



TEEING UP SUPPORT



ACTOR
LUCAS BLACK
HELPS FIGHT
THE DECLINE
OF GOLF

BY HALEY ADAMS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AT&T
PEBBLE BEACH NATIONAL PRO-AM



The Saturday shopping crowd at Sam's Club is awash in a sea of Midwestern normalcy. Standing in the store's Conley Road parking lot, actor Lucas Black looks like any other Columbian in Levis, white T-shirt, Callaway golf hat and sunglasses. You wouldn't guess he's about to leave town to film a movie with Harrison Ford.

You wouldn't guess he knows the politics behind the Academy Award nominations and would prefer a Screen Actors Guild Award to an Oscar, if he could choose.

And while his Callaway golf hat hints at his hobby, you wouldn't guess this 29-year-old won \$40,000 in a celebrity golf tournament last February.

This is the life of Lucas Black, one of Columbia's most famous residents you never knew lives here. He's neither tabloid fodder nor magazine cover boy, but Black has starred in everything from "Friday Night Lights" to "Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift." He's also a scratch golfer who can often be seen on the practice green at The Club At Old Hawthorne, the driving range at A.L. Gustin Golf Course or the leaderboard of a city tournament.

The story is cool enough if you stop there: a movie star lives in Columbia and frequents the local golf courses. But it gets better: Black has become one of the biggest supporters of youth golf in Columbia, giving both his time and money — and that's a good thing because

some say the future of golf is in jeopardy. The sport is attracting fewer youth players, leading to questions about golf's future. Here in CoMo, Black is doing what he can to reverse golf's downward trend.

Black Finds Golf

Born in 1982 in Speake, Ala., Black was 10 years old when his mother took him to an audition for a film called "The War." Casting agents were looking for Southerners in the 12-to-15-year-old range, but Black's mom wanted to meet lead actor Kevin Costner, so they showed up at the audition anyway.

The youngster landed the part, thanks to his strong Alabama drawl and spunky personality. His work in "The War" led to a role in the single-season TV run of horror-thriller "American Gothic." Soon after, Black's accent helped him land other roles with a Southern ambience, including that of Frank Wheatley, the young boy opposite Billy Bob Thornton in the 1996 film "Sling Blade."

SIX CAN'T-MISS LUCAS BLACK FILMS

"SLING BLADE" (1996)

Also stars: Billy Bob Thornton, Robert Duvall, Dwight Yoakum
Black plays Frank, a young boy who befriends Karl (Thornton), a handicapped ex-con released from a mental hospital.

"KILLER DILLER" (2004)

Also stars: William Lee Scott, Fred Willard, John Michael Higgins
Black plays Vernon, an autistic pianist who wins the friendship of the main character, Wesley (Scott), a car thief. While in a halfway house, the two transform the gospel choir into a rock band.

"FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS" (2004)

Also stars: Billy Bob Thornton, Derek Luke
Black stars as the quarterback of a West Texas high school football team. After the Panthers' tailback is injured, the team must rise above the circumstances and make its hometown fans proud at the state championship.

"FAST AND THE FURIOUS: TOKYO DRIFT" (2006)

Also stars: Zachery Ty Bryan, Brian Goodman, Bow Wow
In this action-packed flick, Black plays the main character, Sean Boswell, who escapes to Tokyo to avoid a jail sentence. While there, he gets sucked into the underground lifestyle of drift racing.

"GET LOW" (2009)

Also stars: Robert Duvall, Sissy Spacek, Bill Murray
Black plays Buddy, a funeral home employee who helps an old man plan his memorial service — while he's still alive.

"SEVEN DAYS IN UTOPIA" (2011)

Also stars: Robert Duvall, Melissa Leo, Robert Bear, Dora Madison Burge
Black plays the leading role of Luke Chisholm, a young golfer whose big dreams are shattered after a meltdown in the pros. He rebuilds his confidence after he meets rancher Johnny Crawford (Duvall) in Utopia, Texas.



