



Little Rock's Carl Jackson, left, caddied for Ben Crenshaw, right, in a memorable 1995 Masters victory. The two, shown at a clinic at The Alotian in 2010, will team up again this year at Augusta National as Jackson will once more be on the bag for Crenshaw at the storied event.

# Hitting 50 at Augusta National

Alotian Caddy Manager Carl Jackson Relishes Upcoming Masters Milestone

BY JIM HARRIS

Fifty years after he first began caddying in the Masters, Little Rock's Carl Jackson still strikes an imposing figure. He's 6-foot-5 with broad shoulders and big hands for carrying not only a hefty bag of golf clubs for a professional up that grueling par-4 18th at Augusta National Golf Club, but also sometimes emotionally ferrying that pro to securing a green jacket as well.

Caddying in 50 Masters, which Jackson will achieve this April, isn't simply a number. Think of what Jackson, who is caddy manager at The Alotian Club outside Little Rock, has witnessed while wearing the white caddy overalls and the kelly green cap.

He's seen the Masters evolve from a tournament only for white professionals to one that was finally played by an African-American like himself in 1972, and won by a black man in 1997. The Masters used to be caddied only by Augusta National caddies until 1979, when the tour pros were allowed to bring



their regular bag carrier. Jackson has seen two controversies and picketing outside Augusta National's gates: in 1970, when anti-apartheid protesters picketed South African Gary Player's participation in the Masters, and 2004, when Martha Wright led a protest for the inclusion of women as members of Augusta National.

Jackson has seen the game's growth from persimmon-headed drivers to titanium, and from 250-yard bombs off the tee to 250-yard drives being laughed at as bunts down the

fairway. Augusta has been made over three times in significant fashion to accommodate the changes in the game. The greens went from Bermuda to bentgrass in 1981; the putting stroke went from wristy and with force to handle the uphill greens to a shoulder stroke and a delicate touch. He's seen the game's strategy for a caddy and player go from gauging distances with the naked eye to using the now commonplace yardage books in the 1970s.

Jackson carried bags on the PGA Tour for 12 years starting in 1990. He survived a battle with cancer in 2002. He keeps himself in good shape for a 60-something, admitting that these days, "It's tough carrying a bag."

For Jackson, Augusta, Ga., native and Little Rock transplant, who forged a close relationship with the late financier Jack Stephens and the Stephens family, it's been quite a journey. He repeats the routine again in April, arriving the Saturday a week before the tournament. Jackson will be on the bag of

two-time Masters winner Ben Crenshaw, who will make his first appearance Sunday evening the week the tournament starts. Practice rounds will begin on Monday.

Crenshaw, now 61, hasn't threatened since winning his second green jacket and falling into Jackson's comforting arms on the No. 18 green in 1995, and with Augusta National's overpower length these days, it's unlikely he'll be around to play the weekend, meaning Carl Jackson's job will be about half what it was in both their heydays.

Jackson turns 64 on March 31.

"It's a lot of history," Jackson said recently of his time working the Masters when asked what is likely to be on his mind in April. "I'll be thinking of all the good things, the bad and indifferent. There are so many stories told on those rainy days [among caddies] when it was too wet to play ... I'll be reminiscing many things about the older guys. Some things I'll talk about and some things I'll keep to myself."

Jackson has long since outworked any other Masters caddie. Willie Peterson carried bags in the tournament for 31 years.

It's unlikely anyone who isn't black and a native of Augusta, Ga., can fully understand what Augusta National Golf Club signifies. For outsiders who see it as a bastion of wealthy white elitism, they are missing its true meaning for the men who found work there and who developed close bonds there. Not long ago, Jackson was interviewed on a national news program in which the host pushed the caddy for dirt and for bad feelings that Jackson simply didn't have. "I wasn't going to go there," he said.

"I appreciate Augusta National being there for Carl Jackson and many others," Jackson added, "for providing jobs. Members reached out to people who could not go to school, like me. It was a family thing."

## On the Bag at 14

Carl Jackson was forced to help his mother with income to put food on a large family's table when he was 13. Jackson had to cut through Augusta National Golf Club to get to school. One fall day when August National had reopened for the golf season, he just stopped at the club. Jackson, though, had to fib about his age to get a full-time caddie's job. Clifford Roberts, who created Augusta National with golfing legend Bobby Jones and ran the place, knew Jackson, but also had a good idea he wasn't 16 yet. He was already big enough and he caught on fast. He'd already carried bags next door at Augusta Country Club for a couple of years, so he knew what the work entailed.



Carl Jackson's success as a professional caddy after a tough childhood was the inspiration for "Carl's Kids."

## Jackson Gives Back With Carl's Kids Foundation

Carl Jackson takes great pride in forging a life born out of poverty in Augusta, Ga. His close association with Jack Stephens led to his 50-plus year relationship with Augusta National Golf Club and its members. A dropout at age 13, Carl Jackson has seen both his sons graduate high school and attend college.

