

# The “Three Kings” at the 2015 Masters

by

[Scott Pickard](#)

When I was ten years old, my family moved from Houston to Dallas, Texas, and my parents became members of the Dallas Athletic Club (DAC). A couple of years later, they both volunteered for the 1963 PGA Golf Tournament which was held at DAC. My dad was a marshal and arranged for me to go to the practice session where three pros played with one amateur. So I followed them walking down the middle of the fairway (no ropes in those days) alongside Arnold Palmer, Gary Player, and Jack Nicklaus. I really did not understand the significance of who and what I was watching, and that these three men were the reigning “kings of golf” on our planet.



I have a vivid memory of Jack Nicklaus hitting a driver off the fairway on a long par five, and back then with wooden club heads and the golf balls of the day, the ball would climb up into the sky. Nicklaus’ “driver-off-the-deck” fairway stroke made a loud “crack” as the golf ball shot out like a cannon and climbed up toward the clouds on a hot Texas afternoon, and then dropped down softly onto the green in two. It was magnificent!

Arnold Palmer hit a drive that started way out to the right soaring over the adjacent fairway, and then it turned left in a sweeping hook that brought the ball down into the middle of the fairway on the hole being played. WOW!

Gary Player hit one drive that took off low and skipped across and finally into the water. They all laughed including Player, so he re-teeed and then blasted the next drive down the middle of the fairway. It surprised me that he made a mistake..... I didn’t know golf pros made mistakes!

I look back on that day with mixed feelings of awe and a little bit of regret that I did not fully grasp how special that opportunity was. It was a milestone moment in my life as it opened my eyes and heart to the game of golf.

That was 52 years ago, and fast forward to April 9, 2015, as I watched the “Three Kings” perform the ceremonial first tee shots on the number one hole at Augusta National Golf Club to kickoff the 2015 Masters Tournament. Palmer, Nicklaus, and Player moved a little slower and a little less sure of themselves, each showing a little bit of anxiety that they would not muff their tee shots. But in king-like fashion they striped their drives down the middle of the number one fairway to the delight and cheers of all the fans, including myself: still inspiring, still impressing, still showing us the way in the world of golf just as they did for me back in 1963.



**THREE KINGS: Palmer, Nicklaus, Player kick it off at the 2015 Masters.**

Golf is so much more than just a game for most of us golfers. It becomes a golden thread that weaves its way throughout our entire lives. That must be true because several weeks from now, I will be playing golf with my dad to celebrate his 98th birthday and just as Arnie and Jack and Gary do when they play golf together, dad will be trying his best to beat me, and me him. It has always been that way with us, father and son.

I can only hope that my son and I will be doing the same thing 30 years from now.