

Jennifer Capriati: THE INSIDE STORY

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# Sports Illustrated

## OFFENSIVE GUARDS

Knick John Starks is one of four nasty backcourtmen who could drive their teams to the NBA title

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# Dealt a Bad Hand

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CADDIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN GOLF'S  
UNDERCLASS, ENDURING LOW PAY AND  
NO BENEFITS. NOW THEY'RE ON THE  
VERGE OF EXTINCTION • BY RICK REILLY

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY BILL FRAKES



*In the caddie room at Pinehurst, card games fill the long hours between increasingly rare loops.*

**Y**EAH, EVEN BILL MUR-

ray might have a hard time finding anything funny in the Pinehurst caddie shack today. Take Big Eddie. He's been sleeping in the cemetery again, seeing as how they took away his car. Least he could *afford* a car for a while. Or take William. He's been walking

the eight miles from his home in Aberdeen, N.C., to Pinehurst almost every day for 57 years. Still does it in a tie and a wool suit. Guess some guys never lose their dignity. Or take Loosetooth. When the famous No. 2 course at Pinehurst was closed for six weeks in 1992 to get set for the PGA's \$2 million Tour Championship, Loosetooth was found picking up pears on the grounds. Got a family to feed.

Check out of Fletch over there. The club members don't argue anymore to see who gets to hang his bag on Fletch. They don't sneak the caddie master a five just to get the best eyes in the whole Pinehurst caddie yard. But they used to. Time was, Fletcher Gaines could look at any green for the first time and tell you grain, speed, break and the approximate weight of the guy who mowed it last. Fletch won the Pinehurst caddie tournament 10 years running. And that was when there were 500 caddies in the yard.

But these days there's something funny about Fletch's 73-year-old eyes. They water constantly, and they have a kind of glaze across them. Might be cataracts. Might be glaucoma. Hard to say. It's not like Fletch can afford an eye doctor. Some days you see him just following the Man to the ball instead of the other way around. The truth is, Fletch doesn't know where the ball is.

He's not alone. Probably a third of the guys in Pinehurst's caddie room have that glaze in their eyes. What, you think these guys have health-care packages?

There's no caddie yard at Pinehurst anymore. No caddie shack, either, come to think of it. What there is now is a smoky little room with a Salvation Army couch along the side and a weak-kneed card table in the middle and a lot of caddies wait-

ing all day for loops that might never come. These days there are only 52 caddies at Pinehurst. And even with five courses to caddie on, 52 is too many. Most people use those damn golf carts.

"Lord a'mighty," says Fletch, rising a little off his chair. "When's the last time a golf cart took five shots off your score?"

To be sure to get a bag these days, caddies get to the room at 4:30 a.m. Then they whittle at the hours, playing cards, laughing some, arguing some, sharing one sports section among the 30 of them.

Carl is looking at a dollar bill, adding up the digits in the serial number. If they equal his age, 42, he won't spend the buck. "Bad luck," he says.