Lucas Black was only one of the actors playing in February's AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. Bill Murray, Don Cheadle and George Lopez look on as Black tees off.

As Black grew older, he dabbled in movie and television roles while attending school in Speake and playing on his high school's football and baseball teams. One day he decided to fill time in lieu of a canceled baseball practice, and tried golf at the invitation of a friend.

"For my first shot, I topped it, it bounced twice, it went in the water," he says. "I was hooked. I fell in love with it."

Black says golf captivated him then for the same reason he loves the sport today: the challenge. "We all try to reach perfection in golf, but you really can't ever achieve it," he says. "It's just the pursuit of getting better each and every day, and that process is fun to me."

Black continued to play golf, even as his movie career took off. He acted alongside Matt Damon in *All The Pretty Horses*, Melanie Griffith in *Crazy In Alabama* and Jude Law in *Cold Mountain*. He turned down a role in Robert Redford's *The Horse Whisperer* when asked to alter his accent.

In 2003, Black was cast as an autistic pianist in the indie flick *Killer Diller*. The movie was filmed in Fayette and the cast stayed in nearby Columbia. That summer,

Black became a Columbia resident the same way many people do: he met a girl from Mizzou.

The Move To CoMo

Her name was Maggie O'Brien. She had just graduated from the University of Missouri and was waiting tables for a few months before starting law school at MU. The cast of *Killer Diller* came in for a kickoff party at the now-defunct Dali's. O'Brien was starstruck.

Not by Black; she didn't know who he was. Instead, she wanted to meet one of the film's other stars, Ashley Johnson, who played Kirk Cameron's kid sister, Chrissy Seaver, on the 1980s hit show *Growing Pains*. Black tried talking to O'Brien, but she dismissed him, believing his Southern drawl was a put-on. "I thought he was faking his accent and mocking people from Missouri, like we were hillbillies," she says.

Although she remembers Black being "nice and cute," when he asked for her phone number, she ignored him. As the cast left the restaurant and headed to the parking

**"WE ALL TRY TO REACH PERFECTION IN GOLF,
BUT YOU REALLY CAN'T EVER ACHIEVE IT."**

GOLF'S POPULARITY IS DECREASING ACROSS THE BOARD, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE SPORT'S YOUNGER PLAYERS.

Lucas Black celebrates after winning the 3M Celebrity Challenge at the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. He donated his winnings to the Columbia Golf Foundation and the Heart of the Ozarks Golf Foundation.



Above: Lucas Black and his daughter, Sophie Jo, on the set of "42."



Right: On the set of "Seven Days In Utopia."



FAMILY PHOTO COURTESY OF MAGGIE BLACK
MOVIE PHOTOS BY VAN REDIN, COURTESY OF "SEVEN DAYS IN UTOPIA"



lot, O'Brien offered Black some leftover cake from the restaurant — "just to be nice," she says. Black ate the whole piece in front of her, which she thought was funny. When he called soon after (she had relented and given him her number), she agreed to a date.

"*Killer Diller*" filming lasted only four weeks, but Black decided to stay in mid-Missouri while O'Brien attended law school. He bought a house. O'Brien graduated in 2006. The couple married in 2010. And they're still here.

The Blacks enjoy the intimacy of Columbia — similar to their hometowns of Elsberry, Mo., and Speake, Ala. — but they also like big-city conveniences of the area. "It seems really lively, but it's still a small town and you see people you know a lot," Maggie Black says. "You can see people you know at the grocery store."

She adds that Columbia's golf courses (seven in town and more throughout mid-Missouri) are also a draw. As new parents — daughter Sophie Jo was born on Father's Day 2011 — the couple thinks Columbia is a great place to raise a family. "There's really nothing I don't like about it," she says.

Black says he loves Columbia because there is so much to do here. He loves all the festivals, such as Roots N Blues N BBQ and the True/False Film Fest, as well as Mizzou sporting events. And like a lot of other Mizzou fans, the Alabama native is excited about the university's move to the Southeastern Conference.

"Now that Mizzou is going to the SEC," he says, "I'm going to like it even better."

