

Champions Learning Center Show #20

VO > PGA Tour Champions Learning Center

VO > The month of August wrapped up on PGA Tour Champions with a return to America's heartland. The great state of Michigan and historic Warwick Hills Golf and Country Club in Grand Blanc for the 2026 Ally Challenge.

VO / OC > Hello everyone, and welcome to PGA Tour Champions Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini and Sunday at the Ally Challenge. Lots of great storylines, including two-time defending champion Stewart Cink going for just the 11th three-peat in tour history.

VO / OC > We also had Mother Nature giving Warwick Hills a good Sunday soaking and an off-the-board possible party crasher who was looking to take it all. With a recap let's go to the men who called the action John Swantek and Paul Azinger.

OC > Alrighty Vince, thank you so much. Patience and precision that was on display from Stephen Alker throughout the entire week here in Grand Blanc, Michigan. He waits for everybody else to kind of wobble, and he never wavers on the way to the title.

OC > No a confident Steven Alker is dangerous. That win last week was huge for him. You know, he had a little bit of a lull and made a slight correction you know he's not real candid about what those corrections are, but it's okay to keep that stuff a secret. But he certainly turned it around and now his confidence got to be sky high today he was rock solid. He just never got in trouble.

OC / VO > Yeah, Michael Block gave him a little opening at the 13th and Alker stepped right through and pounced on the opportunity. But this was the birdie at 12 that gave him the solo lead. And it had Michael Block's attention. Watch him walk in here.

VO > Yes. Stopped him in his tracks. Got the up close and personal look at Alker taking the lead Michael Block went for this green pulled it way to the left. Alker with a one-shot lead, decided to take on the shot. It's a dangerous shot water on the right. And this was a real exclamation point to this hole for Steven Alker.

VO > Two-putt birdie from there while Block made bogey. So it was a swing at 13. And then he added to it at 14 with another birdie here.

VO > Yep 14 is a short hole. You had to hit your tee shot over there on the left side of the fairway which he did.

VO > Then at 15 comfortably in front at this point. Certainly, didn't need to hold one from 50 feet, but when you're cruising along, why not?

VO > Yeah, even he sheathed the (INAUDIBLE WORDS) sword on this one. You don't get to see it. But what a player.

VO > And even with a three-putt bogey at 18 not a big deal. Good enough for a three-shot win.

VO > Yeah, he was the man to beat I think at the start of the day really other than while Michael Block had the lead, but it was going to be Alker I felt like he's going to be the bully.

VO > This was Steven's second start on the Champions Tour back in 2021. He finished third that week and he was well on his way to what he has accomplished out here, winning now 13 times back-to-back weeks, making a big move up to Charles Schwab Cup season long point standings in his bid to try and get his hands on the Charles Schwab Cup for the third time in his career. As we send it back down to Vince, who's standing by with our champion.

VO > Thank you, gentlemen. Well, it is that time. It's Alker time. Do you sense that, Steven, this time of season that it kind of kicks in. The playoffs are right around the corner.

VO / OC > Yeah, a little bit. I mean I got a lot of chasing to do. You know I don't know if it's achievable, but it's just great to get some more wins as you put yourself in a chance to win. And that's that's all I ask every week. And it's it's great to win here at Warwick Hills to this is a it's a stalwart for for the Buick and to come here and win it. It's super special.

VO > Yeah. Back to back. It had kind of a on the outside looking in a Rodgers charity classic feel for you in that final round. Did it feel a little bit like that.

VO / OC > Yeah, a little bit you know we're just kind of keeping an eye on each other and weren't paying too much attention from behind. So, it was just trying to someone to break out. And I said to Troy on number 12 tee, I think it was I said let's get this party started. We're playing well enough, you know, we're we're doing all the right things. And and that's where it all started four in a row and yeah, so it was nice.

VO > When I watch this Alker round of golf and you get into that zone you did today, you hit a lot of greens, and you gave yourself a chance to score when you are at your best. And I've talked to you about this before. What is it about your game that's clicking?

VO / OC > Well, I think just the iron play, when you give yourself a lot of chance at birdie that really helps and you don't feel like you have to shoot at the flag all the time. If you're putting well as well, you know, you can just kind of feel like you can freed up, hit targets easier and then just you don't need to hit it five feet every day. So, it's that's that's the main

thing that kind of steers my game in the right direction is when that iron play is on and the rest takes care of itself.