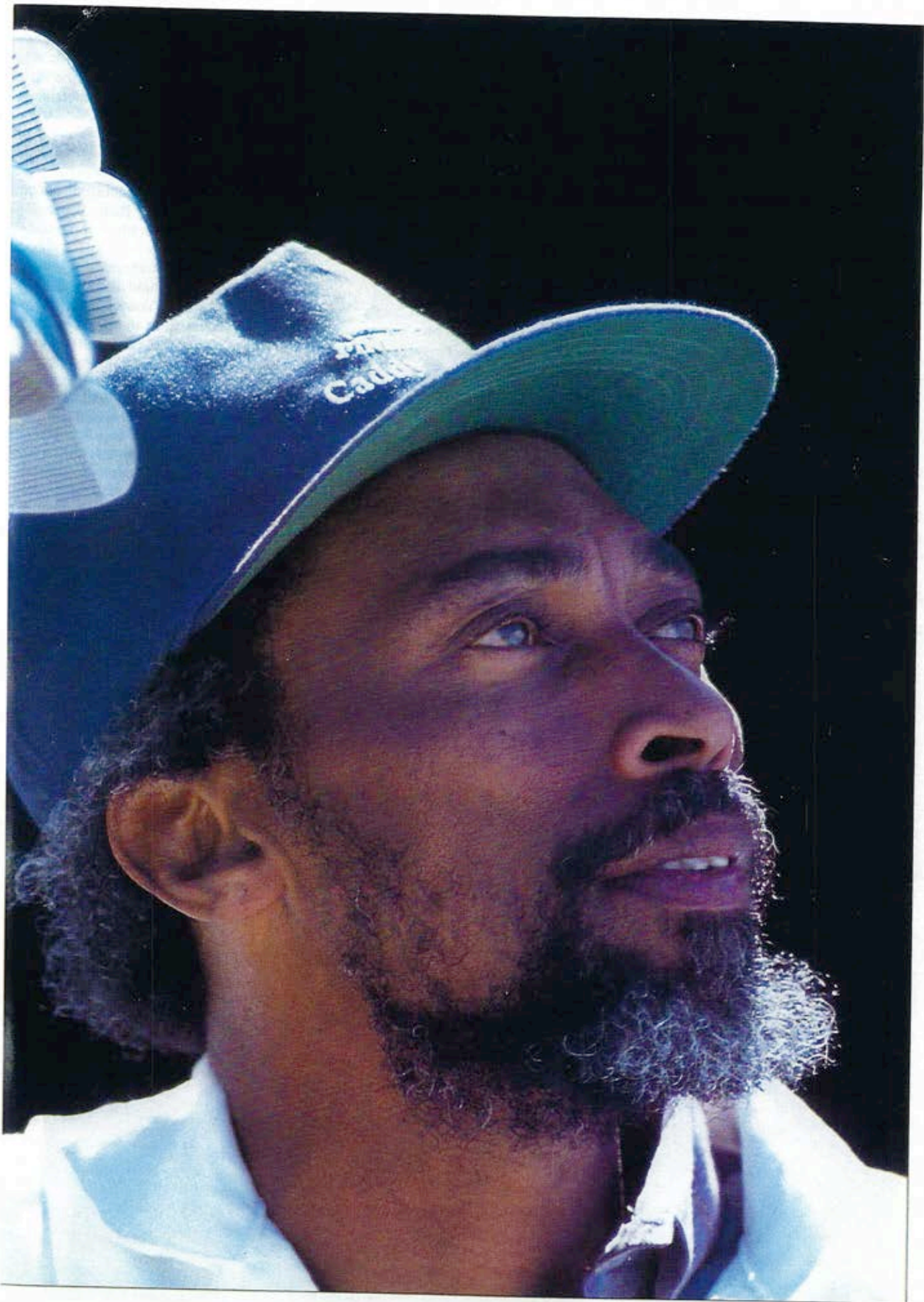
Right now it looks like luck hasn't been within a par-5 of this room. There are almost no young faces. Everybody is at least 30, most are 45 to 60. Many are alcoholics, many have health problems, many have left their families. You have to be a little detached to be a caddie in the first place, because caddies are among the last of the great disenfranchised workers. They have no benefits, no overtime, no worker's compensation, no vacation and no job guarantee. They are as outdated as ink-wells, and paid accordingly. Pinehurst is one of the cheapest resort golf clubs around: \$25 for a single loop, \$40 for a double, and maybe a tip.

This is still less than a living wage, but what are the caddies going to do? They can't even get their own restroom. Cad-

#### **DONNIE**

*A Vietnam vet on disability pay, Donnie Miller, 52, was a postal-service worker before becoming a caddie at Pinehurst.*





## Caddies

dies are not allowed to use the bathroom near the cart barn. They must walk 300 yards to the Port-O-Let in the parking lot. The Port-O-Let fills up in two days, yet it's emptied only twice a week. By day three, the caddies have no choice but to go into town to relieve themselves.

Come to think of it, maybe that's what's wrong with Fletch's eyes. Seen too much.

Maybe you know them. They go by names like Freight Train and Headache Red, Stovepipe and Schoolboy, First Baseman and Cotton Chopper. At Miami Springs Golf Course in Florida, you can still ask for John Cooper, who's been there since 1929 and will still ride the course with you in your cart. And you never know where you'll come across Moon Face, Creamy or Big Head. Or First and Third, so named for the odd way his eyes point.

There are not many of them anymore. A river of concrete has washed over America's golf courses, and carts wash down the river every day. Time was, all the great players started out as caddies. Only way you could learn the game. Ben Hogan was a caddie. So were Byron Nel-

son, Sam Snead, Lee Trevino and Arnold Palmer. America's Caddie, Bill Murray, carried at the Indian Hill Club in Winnetka, Ill. Bill Clinton caddied in the Hot Springs Open.

