

A Dream Fulfilled

A Game In Progress

Atlanta sports fans have welcomed Chuck Dowdle into their living rooms at 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. since 1985. The Channel 2 Action News sports director has covered almost every imaginable sporting event in his hometown (Dowdle is a Briarcliff High School graduate) in a job he always coveted.

Dowdle played sports in his youth. He was on the basketball team at the University of Georgia as a freshman and sophomore. He then transferred to play baseball at Georgia State University. Dowdle pitched for the Panthers his final two collegiate seasons.

His broadcasting career included a brief stint in Johnson City, Tennessee, before he landed a prime gig for 13 years at WPLG in Miami. He hosted Miami Dolphins coach Don Shula's television show during his tenure.

Then, WSB-TV, Atlanta's long-time ratings leader, called.

"WSB was a station I had grown up watching, and it had been a lifelong dream of mine to work for that television station," says Dowdle. "As much as I loved Miami and the station I was with, it was something I had to do."

His time in Miami is where Dowdle discovered golf. He and former Miami Dolphins nose tackle Manny Fernandez

frequently played together at Doral Golf Resort & Spa.

His high-profile job garnered him regular invitations to play in pro-am events. Dowdle still speaks in amazed tones of the time he was paired with pro golfer Larry Ziegler, daredevil Evel Knievel and entertainer Jackie Gleason at Gleason's Inverrary Golf Classic.

"Can you imagine being part of that group?" he says. "That is my favorite foursome ever."

Dowdle says his father was friends with Atlanta amateur legend Bobby Jones and he shares the story of the time he took University of Georgia golfer and friend Terry Diehl (a PGA Tour winner) to visit with Jones through a meeting arranged by Dowdle's father.

"I didn't play golf growing up," he says. "I knew he was famous, but didn't get, at the time, the full impact of who Bobby Jones was."

He knows now. Dowdle is a regular golfer at East Lake Country Club – Jones' home course.

An annual tradition for Dowdle and WSB-TV photographer Eric Hager for the last 20 years has been to travel to Jacksonville, Florida, the Thursday prior to the Georgia-Florida football game. Another regular golf partner for Dowdle is nationally syndicated radio talk show host Neal Boortz.

If there is a charity or celebrity golf event taking place in the Atlanta area, Dowdle is likely playing in it, serving as the master of ceremonies, or both.

Dowdle reminisces on the time he was eating lunch at the Atlanta Falcons training camp when then-head coach Dan Reeves tapped him on the shoulder. Reeves had broken par for the first time ever earlier that week. "I said, 'Wow, that's pretty good.' Coach Reeves said, 'You mind if I walk you through the round.' With that, I just pushed my plate aside and he sat down and we went through it shot by shot. He was pumped up."

A final Dowdle anecdote involves tennis legend Arthur Ashe.

"Arthur lived at Doral when I was working down there," says Dowdle.

"Arthur played golf every day. He was a fanatical golfer. A lot of people don't know that about him. If I ever needed to talk to Arthur about something to do with tennis, and I can hear him now, he would say to me, 'I am teeing off at such and such a time. Meet me at the turn.' That was his pet phrase: Meet me at the turn."

Dowdle says he anticipates retiring in the next couple of years and is frequently asked what he is going to do his newfound free time.

"That's an easy answer," laughs the avid golfer. "I tell them if they want to talk to me after I retire, then they will have to meet me at the turn."

– Patrick Jones