Golf's Declining Appeal

Columbia College head golf coach John Utley was a golf pro at Perche Creek Golf Club when he first met Black on the driving range. "I didn't know who he was," Utley says. "He was wearing a ball cap, just out there hitting balls by himself. Then somebody said who he was, referencing '*Sling Blade*,' which I had seen."

Black has since become a fixture on Columbia golf courses when he's in town, which he estimates to be a little more than half the year. He plays golf every day when he's in Columbia. He's a member of The Club At Old Hawthorne and frequents other city courses.

The actor's love of golf inspires him to improve the state of the sport. Golf's popularity is decreasing across the board, particularly among the sport's younger players. According to the Professional Golf Association, the number of children who play golf has dropped 36 percent since 2006. The decline is causing concern about the future of golf, a multibillion-dollar industry that employs 2 million people.

Rick Grayson, Black's swing coach and winner of the PGA Junior Golf Leader Award, says one factor of the decline is the lack of children on the course. The Springfield instructor compares golf to soccer, a sport that's become wildly popular in America over the past 20 years. According to the U.S. Soccer Federation, 4.5 million athletes were registered in youth, adult and professional soccer leagues in 2011; about 94 percent of those players were 18 and younger. Locally, the Columbia Soccer Club opened in 1975 and has since become one

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 150)

HOW CAN I GET MY KID INVOLVED IN GOLF?

If your children are new to golf, and you don't belong to a golf course, they can still learn the game.

TEE UP THE SUMMER JUNIOR GOLF LESSONS

Columbia Parks & Recreation has teamed up with the Columbia Golf Foundation for this free junior golf camp. The camp is open to ages 7 to 16 and lessons take place on Monday mornings in June at L.A. Nickell Golf Course, 1800 Parkside Drive. The camp is free, but a \$10 donation to the Columbia Golf Foundation is appreciated to help defer costs.

GIRLS GOLF CAMP

The Ladies Professional Golf Association and the Columbia Golf Foundation hosts a girls' golf camp in July. Girls may participate in 10 sessions for \$5 per session. Scholarships are also available. Email John Weston at columbiagolffoundation@gmail.com for more information.

A.L. GUSTIN GOLF COURSE

Gustin has four golf professionals who teach golfers of any skill level. Individual and group lessons are available. Prices vary by golf pro, so call the course at 573-882-6016 for more details.

PERCHE CREEK GOLF CLUB

Perche Creek offers lessons for children and adults. Junior rates vary depending on the child's age, but they cost around \$30. Call the course at 573-445-7546 for more information. Lessons are available seven days a week by appointment.

COMPLETE CUSTOM AUTOMOTIVE

For Your Convenience

2101 W. WORLEY
columbia mall location
OPEN SUNDAYS
10AM - 4PM

ANY MAKE, ANY MODEL, ANY REPAIR, EVEN TIRES, UNBEATABLE!

WILD CARD SPECIAL

10% OFF

ANY SERVICE!

JUST MENTION THIS AD.

EXCEPT TIRES

ALL MAKES & MODELS:
AUDI • BMW • HONDA • INFINITI • LAND ROVER • LEXUS • MERCEDES • TOYOTA • VW

WWW.CUSTOMCOMPLETEAUTOMOTIVE.COM

Paul King, MD
Gastroenterology Board-Certified

Voted BEST DOCTORS "Best" 2007-2008

A Patient-Centered Practice Specializing In:

Colon Cancer Screening	Peptic Ulcer
Ulcerative Colitis	Irritable Bowel Syndrome
Crohn's Disease	Hepatitis & Diseases of the Liver
Acid Reflux	

Columbia Gastroenterology & Liver Associates, LLC
1605 E. Broadway Ste 250
Broadway Medical Plaza 2
573.449.8680 • www.paulkingmd.com



LUCAS BLACK:
TEEING UP SUPPORT
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 101)

of the Missouri's top youth soccer programs.