Twelve-year-old Johnny Miller used to give his player the putter on the 14th green at the Olympic Club in San Francisco and then sneak over to the great par-3 15th, where nobody could see him, and try to make a birdie with a driver he'd stowed away in the bushes. His swing got so good that one day, when he was 14, the players in one of his groups bet him he couldn't play the final four holes in two over using lefthanded clubs. He couldn't. He played them in *one* over.

Chi Chi Rodriguez used to take the 10 cents he earned for a loop in Puerto Rico, buy a loaf of bread, put beans in it and have lunch. Last year on the Senior PGA Tour, Rodriguez made \$798,857.

Yeah, carts are easier. Carts never make mistakes. A cart doesn't clear its throat when you kick your Titleist back in-bounds. A cart doesn't sneeze during your backswing. But can a cart tell you what kind of tree you just hit merely by the sound? At the Pine Valley Golf Club in New Jersey, Big Rich can.

*Smack.*

"Uh-oh," says the insurance executive. "That's not coming back."

"Wait," says Big Rich. The ball is snap-

hooking out of sight and into the woods, but if he listens for a moment, he may still be able to find it. "That sounded like it hit an oak," Big Rich says.

"How can you tell?"

"Just can."

*Smack.*

"Uh-oh," says the publishing honcho.

"Wait," says Big Rich. Pause. "That sounded like a pine. Much softer sound."

*Smack.*

"Uh-oh," says the arbitrage expert.

"What did that sound like, Big Rich?"

"Cedar siding. You just hit a house."

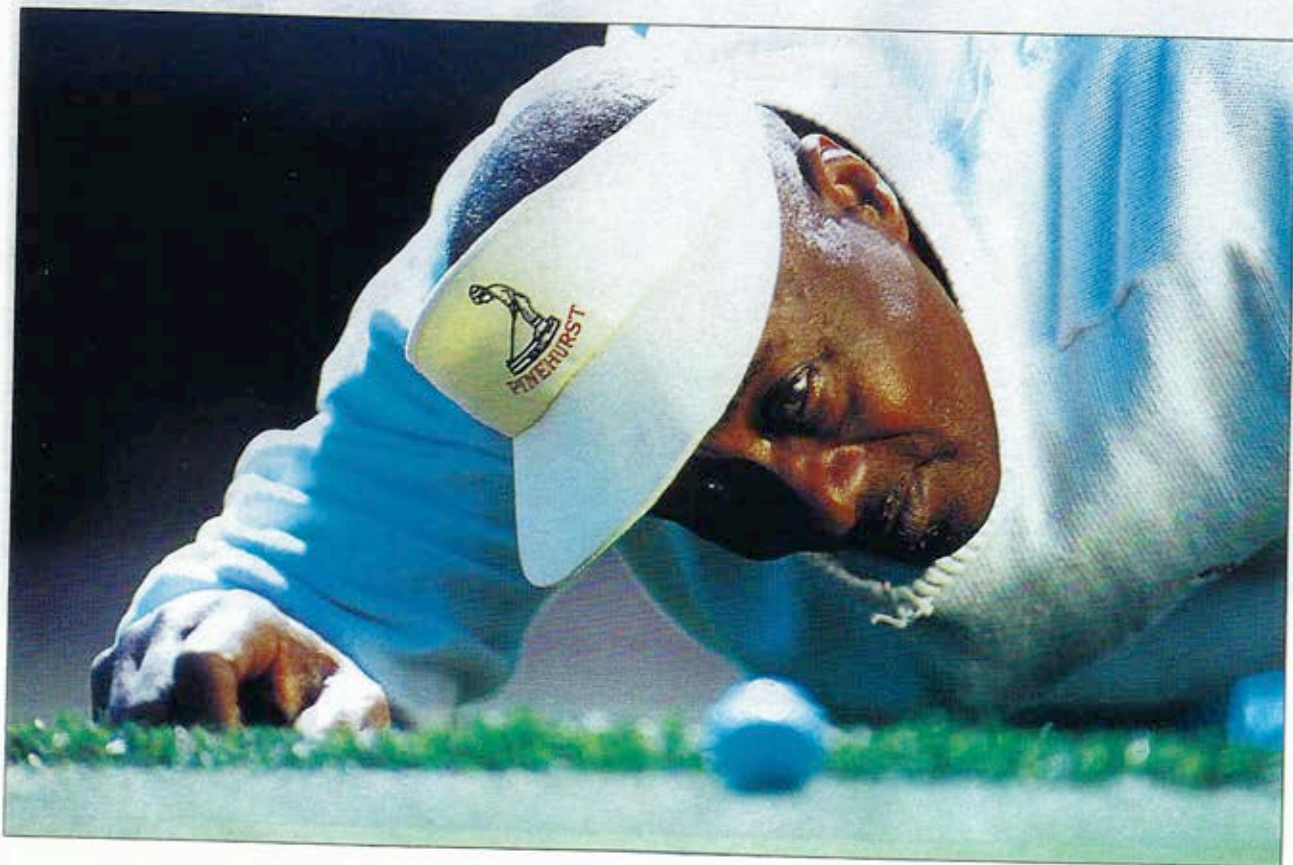
At Pinehurst, in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains, caddies *do not* lose balls. It's not unusual for a caddie to show up at one of the guest cottages well after dark to return a ball he had been searching for since the round ended.

