



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER TWARDY

TWO GOLF & TENNIS LEGENDS, ONE LEGENDARY FRIENDSHIP



NICKLAUS & BUCHHOLZ

The day I met golf legend Jack Nicklaus and tennis hall-of-famer Butch Buchholz is one I'll never forget. The two had just come off the links, laughing and fist-bumping as longtime best friends do after a morning of comradery on the green. Their casual and relaxed nature was so endearing that for a brief (very brief) moment, I nearly forgot that I was chatting with two of the world's more revered golf and tennis legends of our time.

Of course, neither of these icon sport heroes needs an introduction, but for good measure, it's fun to recall that Jack's golf career has spanned more than 25 years and that he's won a record 18 major championships, including the Masters, U.S. Open, and PGA Championship.

And then there's Butch, the tennis superstar of the 1950s and 60s who went on to found one of the world's more prominent tournaments – originally known as The Lipton in 1985 on Key Biscayne (now called the Miami Open).

Allow me to reminisce about our delightful conversation that afternoon...

Ava: Gentlemen, how did the two of you first meet?

Butch: I met Jack somewhere in the 60's, I think with Billy Talbert.

Jack: When you joined my club is when we actually started spending time.

Butch: Yes, but we played tennis and golf years before that. Leigh Livesay said to Jack, 'Butch Buchholz is a friend of mine, and so let's play tennis and golf.' We played two or three years at Loxahatchee, with Cliff Drysdale.

Ava: So, it was not a friendship at first sight?

Jack: It was love at first sight!

Butch: Jack loves to play tennis, I love to play golf. Livesay is a good tennis player and good golfer, and Drysdale is a pro tennis player who loves to play golf, so that's how it started.

Jack: Yes, I remember the first time Billy came down. He brought Chuck McKinley with him. I'll never forget playing with Chuck and getting hit right in the nose with the tennis ball with the kick serve.

Butch: Chuck McKinley was my doubles partner.

Jack: I mean we both love tennis and we both love golf, we have common interests. Butch likes stone crabs, I like stone crabs.

We have a lot of fun together.

Ava: What would you tell a young person today? Would you recommend golf or tennis?

Jack: Play both. My father introduced me to all sports. My dad was the city tennis champion in Columbus. I didn't really play tennis until I was in my 30's, but he introduced me to it when I was a teenager, so I had enough fundamentals to be able to not start from scratch. I think kids should play as many sports as they can.

Butch: Jack played college basketball.

Jack: No I didn't. I got recruited to play, but I elected not to play.

Ava: When were your own talents recognized and by whom?

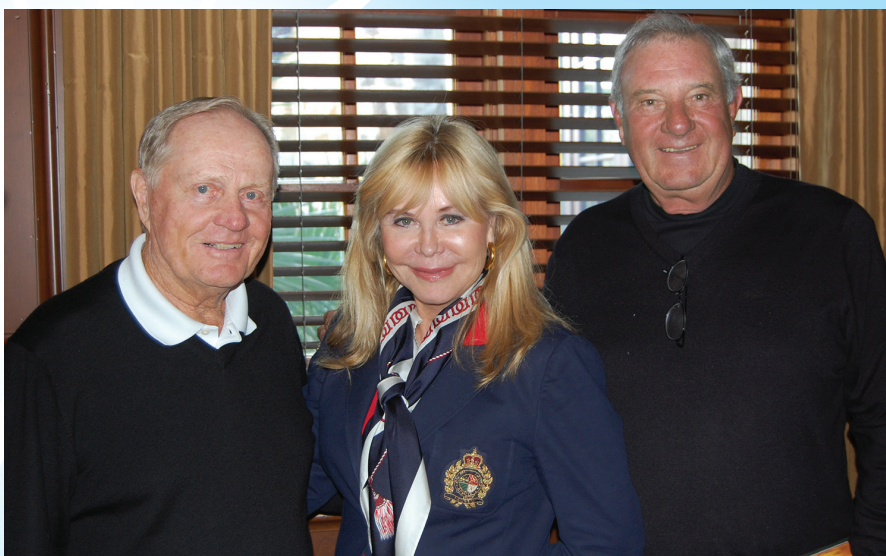
Jack: My father introduced me to all sports. He turned me over to a teacher named Jack Grout at age 10. Jack was like another father to me all my life until he passed away in 1989. But I don't think I would have ever become a champion if I didn't have the desire within my own self to be so. I think you can lead anybody to water, but you can't make them drink. You see that with kids every day.

