been for, you know, a while, but I think that it's good enough that that I can still maybe just sneak myself in there and make some noise. But at this point, it's not pushing, it's just trying to put one foot in front of the other bud.

VO > When Learning center returns, Cameron Percy looks playoff bound, but not without some health setbacks and some time away from golf. The latest on his quest and more. When we return.

VO > Cameron Percy returned to the tour for the first time since the Portugal Invitational two months ago. Percy had been sidelined due to an injury which started Saturday at the Senior Open. While warming up with planks on a Swiss ball, he felt pain in his stomach and it worsened during the tournament. When he returned home. Doctors found a ventral hernia, and Percy required a laparoscopic repair with mesh to reinforce the abdominal wall. Cameron fills us in on his recovery.

VO / OC > I'm okay, but I'm, I can feel. Yeah, I can feel something, so I wasn't expecting this one. This one was way unexpected. It was like, no, I've got a golf ball to get out of my stomach. That can't be good. And I had a hole in my stomach in my lining. So the doctor said, yeah, we need to go and get that fixed up. So we did. Yeah, I'm just lucky I've done alright so far. So the pressure lie because he said, oh, you can play through it if you want. I'm like, I was in a lot of pain at the time. So luckily I'm in a position where I could take eight weeks off and I'm going to be okay. So I'm going to play this week and then I don't know about next week, and then we'll see how we go. It's all up in the air, so I'm not too sure.

VO > Darren Clarke returned to action at the Jefferson Lehigh Classic after spending part of his time away celebrating his son Tyrone's wedding in Ireland. But before teeing it up for three rounds in Allentown, Clarke squeezed in a round at one of golf's most famous and most private layouts just down the road, a layout almost mystic in nature.

VO / OC > I became a member for very fortunate of of Pine Valley in 2012, and I've been there, been there. I used to go there from the mid 90s playing all the time, so I love the place. It's just wonderful. So I took Keith, Harry, Tyson, Roster [inaudible], got my physio and then Brian, one of the guys from the equipment trailer, and we would play the short course in the morning and then we played the big course in the afternoon. And there was a lot of searching for Tyson's golf balls in the afternoon. He yeah, he can hit it. But too

often, unfortunately, you know, it was just when we're only so close to it here. It was a perfect thing to bring the guys over and have a little treat and go and play PV.

VO > Throughout the season, Learning Center is tagged along with players starting their tournament week here. Dicky Pride is our victim subject as he is mic'd up for the opening hole in the opening round in the opening event ever at Lehigh Country Club. Let's listen in as this Alabama football fan gets ready to roll.

OC > The Lehigh Valley Country Club I've been up here so many times doing things to help the tournament. I just, it's like I've got a bunch of friends now here. So it's really nervous. And, you know, let me look at this. This is. Yeah. This is exciting. Here. Let's run. Excuse me, big man. I gotta run right through your. Don't mind. Thank you so much. Yeah. So here we go. You're with us, sir. I'm Dicky, nice to see you. Thanks for coming out, guys. Boys, I got a black one with a red dot.

OC > I've got two black dots, kids.

OC > Easy, easy, easy. Well there's a reason this one. You're truthful. What up Janie. Have a good one. Hopefully I don't have to use your skills of finding my golf balls again.

OC > HD. Yeah, lets send a message out to HD.

OC > Harry Diana, we love you, bud. Get better. We're going to get the transplant for you. I got to go play golf.

OC > Play well boys.

OC > Classic presented by Sideco. 9:46 Tee time. Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Dicky Pride.

OC > Thank you. Oh, I was wondering who was back there. Play well boys. Yeah, yeah. Thanks. Thank you. I know we were waiting. Shakes left people. Let's go.

OC > Oh, you walking here? Go ahead.

OC > Don't say anything. I shouldn't suppose I'm right. Well, well, that'd be a first.

OC > Yeah, exactly. It's always special. I mean, I think the big thing here is, you know, new tournament. Very exciting. When Nick told me they had the event and we talked and we worked it out to be a brand ambassador, it was just really exciting because the enthusiasm of the club and the community is just amazing. I mean they are so into it. The golf course is, it's so much fun. I mean, look at this. This is just weather any good, right?

OC > How big was that win at [inaudible] for you personally?

VO / OC > Oh, that was very big for me. I I'd never won twice on a tour since the now defunct Tommy Armor Tour, which is a mini tour in Orlando, and it weighed on me. I mean, honestly, it did, because you feel like you have to prove yourself over and over. And to win, to win in that fashion against Padraig. He's a Hall of Famer for a reason. He's a great competitor and a and a good friend. And that was just very special the way it happened. But for me personally before, yeah a second win out here was very big deal for me.

OC > Talk to me Goose.

OC > 31, 8, 39 okay.

OC > And that wind's a little into us. All right. 39.45. You think?

OC > 45 is perfect.

OC > Yeah. Okay.

OC > Soft. Softly. Softly. Softly. Yeah. All right. Thanks. Thank you.

