

Rise Above: A Masters-ful Story of Perseverance & Love Spotlights Legendary Augusta Golf Caddie Carl Jackson

People who know the name, know Jackson was “on the bag” for Ben Crenshaw when he won the Masters in 1986 and 1995.

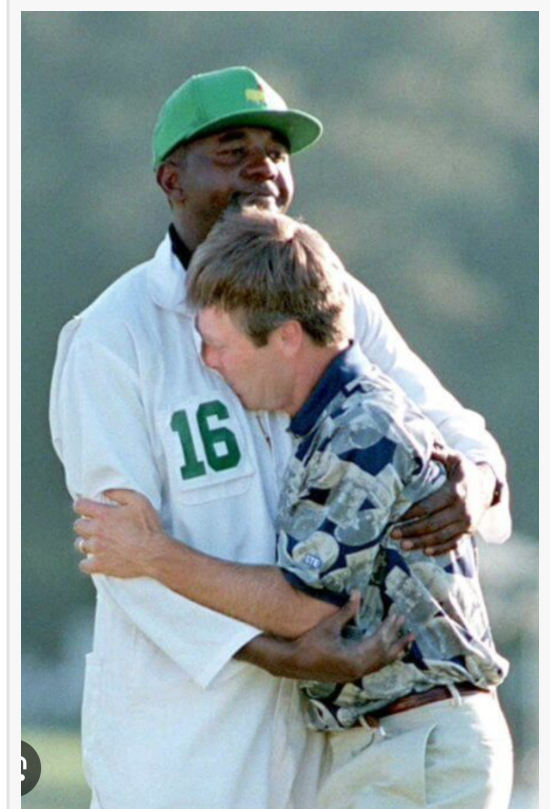
CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, March 17, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When the storied Masters [golf](#) tournament begins its 89th edition on April 10 at Augusta National, Chicago filmmaker Maryilene Blondell – who never knew much about golf -- might not be watching, but she will have forged an enduring bond with one of its legendary figures: caddie Carl Jackson.

People who know the name know Jackson was “on the bag” for Ben Crenshaw when he won the Masters in 1986 and 1995. Blondell’s internationally award-winning 2024 [film](#), “[Rise Above: The Carl Jackson Story](#),” lets the veteran caddie step out of Augusta’s and Crenshaw’s shadows and into the limelight.

How Blondell, whose expansive career has ranged from TV news to nonprofits to social and environmental activism to feature film, made Jackson’s acquaintance and came to write, direct and produce a documentary (her first) about him, sounds like kismet. And it has blossomed into a friendship that transcends age, race and geography.

“That’s how America ought to be,” Jackson, now 78, says in the film.

Carl Jackson grew up adjacent to the course in the poverty-stricken African American enclave of Sand Hill and caddied at Augusta National for more than 50 years. His career began at age 11, when he dropped out of school and joined his Sand Hill neighbors as a caddie at Augusta National to support his family of 10. At the time, all of Augusta’s caddies were African American and wore the iconic white coveralls.



Carl Jackson & Ben Crenshaw

Learning at the knee of Pappy Stokes, who was on the Augusta National construction crew, young Carl soon became the leading expert at reading Augusta's devilishly tricky greens. He first teamed with Ben Crenshaw in 1976 and, together, they won two Masters.

Jackson not only became the longest serving caddie in Augusta National history, he also worked 30 years for Jack Stephens, one of the wealthiest men in America at the time and chairman of Augusta National. Jackson moved with his family to Little Rock, Ark., where Stephens ran a major private investment bank. Stephens invited Jackson to play Augusta as his guest, making him the first Black nonprofessional to play Augusta and the first to stay in one of Augusta's 12 guest cabins.

Jackson retired in 2015, and all his stories went with him. Then, about seven years ago, Blondell got a phone call that would eventually set the documentary in motion.

"A friend of mine was friends with Carl's brother, Jimmy," she recalls. "Carl had signed an entertainment contract for an independent production company to make a feature film about his life starring Denzel Washington.