There is a vague royalty to caddies. They are usually neither well schooled nor well dressed, neither well-bred nor well-off; they may need a shave and two showers and three visits to the dentist; but when they are on the golf course, millionaires hang on their every word.

Over the tops of golf bags, all over the world, kings and cobblers mingle every day. In few other sports is the athlete permitted to bring along an on-course teacher, psychologist, assistant, mule, friend, whipping boy and moral conscience. One day, as legend has it, a man drove his ball

## LOOSE TOOTH

*Rush McLaughlin, 67, has been carrying bags for five decades, and four of his sons have joined him as Pinehurst caddies.*







## BIG EDDIE

*Eddie Lane, 54, who has carried at Pinehurst since the 1960s, had to sleep in a cemetery after he lost his car.*

"Sure, kid," Venturi would say. And Venturi would pay him \$1.50 for a shag, which, in the days before range tractors gobbled up golf balls, meant standing on the driving range collecting the Man's practice shots.

"Oh, Venturi was a beautiful shag," says Madden fondly. "He wasn't like the [club] members you'd have to shag for. He'd start with the wedge and hit about 10 balls in a perfect circle, no more than five feet around. He'd give me his shag bag, and I'd catch them right in the bag, no problem. Then he'd work up through his clubs: the short irons, the long irons, the driver. Even the driver, you knew exactly where he was going to hit it."

Venturi doesn't remember Madden, but Madden remembers Venturi, as he remembers nearly everybody he packed. "I used to look at the members and study them and figure out how I could be one of them," says Madden, the son of an auto mechanic. "And after a while I noticed that whenever the big game would come around—Cal-Stanford—I'd hear them talking about it for months beforehand. And I realized that the one thing they had in common was that they all went to college. I decided then and there that I would go to college no matter what."

Madden wound up not only going to

college but also getting his master's degree. And all through his college days he caddied. But if caddying dies, what becomes of the Reds of the world—to say nothing of the Freight Trains and Stovepipes and Cotton Choppers?

It's hard to tell where most of the smoke comes from this morning in the ramshackle 15-by-15-foot caddie room at Pinehurst. Is it all the cigarettes the men are smoking down to their knuckles, or is it the bacon and eggs that Haircut is frying in the electric skillet? You ever taste bacon and eggs cooked up in an electric skillet washed once a week in the ball-washing machine? Good.

Time to kill. Caddie talk. "We were cruising along doing fine," says Ronnie, "until he hit it in the lake." Caddies are like that. To carry a good player is to actually play yourself, as in, "I played in the North-South in 1967. Won with Gay Brewer."

Today is Sunday, and so Fletch gets the run of the radio. He's got the gospel station on. Talk gets low. Fletch is humming those old-time hymns. He's got a sister laid up in the hospital these days. They share a house. He worries about her. He worries about himself. Fletch doesn't do many loops anymore. He's so tired these days. Oh, somebody will come along and ask for him, somebody from years ago. Or a Pinehurst member will have Fletch drive the cart just to hear some of his stories. But mostly Fletch just serves as Caddie

Legend, and all the other guys in the room are glad to spend the time polishing his glory. "Fletch won the North-South twice, with Curtis Strange and Gary Hallberg," says one caddie. "Read all their putts for 'em."

"Caddied for Julius Boros, right, Fletch?" somebody asks.

"And Tommy Armour, too?" another says.

Fletch nods. What he doesn't mention is that he also caddied for Pinehurst architect Donald Ross. Fletch says Ross would get mad when anybody broke par on his course. Maybe Ross didn't like Fletch much, come to think of it. Fletch once played No. 2 from the back tees in 71-71-72-71—285, three under par.