OC / VO > Alright you locked up win number 13. Now in the previous two wins there was headwear for Cologuard, the conquistador helmet and then the Stetson hat at Rogers. Since we're in Hockey Town and it's Detroit with the Red Wings, it's a hat trick. So it's not not really.

OC > Okay, let's do it. Here we go.

OC > Not really part of the protocol, but I thought I'd bring a hat.

OC > It's a nice fit. Yeah, but last week's was no, I didn't look good on a cowboy hat. So this is. I prefer this to be honest, but I love my cowboy hat but hey it's been fun.

OC > Congratulations.

OC > Thanks, Vince.

VO > So, hats off to Alker. Charles Schwab Cup standings, and it's the usual suspects. Stewart Cink remains a strong first, followed by Zach Johnson. Harrington and Alker jumps in at four with Retief Goosen fifth after a runner up in Michigan. As we hit the month of September with a very strong group of veteran contenders.

VO > One of the subplots of the day was the performance of 36-hole leader Michael Block in Grand Blanc, after a T-5 at the Rogers Charity Classic. Fifth start of the season best finish in any of them, and playing his way closer to seven starts in official money on PGA Tour Champions. This was an emotional week for the PGA professional from Mission Viejo, California, and another huge step since turning 50 in June.

VO / OC > Steven Alker showed me a couple of things I needed to do. He did what I do on the first and second day, and he does it on the final day, and I need to learn how to do that. And I played a little bit different golf than I did the first two days, because I was nervous and I had never been there before. So, it was a learning experience for me. Now, saying that I believe fully that you could see Blocky Alker Harrington in many future groups on Sundays or coming in the future, because I do believe I do have the game to be able to compete against these guys.

VO > And now, a quick flashback. 13 years ago, Henrik Stenson stood on top of the PGA Tour world, winning the Tour Championship and FedEx Cup at East Lake this past week as the PGA Tour once again crowned its FedEx Cup winner. Stenson was starting a new chapter of his own 2016 Open champion, made his first start as a PGA Tour Champions member at the Ally Challenge, this after three senior major appearances earlier this

season during the pro-am day at Warwick Hills. Learning Center, walked with the tall Swede and caught up on all things Henrik. A new tour where his game stands now and what this next stage of his career could look like.

OC > TALKING TO HIS CADDIE (SWEDISH)

OC > I've had a good taste of it, playing three senior majors so far this year and and catching up with some of the guys I've played a lot of golf with and travel with and so forth. So yeah, it's good. It's a nice relaxed atmosphere and then competition is always when the first tee announcements are made and then everyone's ready to go.

OC > I'll take one step at a time. And like I said I haven't played a lot of competitions. It's I've had a long break and even before the break I wasn't playing very good. So I think one one has to be realistic with that and might take some time to, to, to get back into the groove of things. And yeah, we're in no rush.

OC > You might see Fanny on your bag over at the Senior British?

OC > Yeah, yeah, she was on the bag at the Open and then the senior Open as well at Gleneagles. So yeah, we've done that last couple of years. She's done a couple of events for me and you never know, she might be out here and caddied for me over the next couple of years for, for an event or two as well.

OC > TALKING TO HIS CADDIE (SWEDISH)

OC > 40 meters. Soft.

OC > But took the soft bounce and I still have a look for birdie. When you start playing like I'm doing here this week, you just on I know there's some new people around with the tour. There's obviously you coming from the parking lot and you don't know where the locker rooms are and things like that. So just takes a little bit of a little bit of time. I mean, we played plenty of tournaments over there the past 25, 30 years where we haven't been before. But there's a couple of new things here and there, but nothing, nothing that puts too much stress on my mind.

OC > Yeah. Good putt. Very nice. Get in. Oh. Good putt. Beauty.

OC > That was a weak putt for TV, wasn't it?

OC > Can we edit that?

OC > Well, you made it four for three, so I didn't really need it. No way I would have missed otherwise of course.

OC > All right we got the birdie right.

OC > Three.

OC > All we needed.