Butch: Once you get to that stage, it all depends what's in your heart, and what's in your head. My dad was a teaching pro at a public park in St Louis. He never got mad at me when I lost. I was ranked number 1 in my teens. I was also playing basketball. That year I played the Orange Bowl, the tennis tournament, and I lost to somebody in the finals who I had never lost to before. We get back home and my father said, "Now let's see, you're the number one junior in the world – what is your world ranking in basketball?" I got it. Billy Talbert invited me to come down during spring vacation and play tennis in Puerto Rico and Jamaica. I beat two guys who had world rankings, and I was 17, and because of that, I got picked to go play the French, Wimbledon, the Australian Open and if I hadn't....well, that was the hardest thing to go to that coach and tell him I'm not playing basketball.

Jack: When I was Butch's age at 17, I had actually narrowed it to basketball and golf, but I mean I had NO idea I was going to be a professional golfer. I was just another kid who played golf, and I didn't even go to college on a golf scholarship. Well, they recruited me for basketball, but I think that was because they didn't give golf scholarships. I was just having fun playing golf, and when I was 18, I won an amateur tournament, and that got me on the Walker Cup team. So I figured I've got to be one of the 12 best amateurs in the country, and that was pretty nice.

Later that year. I won the US Amateur. I thought, I must be better than I think, and then the next year I played in the US Open and I finished second. I just kept going by stages and climbing mountains, and I never really took myself seriously. I always felt like I had something more to prove.

Ava: People call you a God of Golf, an



Ava Roosevelt with Jack Nicklaus (left) and Butch Buchholz

individual of multi-faceted talents, a marketing genius...

Jack: No, I'm not, I have a lot of people that work for me who are smart, and they give me all the credit.

Ava: What do you consider your greatest accomplishment to date?

Jack: Ahhh, 5 kids, 22 grandkids, by far.

Ava: And you, Butch?

Butch: Same. I have 3 kids, 5 grandchildren. He knows all 22 grandchildren's names and birthdays. I think that's pretty good.

Jack: I don't think I know them all...I have a cheat sheet with their names and birthdays that I carry.

Ava: Do you influence the lives of your grandchildren in any way?

Jack: Well sure I do, by showing support. I influence by staying out of the way. I think what I've actually done with my kids, is what my father did with me. I introduced all my kids to things but never really forced anything on them.

Ava: Who beats who at which game, and how often?

Butch: We're actually partners when we golf together, although he beat me today when we had an individual game. In tennis, he is very smart when he picks his doubles partner who is Cliff Drysdale. So not only does he beat me in golf, but he is smarter in picking a partner.

Jack: He would obviously beat me at tennis. He loves to play golf and I love to play tennis.

Butch: I will tell you about Jack's tennis.

He understands doubles better than some pros, seriously.

Ava: So how is Butch's golf?

Jack: Butch is an 8 handicap in golf and I'm about an 8 handicap in tennis. We're pretty comparable. I know that Butch can play golf with guys his age and never embarrass himself, except for today!

Butch: We've had this game for the last 20-some years. It's Camp Nicklaus. You go play golf and then you go play tennis at Jack's house.

Jack: We call it Golden Bear Day Camp.

Butch: But you must know, there're always these little friendly bets, \$50, and inside of Jack's kitchen cabinets are these \$50 bills that he's won from Cliff Drysdale over the years. When you go to his house for the first time and you think 'oh yes, I'm going to see the Master's trophy, or the US Open trophy.' But no. You go into the kitchen and you open up the cabinet door and see all these \$50 bills plastered in there.

Jack: It got so full we had to start another cabinet! And I have another one that's called OD Money – that's Other Dummies' money.

Butch: Mine's going in the cabinet today.

Jack: My biggest problem is if I lose, I get to reach in my pocket and pay it off. If I win, I have to give it to my wife and she puts it in the cabinet.

Ava: With a friendship like this, I can't imagine it would matter if you stayed behind here and there!