Now, though, the way his eyes are. . . .

"Hell, eyes don't make no difference to Fletch," says Loosetooth. "Fletch been around this course so many times, he don't need to see. He'll just brush the grass once and say, 'Six inches out on the right, firm.'"

"How about the time Fletch led Charlie Sifford by four shots with five holes to play?" somebody hollers out. "And Charlie birdied the last five holes to beat him."

Fletch looses a rare grin. "That's true," says Fletch. "And he come up to me afterward and say, 'I had to come get you, little roun' man.'"

Despite his reputation, Fletch is still a caddie of the Old South. When he meets the Man at the 1st tee, he does not speak until spoken to. He stares at his feet. That

dies

hat caddies did in the 1930s, when  
her started out, when no white  
ld carry another man's golf bag.

the North, at courses like Inverness  
ledo, Ohio, and Olympia Fields out-  
Chicago, young whites today might  
lie for spending money and a way to  
some free golf. But at Pinchurst and  
eminole in North Palm Beach, Fla.,  
at Augusta National in Georgia, cad-  
g is not a lark; it's a life. "The white  
do it to work on their games," says  
nic, a popular caddie at Seminole. "I  
t to eat."

1 the summers, Zunnie caddies at  
ewood Country Club in Rivervale,  
. He gets up every day at 4 a.m. in Ja-  
ca, N.Y. He catches the 4:28 bus to  
hhattan, takes the A train to the  
rge Washington Bridge, catches an-  
er bus at 6:54 and gets off near the 2nd  
of the club to make his 7:45 bag.

When caddies finally die out, the black  
die will probably go first. Check your  
ndly neighborhood PGA Tour tourna-  
nt sometime. Once, most of the faces  
ind the bags were black; now they are  
ost all white. With some players earn-  
more than \$1 million a year, their cad-  
s' take of 7% to 10%, plus a weekly fee  
a few hundred dollars, can approach  
0,000 a year. Behind the bags now are  
fers' brothers, friends, business part-  
s and even golf pros. And since there is  
t a single African-American player un-  
40 on the Tour—and the white play-  
don't exactly travel in racially diverse  
cles—those friends and business part-  
rs are almost exclusively white.

It's a vicious circle: As caddie jobs  
idle, it is even harder for young blacks  
learn the game. As long as young blacks  
n't learn the game, black Tour players  
ll continue to be nearly nonexistent. As  
ng as there are no black Tour players,  
ere will be few black Tour caddies.

It has been 11 years since the black cad-  
e all but disappeared at the Masters.  
ntil 1983 the Masters required each  
ayer to use an Augusta National caddie  
stead of his regular Tour caddie. But  
en a misunderstanding during a rain  
lay that year caused some local black  
ddies to be late for the resumption of  
ay, Tour players demanded that they be  
lowed to use their own caddies. The  
asters capitulated.

"I know it was racist," says Jerry Beard,  
longtime Augusta caddie who now  
orks for an Augusta paper company.  
As the purses went up, the players didn't  
ant the black caddies to have that big  
oney. They wanted their own guys to  
ave it. When I caddied in the Masters, I

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## Caddies

could go into any store in town and get whatever I wanted on credit. Now. . ."

Now when the Tour players go to Augusta, they almost never use local caddies. And perhaps not coincidentally, since 1983 no first-time Masters invitee has won the tournament—as Fuzzy Zoeller, armed with local knowledge, did in '79. "I think it's a mistake," says Venturi of the use of Tour caddies. "If I were playing [the Masters] now, I'd tell my regular guy, 'You're taking the week off, son.'"

All that local knowledge is disappearing now—going, going, gone. The players will never get it back. And when Fletch's sight finally fades to black, will we know what we've lost?

In his first year and a half as caddie master at Pinehurst, Jim McGannon had three caddies die on him—two from alcohol abuse and one from both alcohol and exposure. Nothing so unusual in that. What was unusual was that McGannon went to one of the funerals. It was for a longtime caddie known as Fayetteville. You knew it was McGannon at Fayetteville's funeral because 1) he was the only 6' 9" professional golfer in the church, and 2) he was the only white man within five miles.