VO > Just three seasons ago Steve Stricker was dominating PGA Tour Champions six wins and capturing the Charles Schwab Cup. But 2026 has been an uphill climb, going through a big change in his personal life, as well as disc surgery on his neck last year and right hip replacement in January. The Ally Challenge was just his fifth event this season on PGA Tour Champions. In a game that demands focus and execution, Stricker seeks both.

VO / OC > I've struggled at home playing. It's been hard for whatever reason. There's a lot of factors, but it hasn't been that good at home even playing with my friends, I go down and play Town Country Club in Edgerton, my own home course, and I'm usually good for 4 to 6, seven and eight under round there and I'm shooting over par. So that tells you a lot about the state of my game. It's been a struggle. But keep my head down and keep plugging and try to get better. I want to be out here. I mean, it's it's hard when my body isn't working right and my mind isn't working right. And so it becomes a little bit more of a challenge. But I'm giving myself some grace and trying to move forward and trying to look forward. And I've got time, you know, I'm only 59. I feel like I've got some good golf in me yet. And whether it's this year or, you know, focus on next year. Not quite sure yet.

VO > When learning Center returns. Jason Caron's unlikely journey continues. Caron continues to follow his passion as teacher and player with success in both. An update is on the way.

VO > Matt Gogel's season and career is on hold. Gogel has been suspended from the tour for gambling, as he was found to have placed golf-related bets, which members are prohibited from doing. The tour provided a statement and noted that Gogel did not wager on tournaments in which he was competing. Still, the suspension covers all tour sanctioned events and lasts six months. It took effect Sunday, August 23rd. Gogel provided a statement of his own in which he said in 2024 and 2025, I unknowingly violated the PGA tour policy by placing small recreational wagers on golf. I want to be clear that these wagers were not placed on regular PGA tour events, PGA Tour Champions events, or any tournament in which I participated. I would never knowingly violate the integrity of the game of golf. I made an honest mistake, and I look forward to playing in 2027 on the PGA Tour Champions.

VO / OC > Last Tuesday, four-time PGA tour winner and NBC golf analyst Notah Begay III was recognized as the recipient of the 2026 Payne Stewart Award presented by Southern Company, the first full blooded Native American to play on the PGA tour. Notah and his NB3 Foundation has spent over two decades in service to Native American youth. The

award recognizes character, leadership, and charitable giving. For many of you that saw the video of Aaron handing me the Payne Stewart trophy. I was never more surprised in my life. I never thought I could actually become a Payne Stewart Award recipient. Wow. Awesome. Distinguished company guy. Wow. And many people have asked me. Well, why is that? People like me don't win awards like this. I come from a community where Native Americans have the shortest lifespan in America. And in the county that holds the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. That means just living to the age of 60. I come from a community that experiences the highest rates of substance abuse in the US. Over 25% of adults on the reservation battle addiction. I come from a community where only 3 or 4 students graduate from high school, and that's the lowest graduation rate in America. Those are the facts. So, for me to be standing up here as a Stanford graduate with a degree in economics, four-time PGA tour winner and a television broadcaster, accepting this prestigious award is a miracle.

VO > The third joins this list of recent Payne Stewart Award winners. He's the 29th recipient added to a distinguished group of honorees. The inaugural recipients were Byron Nelson, Jack Nicklaus, and Arnold Palmer.

VO > Two years ago, Jason Caron was the PGA professional, crashing the PGA Tour Champions Party. Now, the surprise isn't that Caron is still here. It's how comfortable he's become staying here.

VO / OC > Yeah. It's almost. It's still the pinch me moments. I still think. Right. You know, I tell people still to this day how it kind of happened. I think it's just self-belief, you know? And I have a, you know, again, such a good home life that it enables me to come out here and play a little bit more relaxed knowing that this isn't the end of the world for me. So if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. And if it works, you know, just like my president said, you know, make hay while you can. Right. And it's so far it's been great. I really do have a blessed life.

VO > The results back up that belief. Karen has settled in as a full-time member of PGA Tour Champions, and this season he's regularly finished inside the top 25 and has put himself in contention to win more than once. But settling into tour life doesn't mean Karen has left his other life behind. He's still the head professional at Mill River Club on Long Island and even from hundreds, sometimes thousands of miles away. The job follows him.