Jackson has established a foundation that has touched children throughout the South. The nonprofit Carl Jackson Foundation sponsors a youth program, Carl's Kids, that helps under-served youths develop life-enriching skills through education, fitness and wellness, golf and caddy training.

### Carl's Kids offers four phases:

- Supplemental in-school and after-school programs;
- Summer camps and clinics;
- Caddy training program; and
- Fitness and wellness.

Support has come from the corporate world, and Jackson makes speaking appearances throughout the South to encourage more backing. To find out more about Carl's Kids, visit the website at [CarlsKids.org](http://CarlsKids.org).

Luckily, he met Jack Stephens, a newer Augusta National member who was already in the circles of the club management with New York financier Roberts and the founder, Jones, who found Stephens to be an excellent bridge partner.

Jackson learned something about the Arkansan Stephens very fast.

"Mr. Stephens always had a way of getting problems worked out," Jackson said. "He took care of me."

Jackson was employed — as Jack Stephens' per-

sonal caddie. The Masters would follow shortly.

Fred Benton, Augusta National's caddy-master then and only the second in the club's history, took care of Jackson immediately when tournament time rolled around, matching the youngster with one of the tourney old-timers, necktie-and-knickers-clad Billy Burke, in 1961. Dean Beman, later to lead the PGA Tour, followed in 1962 for Jackson, then Downing Gray in 1963.

Long before Ben Crenshaw and Carl Jackson made such a magical pairing, veteran Bruce Devlin from Australia would experience some of the Jackson magic in 1964.

"The news story about him was, if he didn't do well at the Masters that year, he was going back to Australia and be a plumber," Jackson said.

Devlin went into Sunday's round leading. He didn't win, but the finish set Devlin up for an outstanding career on the PGA Tour that continued several years into his senior career.

Jackson carried for Mike Souchak, who famously held a PGA Tour scoring record for nearly half a century, and for Augusta favorite Charlie Coe and major winner Lou Graham. Steve Melnyk, who would go on to be a CBS commentator, was another player caddied by Jackson in the 1970s.

## Player Pairing

Another magical year, though, for Jackson was 1970.

Gary Player's participation in the tournament was the source of loud protests on Augusta's Washington Avenue and in the media because of his native country's apartheid. Player's designated Augusta caddie, one of the best at the club, was so frightened by death threats he had received if he carried Player's bag, he begged out.

"They asked me if I'd carry his bags," Jackson said. "The way I saw things, this is a world-championship-caliber player. If he wins or finishes among the top players, I'm going to get a nice pay check. It was a no-brainer for me."

Player abhorred his country's racial policies, but he wore black from head to toe, Player would say later, to stand out. At the start of the week, Jackson saw the job as simply to carry the bag and clean the clubs for one of the game's best players, the famous "man in black," and that's how the tournament proceeded. For 27 holes, they hardly spoke. Finally, after failing to get up and down on No. 13, Player started asking his caddie for some green-reading advice.

On Saturday, at the drastically sloped back-to-front No. 9, Player asked Jackson for some help reading the putt. What Jackson saw and what



Player expected differed significantly, Jackson recalled. Player took his caddie's read. The birdie putt fell.

Suddenly, the player and the caddie had something going. And Gary Player was in contention for a green jacket as they stood in the No. 18 fairway on Sunday for an approach shot.

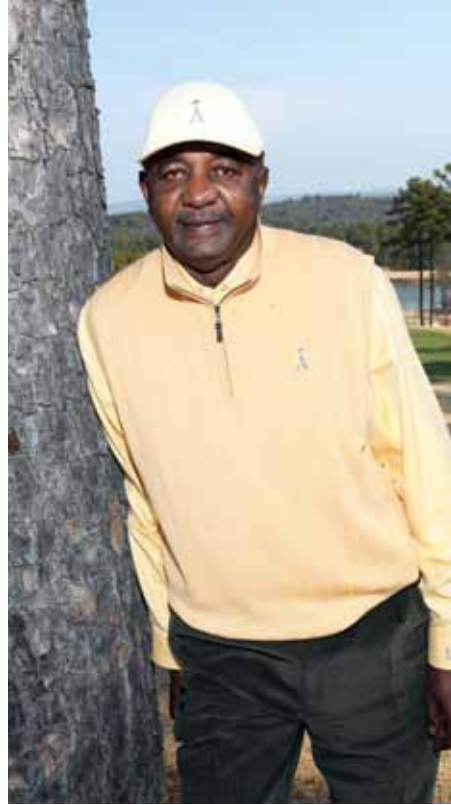
"He was asking me every club on the second shot. That's the only time that weekend he didn't hit what I suggested. He went with one less club," Jackson said. Player put his second shot in a sandtrap, made bogey and finished one shot out of a playoff.