OC > That's eight. That's eighty. I am getting old. Oh, yeah. There's. There's no doubt that after 50 the yardage get. You don't get longer, you get shorter. So that's why we're all in the gym. I think Ben's long guy in the pink shirt because that he hammered that drive, 50 year olds. You got to hate him. Yeah, I've got two of the most positive guys on the tour out here with Rocco and Ben. Good shot man. Oh, oh. Almost. But also for Rocco this year. Yeah. For Rocco, this is a home game. That's where he's from. So that's where I think all these people are from there. I mean, they're not. I mean, we're acting like it's for me. I think it's for him, and for good reason, right? I mean, I'm playing against guys I played against my whole life, and, you know, the generation ahead of me that's still playing like Rocco are the guys that helped me learn how to be a professional. It's like being back to a rookie on tour. Thank you Rocco. Good shot man.

OC > Thanks bud, you too.

OC > You're right in the gap. You're gapping it right up. Yeah, well.

OC > Thank you. Knock it in. How many holes you got in you Allen?

OC > Might be the second one to have made a birdie mic'd up. I did in Tuscon. Am I right or am I wrong? Everybody chokes, they don't know.

OC > Did I not say he was my mentor?

OC > See? Yeah. That poor son of a.

OC > Wow. What a way to start. That was cool. Yeah.

VO > Still to come on learning center. When in Rome.

OC > Never heard of a tasty cake. What is it? Pennsylvania thing?

VO > Players sample a legendary local snack.

OC > And this. This is, like, famous here in America?

VO > Tasty cake, anyone?

OC > I'd smile. That'd make a good picture.

OC > I'm all in. I'll be at that store all night.

VO / OC > Oh, well, my favorite all time player in the world is Chase Utley.

OC / VO > Smokin Joe Frazier is the guy that would be my all time favorite Philadelphia sports legend.

VO / OC > Brian Dawkins. Weapon X.

VO / OC > I'd have to say Bobby Clarke because I was part of the Broad Street Bullies era.

OC / VO > Allen Iverson. I mean, just a guy who's six foot nothing but was all over the place, hit the ground every possession.

OC / VO > Probably be Donovan McNabb. He bought the Philadelphia Eagles back and took the tension of winning.

OC > Go birds!

OC > I love like that era of football. You know the vibe. One of the best.

VO > Philadelphia has given us many things. The Liberty Bell, Rocky Balboa. Cheesesteaks. And for a deeper dive, the tasty cake. This regional snack delight was born from the Tasty Baking Company, headquartered in Philadelphia, a company that dates back to 1914. Just up the road in Allentown, PGA Tour Champions players got a sampling of this local guilty pleasure. A lineup of classic, tasty cake treats.

OC > Tasty cakes, have you had them before?

OC > Never.

OC > I'm not a dessert guy, as you can tell.

OC > Never heard of a tasty cake, what is it? Pennsylvania thing?

OC > Can I have just one little bite?

OC > You can have as much or as little as you want.

OC > Tasty Cakes. Yeah, I like dessert. This looks like chocolate. Did you say there's peanut butter?

OC > The peanut butter is sticking out to me big time. Gotta have it.

OC > Let me try it. I've never had this.

OC > Let's try one, I like chocolate. You know what I mean?

OC > But don't tell Josh because he's holding me accountable to not have sweets.

OC > So peanut and this, this is like famous here in America.

OC > You're in Pennsylvania.

OC > Oh in Pennsylvania even? Okay. Hold on. Right. It's pretty good.

OC > Well, if I can get in that mug.

OC > Alright, here we go.

OC > Can I take a bite?

OC > Yeah.

OC > Oh. This is actually very nice.

OC > Yes. That is so good.

OC > One through ten?

OC > I need about 20 more of those. That's a 12.

OC > It's all in my teeth. I'd smile. That'd make a good picture.

OC > Oh, I mean, it's chocolate and and peanut butter. I'm gonna. It's gonna be pretty, like, at least an eight already. Well that's a ten.

OC > It's good. I think I'm gonna.

OC > One through ten?

OC > It's gone. No it's really good. I want to give it a good nine.

OC > I give it about a seven.

OC > Yeah. That's amazing. Is this all from here?

OC > This is fantastic. Is this local stuff?

OC > I'm all in. I'll be at that store all night.

VO > From tasty cake to wedding cake. Earlier this year, Learning Center joined Boo Weekley and his then fiancée Susan for a whale watching adventure off Hawaii's Big island during the Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualālai in late September. The two made it official and now Boo fills us in on the big day.

OC / VO > Well, I'm physically married now. She made me honest, man. Susan did. Yeah, it was great. And we had the whole family. I called my ma and pa up and, my kids and my step kids, they all come over. And then we called her mom and dad couldn't tell her mom and dad because, you know, she'd be her mom wanting to bring all kind of stuff. And all we wanted was simple. And her brothers [inaudible]. So it was fun to be able to have everybody there at the house. And like I said, we just did it on the back porch. And he said, what we need to say. And then I do, I do. And nobody ejected. So here we are. You know, I love the woman. And she's been a godsend for me just to help me out and everything that she's done along the way. And her family too. And my kids are being very supportive of it. And they love her, you know, and it's it's awesome to have a family like this again.

VO > Just a girl and her Boo. With that we say so long. Eastern Pennsylvania and the inaugural champion at the Jefferson Lehigh Valley Classic. Part of the October playoff push. I'm Vince Jelani. We'll see you next time right here on Learning Center.