VO > Golf shop this is Jason. Sure. We'll get that for you. Not a problem. Thank you. We're running tournaments for running, you know, buying products for different tournaments or getting the shop ready for fall. You know, I was talking with Liz. Just. Just last night and night before. And my assistant Faith, I said, hey, listen, we need to maybe sharpen up the

look of the place for next year. So do we paint something or do we get new fixtures or so you're constantly working with the at home stuff right.

VO > Two years into this unexpected second career, Karen says he's gotten better at managing both.

OC > All right. The rest is probably going to be pretty solid.

VO > Then what once felt hectic has become routine.

VO / OC > When I first got out here and I had some status, it was a hectic. I mean, because it was something new and trying to balance some things out. You know, the club was very nice to let me go do what I was doing at the time, so I missed a few events. Then the next year, which was last year, things kind of fell into place early, right? I played really well early, so I was able to kind of work with the club a lot easier. I was always around for our board events and many other events, but this year so far, we've kind of been able to really plan it out where I'm around more of all the events if possible, which has been good so far.

VO > There is, however, one line Caron has learned to draw when the tournament starts. The club pro has to disappear.

VO / OC > Once they get into the golf tournament. My phone turns off. As soon as I'm done, I'm back to, you know, the working guy and the, you know, the head pro guy and then and dad.

VO > And that formula seems to be working. Caron enters the week inside the all-important top 36 in the Charles Schwab Cup standings. No longer a club pro, simply enjoying an unexpected run, but a PGA Tour Champions player who just happens to have another job waiting for him when the phone turns back on.

VO > Still to come on learning center like father, like son. The road back from injury for Brandt Jobe and his major league pitcher son Jackson. The Detroit breakdown is next.

OC > All right Ben Crane here with the champions tour play a lot of pro-am. And the format is often shamle, which means everyone hits a tee shot. Take the best tee shot, and everyone plays their own ball in from there. What I see is I get into the fairways and I see this. I see all these divots and they're all four, three, four wide. When you're in a shamle, why doesn't everyone just take their golf ball? After the first players hit and just put it right behind that one so we preserve the golf course that we're at it, preserve the fairways we're playing. And so the pros hit it in less divots when they're playing in a tournament. That's that's what I'm thinking. I might have been born at night, but it wasn't last night. So that's

what we're we're trying to do. Preserve the golf course a little bit. That one looks good right there.

VO > The Jobe family knows comebacks. Two-time PGA Tour Champions winner Brandt Jobe had four surgeries in the last three years and son Jackson Jobe, the former third overall pick in the Major League Baseball draft in 2021, was coming off elbow surgery in June of last year. Jackson is a fireball right hander for the Detroit Tigers, who methodically worked his way back to the mound for the Tigers earlier this month. While in Michigan, Brandt saw his boy and shares in the journey back.

VO / OC > I think he did well. He didn't feel real good going into the game. I guess he took some medicine or something that really upset his stomach and got a little sick before the game so I could tell his energy was down. But you know, the cool thing is I walked on the field with him. I said, how do you feel? He goes, well, I felt terrible, but we got the win, so that's all it matters. So I think the the mindset is, right. You know, he's there for the Tigers and he's there to win and he's there to perform. You know I listened to of interview after the game and he didn't have the stuff he wanted. But he's starting to learn. He's got a manager. You know you don't get your stuff that often. The worst perfect. And so he's learned how to manage. And I think that's right. Right now he's really learning. What am I going to use. What pitches am I going to use. Because he's got a lot of them. But they all got to be great, you know, in order to succeed out there. And so I think that's something that he's learning right now. And I think it's you continue to learn. You know, if you asked for Verlander today, he'd probably say the same thing. You know, I'm always learning when you stop learning, that's that's the time when you're done. Same thing with golf.

VO > Next week, PGA Tour champions returns to South Dakota for the Sanford International. Last year, Goosen carded rounds of 65 65 and a closing 67 to earn his only victory of 2025. The goose posting a 13 under for a two-shot win in Sioux Falls. Retief has since added another win, coming out on top in the 2026 Mitsubishi Electric Classic for his fifth career champions victory.

VO > And that is a wrap on this edition of Learning Center. I'm Vince Cellini. As we say goodbye from Grand Blanc and the Ally Challenge, it is on to September. And step one in a sprint to the PGA Tour Champions playoffs. And we can't wait.