Nearly every child has played soccer at some point, whether he or she was a star forward or the one doing cartwheels in the goal. Soccer is still the go-to introductory sport for young people. Golf, on the other hand, is rarely considered as a child's sport. "Ten years ago, there were no programs for a 5-year-old trying to play golf," Grayson says.

To combat the diminishing numbers of young players, U.S. golf enthusiasts are trying to raise interest among youths. In Missouri, Grayson started the Heart of the Ozarks Junior Golf Foundation and raised \$60,000 for equipment for public schools. Golf is now a physical education requirement for elementary and middle school kids in Springfield.

Grayson is starting to see an impact. "Less than 10 years ago, many of the high school girls' teams barely had enough players to host a team, to just get five players," he says. "One school had 17 go out last fall."

Hoping to generate a similar boost in Columbia, Black's friend and former Mizzou golfer John Weston started the Columbia Golf Foundation in 2010. Weston's goal is to give youths the chance to play and learn about golf, even if they can't afford clubs or greens fees. The organization hosted its first free clinic on June 7, 2010. About 40 volunteers showed up on the first day, including Black.

"He was huge," Weston says. "He was at camp every day. He took it upon himself to be a real cheerleader, kind of a coach to the kids, and an encourager."

Black's biggest contribution to the Columbia Golf Foundation came last February, after a trip to the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am. The tournament pairs big names in golf with big-name celebrities. Black was one of the celebrities who shared the course with Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Bill Belichick, Bill Murray, George Lopez and more.

Black participated in the 3M Celebrity Challenge, a part of the tournament's week of events when

12 celebrities play five holes at Pebble Beach to win money for their respective charities. Paired with ESPN Sportscaster Chris Berman, Black won the challenge in a chip-off. He and Berman took home \$40,000 each for their charities. Black gave half the money to the Ozark Junior Golf Foundation and the other half to the Columbia Golf Foundation. In both Springfield and Columbia, the donations went to fund golf equipment in schools.

The \$20,000 donation is the largest gift the Columbia Golf Foundation has ever received. Grayson credits Black's enthusiasm for donating to his community as a big step forward to check golf's decline in Columbia.

"Columbia, Mo., is a better place to live, raise a family and produce junior golfers with Lucas Black in the community," Grayson says. "The \$20,000 could have gone anywhere else. It could have gone to a cancer society, which we know is a good thing. It could have gone to St. Jude, which is also a good thing. But for him to spend that money in Columbia — where he lives — and to promote junior golf, makes that community a better place to live."

Black Plays Pee Wee Reese

Black won't be spending much time on Columbia golf courses this summer. In April, he accepted a role in Warner Brothers' upcoming Jackie Robinson biopic, "#42." Production for the movie is under way, and according to Black's Twitter feed (@TheLucasBlack), he's pumped about playing shortstop Pee Wee Reese. "#42 is going to be a fun project and great movie," he tweeted. "Excited about playing Pee Wee and having fun while doing it."

The film stars Harrison Ford — one of many big Hollywood names to share the screen with Black. Last year he co-starred with Robert Duvall and Melissa Leo in "Seven Days in Utopia." Black played Luke Chisholm, a young golfer taken under the wing of a Texas rancher. He found the film through Utley, who is a friend of *Golf's Sacred Journey: Seven Days at the Links of Utopia* author David Cook.

Leo and Duvall are Academy Award winners. Does Black see himself in their ranks someday? "I don't really think about that to be honest," he says.

Making Plans? Better Tell Your Financial Advisor.



We all have secret dreams and goals in life. But for those who plan, the dreams can become real. The right guidance and support can help make a big difference in many endeavors, including planning for your future. A financial advisor can provide the assistance you need to set strategies and take action toward your specific goals and aspirations. Call your Waddell & Reed financial advisor today and ask about creating your personal financial plan.