Jackson would get more shots at helping a golfer to a green jacket.

### Championship Pairing

Ben Crenshaw was already considered the next great thing in college, when he and Texas teammate Tom Kite dominated Southwest Conference and NCAA golf in the early 1970s. In his few visits to Augusta up to 1976, Crenshaw had underperformed.

Fort Worth, Texas, businessman John Griffith had confided in Jack Stephens that Crenshaw needed a more experienced caddie for the 1976 Masters.



NELSON CHENAILT

Caddy Carl Jackson remembers that he and Ben Crenshaw "hit it off from the very first tournament."

Jack Stephens had just the man, and Griffith convinced Crenshaw that he needed to try Jackson on his bag.

"Carl and I hit it off from the very first tournament," Crenshaw said some 34 years later in a visit at The Alotian Club in western Pulaski County.

Nobody was going to beat Raymond Floyd in the 1976 Masters, as the Texan won by a then record 10 shots. But another, younger Texan finished second: Ben Crenshaw.

Still without the elusive major championship in 1984, though, Crenshaw seized the lead from his old Texas pal Tom Kite in the final round.

"I really thought we would've won before then," Jackson said, "it's just not that easy. You don't win the Masters just because you want to. Even the good years, when you think 'We'll get it,' things have to happen. Some good luck has to happen. A couple of long putts have to fall."

What will be most remembered about the 1984 Masters and what is still replayed by CBS along with other great moments from the past is the 60-foot uphill snake that Crenshaw drained on No. 10 to take the lead. What should be included is the birdie chip-in from a tough lie one hole earlier, the diabolical No. 9 when the pin is in front, that tied things after plodding along for eight holes on Sunday.

After the birdie on No. 10, Jackson thought, "Now we've got some excitement." And behind

them, Kite watched, likely unnerved.

Crenshaw and Jackson were almost through "Amen Corner," standing in the middle of No. 13 after a great drive. The excitement every fan enjoys at this point is wondering whether a golfer will go for the green in two shots or play safe short of Rae's Creek. Jackson was all for going for the green; Crenshaw looked back at 12 and watched Kite. Knowing where he stood, Crenshaw laid up and would do the same on the par-five 15, and he won going away.

"He played the percentages. He had the lead. He was really focused on what was going on around him. He was really in control of his game from 13 on in."

Crenshaw was not in control of his game or his emotions 11 years later when he arrived at Augusta National. His Austin, Texas, mentor, Harvey Penick, died the Sunday before the tournament began. Crenshaw was playing poorly. Nobody had Crenshaw in their Masters pools in 1995.

In Monday's practice round, Crenshaw's struggles continued. With his golfer teeing off on No. 9, Jackson took the caddie shortcut from the eighth green down to the fairway turn to the left. Back up the hill he could see Crenshaw standing over his ball.

"I look back when Ben's time came, I saw him and I said out loud, 'Darn, Ben, you look like you're playing hockey,'" Jackson remembered.

The practice round ended after No. 9. The pair headed to the practice range as Crenshaw listened to a little coaching from his caddy to adjust his position at address. Crenshaw hit three balls, all crisply. "Carl, we've got something," Crenshaw would say.

### 'Nothing Got Between Us'

Crenshaw, who played Augusta's front nine without a bogey all week, had a two-shot lead as they walked up No. 18 on Sunday and suddenly Crenshaw's concentration was broken by the adoring fans. He left his second shot short and right. From TV, Jackson says now, observers can't tell how difficult the ensuing chip shot would be, and media would later say that Crenshaw hit a poor chip. Actually, it was Jackson's and Crenshaw's intent to chip the ball up on the high side and leave an easy two-putt; a chip at the hole, Jackson said, would be perilously on a little ridge that could send the ball back down the green into the fairway.

Crenshaw got the ball up and down. The image that Sports Illustrated and TV cameras caught moments later was Crenshaw in tears

being supported by Jackson after one of the most emotional weeks in each other's lives.


"He never wavered," Jackson said. "He played a great round for a final round in the Masters or for any major. They talk about Johnny Miller's 63 [in the 1973 U.S. Open at Oakmont] and there are others they call great rounds, but that was a great round."

Their other Masters Tournaments, though they didn't end in championships, were also full of thrills. Crenshaw was in the final pairing in 1987, '88 and '89.

"We could just get along, and nothing got between us," Jackson said.

At some point, it will all come to an end. Crenshaw will go the way of the other great Masters winners of years past and find the course far too long to enjoy even for a ceremonial two rounds. Jackson is nearing an age when most people retire.

But this 35th straight year for Crenshaw-Jackson and the 50th consecutive year for Jackson to carry a bag in the Masters isn't necessarily the last for either.

"Ben and I, we've got a close friendship," Jackson said. "I'm not going to say it's my last one. As long as Ben wants to play, I'll be there. I'll go out when Ben does." 

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