Worrying about caddies is not the usual way a caddie master wins respect at Pinehurst. Bill Bennett, the caddie master in the '50s and '60s, would take an old cigar box with him everywhere he went. Whenever a caddie got a little out of line, Bennett would flip open the cigar box, take out a .38-caliber revolver and growl, "I said, 'Get back in line.'"

But this McGannon was an odd duck. For one thing, he was a Dartmouth graduate who had managed the Alfred Dunhill cigar store on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, and second, he actually seemed to think of the caddies as people. "Some of these caddies are the happiest people I've ever met," McGannon says, "happier than a lot of the richest people I've ever met."

Hoping to find a sponsor and make the PGA Tour, McGannon, now 34, left the cigar-store job in 1990 to go to Pinehurst and sharpen his game after hours. But somewhere along the way he got caught up in his caddies' lives. He'd pick them up hitchhiking on his way home and drop them off at one-bedroom shacks that housed four families. He'd hear them coughing day after day in the caddie

room, and yet none of the men ever mentioned going to a doctor.

But it wasn't until his wife, Laura, happened to come by the caddie room that Jim knew how serious things were. A teacher of visually impaired kids, she could see the problem. If the eyes are traitors of the heart, these hearts were aching. Laura saw men with opacity in the backs of their irises (signs of glaucoma); men whose eyes bore the glaze of cataracts; men whose alcohol abuse and high blood pressure threatened their sight.



## THE GIFT OF SIGHT

Laura helped get specs for Charles Johnson, who helps himself to a bigger vocabulary.

She was alarmed. "Don't any of them ever go to an eye doctor?" she asked.

"Can't afford it," Jim said.

"Oh, yes, they can," she said.

If the sight of a player and a caddie ambling down a fairway ever becomes just a memory, it won't be the fault of caddie heaven: Old Marsh Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Old Marsh is a purist's club. There are no tee times. No men's days. No opening day. At Old Marsh, members just play golf. And they still believe in the magic of kings mingling with cobblers. Every four-some must take at least one caddie, and the caddies are very good. The caddie master is the most famous caddie there ever was, Angelo Argea, who carried Jack Nicklaus in his heyday. Argea won five of the first six tournaments in which he packed Nicklaus, and 42 before he retired. It figures that Argea would set up caddie nirvana: regular, well-paying loops, a locker room, showers, even cable.

No wonder Old Marsh caddies almost hate to see winter end, for that's when they pack their stuff and go up to caddie in the Northeast, at places like Shinnecock Hills, Winged Foot, Glen Oaks and Westchester. You will even find a few Old

Marsh caddies at Pine Valley, where some people go not to play the course that *Golf Digest* ranks No. 1 in the world but to watch the fore caddies in action. At Pine Valley one caddie runs ahead of his group on every hole to watch the tee shots. When you've driven into the fairway, the fore caddie gives baseball's "safe" sign. When you've hit into the six-inch rough, he holds his hands out flat, one above the other, six inches apart. When you've hit into the tall rough, he holds his hands about a foot apart. A train-whistle motion means you're on the railroad tracks. A rowing motion means you're in the lake. And when he crosses his arms into an X, it means "Mark an X on your scorecard, because you're never getting out of there."

Caddies aren't too fond of leaving Seminole, either, mostly because it has the best eats in caddiedom. The caddie master's wife, Rozzie Fobbs, fixes up daily specials for only \$3: smothered chicken and collard greens, or stewed beef and oxtail soup, or pork-chop sandwiches and grits. Many are the days when the smells emanating from Fobbs's kitchen are so good that the millionaire club members have to be shooed from the door.

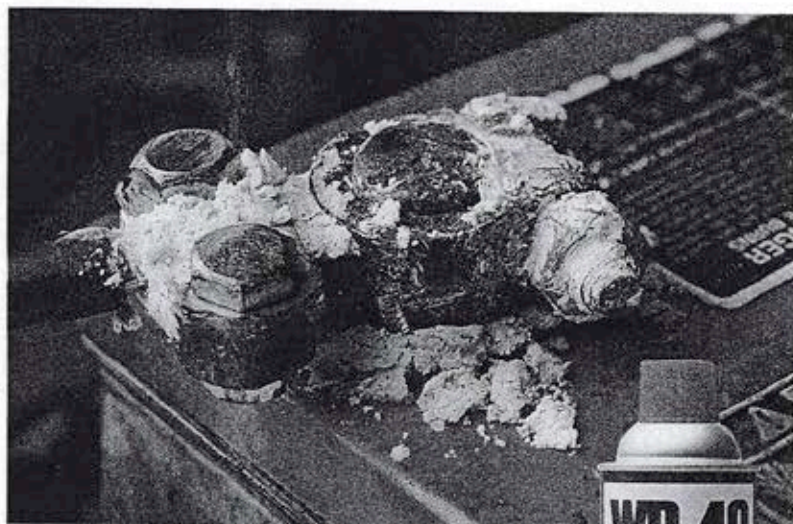
In the Seminole caddie shack some of the lifers can quote you chapter and verse from the Bible even when they're up to their ears in a crap game. Spongey, who worked right up until his death last August in his 80's, was known for always carrying two bags. "He got mad if I didn't get him 36 holes a day," says the caddie master, Eddie Fobbs.