Investing. With a plan.
Waddell & Reed, Inc. Member SPIC



Andy Stewart, CFP®
Managing Principal
stewart@wradvisors.com



Rodney M. Loesch, CFP®, CDFATM
Financial Advisor
rodney@wradvisors.com

200 East Southampton Drive, Suite 102, Columbia MO 65203
573-875-4494 • Fax 573-449-1817 • Toll Free 800-844-4494



Paradise IN YOUR BACKYARD

Custom-designed, in-ground pools and hot tubs are the perfect way to add value to your home, release stress from your day, and have fun with your family and friends.

www.columbiapoolandspa.com



1100 Business Loop 70 W.
573.874.6972

“That’s just one of those things where, when I go to a job, I just do my thing. A lot of people might say that’s an excuse, but really I’m just focusing on what I need to be doing.”

Black may not have an Oscar on his mantel yet, but his work has been recognized. He won three awards for his role in “*Sling Blade*,” and the cast was nominated for a Screen Actors Guild Award. Black has been nominated for various other awards, including Choice Breakout Male for “*Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*” at the 2006 Teen Choice Awards.

Utley says Black doesn’t behave like the stereotypical movie star. “I think Lucas just wants to be Lucas,” Utley says. “He doesn’t care that you know who he is and that he’s an actor who has done movies, which I think is a cool thing.”

Despite his low-key manner, Black’s occupation sets him apart from most Columbians. He is often recognized around town. “He and I went to Cracker Barrel after golfing or turkey hunting or something,” Utley remembers. “It didn’t take the waitresses very long. They knew who he was. A couple of them asked for autographs.”

Every time the Blacks go out, someone usually notices the actor, although wife Maggie says he doesn’t mind. She appreciates how polite Columbians are. Black always accommodates people who ask for pictures or autographs, but the couple has encountered rude fans in larger cities who have demanded photos without asking.

Utley says Black’s fame also affected

“He’s definitely a Columbia guy now,” Weston says. “Before, he was a movie star from the outside, but now he’s a Columbia guy.”

The Future Of Golf

Black has other goals in life, aside from acting. He’s contemplated attending Q-school (qualifying school) to become a professional golfer, which he thinks

“BEFORE, (LUCAS) WAS A MOVIE STAR FROM THE OUTSIDE, BUT NOW HE’S A COLUMBIA GUY.” – JOHN WESTON

his introduction into the Columbia golf community. “Everybody wanted to meet him,” Utley says. “Everybody wanted to be his friend, I think.”

Weston echoes the sentiment. He says Black is easy to get along with, but his fellow golfers didn’t know that at the beginning. Although he’ll always be treated a bit differently, Weston says Black has found a place in Columbia.

needs to happen soon because of his age and the demands of raising a family.

Whether or not he goes pro, Black hopes his work at the Columbia Golf Foundation will continue to have a lasting impact on the city’s golf future. Weston has been working to make golf a part of the physical education curriculum in Columbia’s public and private schools. Columbia Independent School and Columbia Catholic School have already added the sport to their programs. According to Patty Cornell, the Columbia Public Schools coordinator for elementary physical education, CPS does not plan to incorporate golf into the elementary curriculum.

Weston, however, spends time at the schools. On May 2, second-graders at Mill Creek Elementary had a golf morning with Weston and parent volunteers. Weston set up different stations where students worked on putting, driving, rules and etiquette. They also created their own nine-hole golf courses out of construction paper. The children used a program called Starting New At Golf, designed for beginning golfers. The Columbia Golf Foundation purchased the SNAG equipment with the tournament money Black donated.

Black believes that increasing golf’s exposure through schools and clinics will inspire children to take up the sport. “I hope it gives a lot of kids an opportunity,” he says. “I hope it gets kids and families more involved in the game because I think they can learn from it and take the positives from it.” ■

Three Great Vacation Destinations

Locally Owned
kellarcondo.com

INDIAN SHORES, FL.
Beachfront, pool level condo with stunning Gulf views, 90 minutes from Disney. **Sleeps 6**

CRESTED BUTTE, CO.
Spacious mountain view home in the historic town of Crested Butte. **Sleeps 8**

COSTA RICA
Luxurious oceanfront property only steps to the beach. **Sleeps 4**