“

"I believed in my heart that people needed a message of kindness, gentleness, humility and love.

That is Mr. Jackson's story and I am humbled to have had the privilege of telling it."

Maryilene Blondell

"It was a typical Hollywood flim-flam deal, and I helped Carl get out of it. I didn't know him, or really much anything about golf, but we became close friends after that.

"You should tell your story, I kept saying to him."

A few years later, Jackson told her that he had decided to tell his story, and Blondell said, "Good for you, Carl. I'm thrilled."

"And," Jackson continued, "you're the one to tell it."

"I said, 'Mr. Jackson, you've got the wrong woman. You

need a nice Southern lady who will tell a pretty little story about tee shots -- not an Irish woman from Chicago who has only golfed twice and feels strongly that your story is more than just golf.'

"But when Mr. Jackson tells you to do something, you do it."



Rise Above film poster.

If anyone had reason to be filled with rage and anger over racism and poverty, it was Carl. "But he wanted to tell a love story, an inspiring story a story to bring people together, not tear them apart," Blondell says.

She had never made a documentary before. "They're very difficult to make. In a feature film or TV show, the script is the guardrail that keeps the project on track. In a documentary, you have an idea, you start interviewing, and then all of a sudden the story takes very unexpected twists and turns."

And as with all production, "it all boils down to money." This is where kismet came into play again, when a Chicago financier, Paul Purcell, called her and said, "I hear you're making a documentary about my friend Mr. Jackson. If he says he believes in you, I believe in you. What do you need?"

"The remarkable thing about Paul is that he had never done anything in entertainment," Blondell says. "There would not be a 'Rise Above' without Paul Purcell. Period."

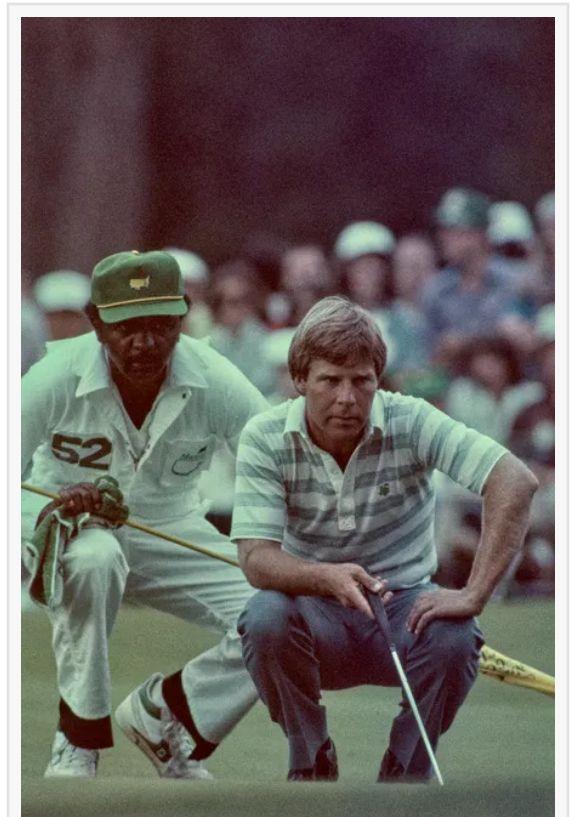
Since its release, "Rise Above: The Carl Jackson Story" has been a 10-time Official Selection in film festivals worldwide and won Best Documentary Feature at the Cannes Indie International Film Festival in 2024. Now streaming on Apple+ and Prime Video, it is touching viewers from all walks of life, not just those within the golf community.

Blondell says she hasn't really been surprised at the reception the film has received.

"Here's what I know," she says. "In a world that seems to be falling apart and 100 percent of the people I know are distraught, confused and angry in a land of chaos, negativity and disrespect, I believed in my heart that people needed a message of kindness, gentleness, humility and love.

"That is Mr. Jackson's story and I am humbled to have had the privilege of telling it."

Joanne Levine
Lekas & Levine PR
joannepr@aol.com



Ben Crenshaw & Carl Jackson

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/794636600>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.