One day one of the younger caddies was standing on the 18th green. He said, "Spongey, how long you been here?" Spongey considered that for a moment and then pointed to the Atlantic Ocean, which was buffeting the shoreline.

"See that?" Spongey said. "When I first got here, you could jump across it."

Seminole is the place where great Tour caddies go when their feet get sore. In the old days Zunnie outdrove every player on the Tour—in his old beat-up Chevy. Once, in the 1960s, he and two other caddies were driving to Robinson, Ill., the next Tour stop, and on their way into town a police car pulled them over. The officer ordered them to follow him. He took them directly to jail. Other than being black, they asked, what had they done? "Fellas," the policeman said, "we know who you are, and you'll never get a room in this town . . . so you can stay here." The police kept the cell doors open, tried to make the caddies comfortable and served them breakfast every

## USE #881

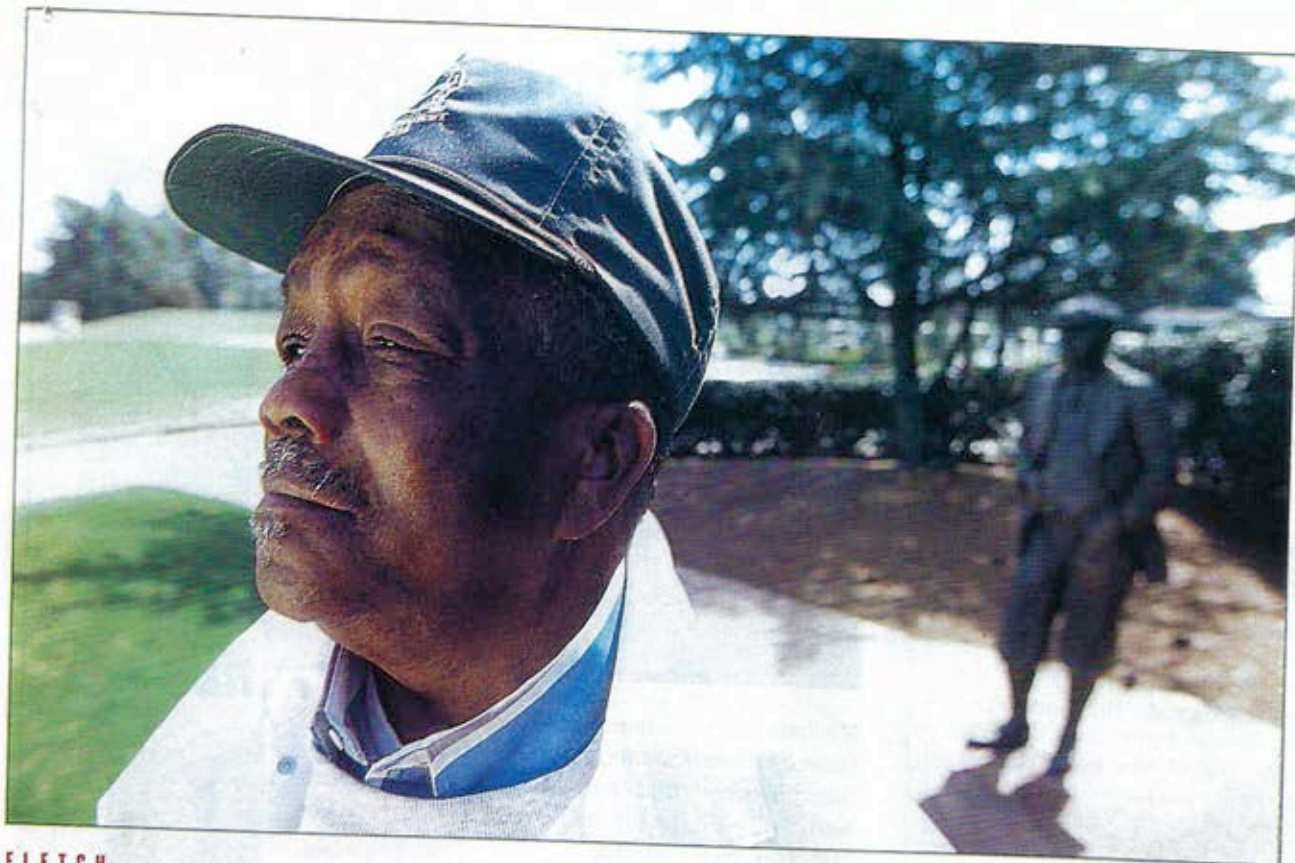


Mechanic fights plaque with WD-40. According to Jason Carlson of South Carolina, the best way to clean battery terminals and keep them free from corrosion is a blast of WD-40. It also removes road tar from your car. Just spray, wait and wipe.

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## FLETCH

*Fletcher Gaines, 73, won Pinehurst's caddie tournament 10 years running, but now he can barely see the ball.*

morning. "Free room and board," says Zunnie. "How do you beat that?"

Some Tour players were so tight that their caddies had to watch every penny. For his 1967 book, *Bogey Man*, George Plimpton asked a gaggle of caddies if there were any players on the Tour whom they tried to avoid. "You know what Deane Beman give?" one caddie said. "Why, man, he give 10 dollar a day and three percent of his winnings. And when he han' that ovah, he look at you like you done stab him in the knee!"

When word goes around the Pinehurst caddie room that former North Carolina governor Jim Martin is approaching, caddies jump fences. "You know what Jim Martin pay me?" asks Gillis, a Pinehurst veteran. "Twenty-two dollars. Not only did the man not come up with a tip, he didn't even pay the minimum! I ran up to him and said, 'Man, the price is \$25.' I got my \$3. The man is cheaper than chitlins."

Pinehurst caddies can smell a cheap-skate at the front gate. "We can see if a man got money just by the way he walk," says Fletch. "Now, that man there, you see the way he carry hisself. He ain't got no money. Same with that man there with

the ball retriever in his bag. You know when a man carry a ball retriever, he goin' to be a hack, for one thing, and he goin' to be cheap, too. I hate to get a man with a ball retriever. My man is Senator Sam Nunn. Sam's an \$80 man. *Everytime.*"

If an organization called the Western Golf Association has its way, caddies will be leapfrogging each other for years to get Sam Nunn. There is a movement afoot to save the caddie, and it begins with the WGA, which will give away 200 college scholarships to caddies this year alone. Beverly Country Club in Chicago is up to 300 caddies. South Bend Country Club has reinstated caddies after almost 10 years without them. Suddenly club members are remembering how much fun it is to take that long walk down the middle of the fairway with nothing in their hands but a putter. Inverness Golf Club in Toledo, site of last year's PGA Championship, is now the largest employer of teenagers in Lucas County.

Why not? After all, when was the last time you went back to the 19th hole and told a hilarious story about your golf cart?

Turns out Laura McGannon knew something nobody at Pinehurst did—that North Carolina provides free eye care for people who make less than \$400 a month. In fact, she said, the Pinehurst area is known for two things in America: golf and

eye doctors. Her husband explained it all to the guys two years ago.

And exactly nobody went.

But Jim McGannon wasn't going to give up. He was bent on helping these guys, and he hounded them until a few went to eye doctors. Lo and behold, they came back with glasses. Eventually a few more went, and then more, and then more than 20. Fully a third of the Pinehurst caddies now wear glasses. And not just glasses, but the same gray state-approved, low-cost frames.

"It's the team frame," says McGannon with a grin. "It's Team Pinehurst. All of a sudden everybody can see the ball."

Not only that, but somebody must have finally seen what the electric frying pan looked like and taken it home to clean. McGannon even found a clinic that would give the caddies cheap physicals. Things have started to look up for everybody.

Well, almost everybody. Gillis, whose eyes seem to be among the worst at Pinehurst, refuses to go to a doctor. Big John Allbrook was told he had glaucoma, but he won't go for the treatment.

And the man who once had the sharpest eyes in the whole caddie yard won't go, either. "Ol' Fletch is just too proud, I guess," says McGannon.

Lord a'mighty, Fletch, you ought to think about it. You might just like what you see.