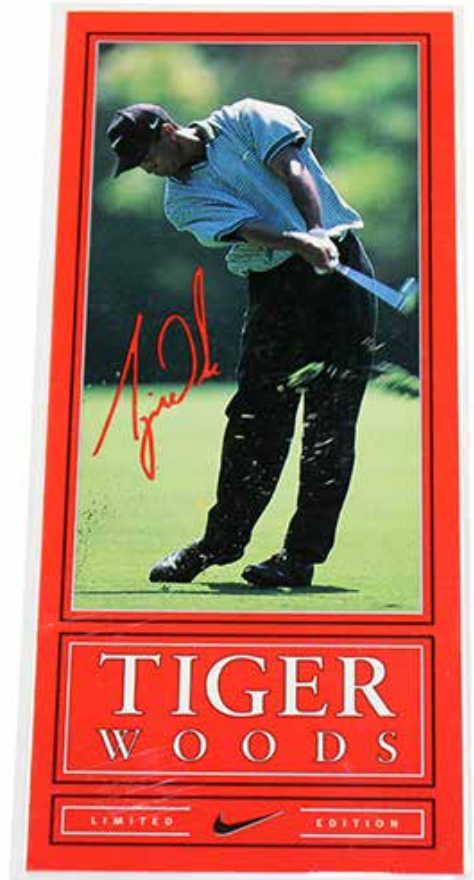


Golf card auction report – Spring 2023

*The following report, produced by **George Petro** for the Spring 2023 issue of The Golf, is a prime example of how golf cards move in the marketplace. Tiger Woods cards were prominent in auctions of that period, often bringing astonishing prices from collectors trying to snap up desired cards with that all-important high grade from authentication agencies. Petro's report is a solid read for collectors who wish to understand grading and how this affects the desirability of a card, as well as photos, tickets and badges.*



Spring 2023 Auction Report

Golden Age Auction – January 2023

This auction featured “Modern Collectibles.”

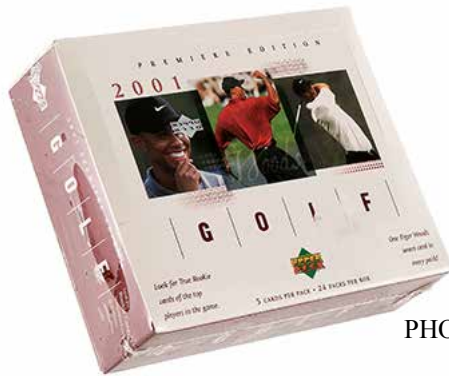


PHOTO 1

Tiger's Cards: In 2001 Tiger signed a contract with Upper Deck making his 2001 UD cards, in several variations, amongst his accepted rookies. They are the first mainstream golf cards since “Tour Pro Set” made their last in 1992. UD produced two prominent boxes of sealed packs, one being the 2001 “Premier Edition” (**PHOTO 1, above**) consisting of 24 packs of five cards (\$100 on eBay) which tends to produce one “everymans” Tiger #1 rookie card per box. These Tiger rookies were produced in massive quantities with PSA alone

having graded 35,000 Tiger rookie cards of which 12,000 were PSA 10's.

High demand explains how one of those cards in Lot #175 (**PHOTO 2, right**) brought \$1,049 (while a 9 typically does about \$110 and a good raw card about \$30). Another such rookie card in Lot #15 was submitted to Becketts where it gained a Black label 10, with only 90 in their database/catalog, hence it did \$5,718. And in Lot #8, his rookie card graded a PSA 8 but that was also signed by Tiger some-



PHOTO 2

time after it was busted from its pack and being one of only two signed in the PSA database, it did \$25,331. Clearly Tiger doesn't sign many cards, though Golden Age estimates that Tiger has signed over 10,000 flags!

But there is another way to potentially get a Tiger signed card and that's within the 2001 Upper Deck box called



PHOTO 3

the “SP Authentic Series” (PHOTO 3) which contains 24 packs of four cards (\$1,500 on eBay) with the guarantee that each box will have at least two “special editions” often signed cards associated with “a” player, but rarely is that player Tiger.

If so, they include cards signed by Tiger before being randomly inserted into packs: one run of 900 cards as seen in Lot #2 (PHOTO 4) in PSA10 did \$48,178 (though another PSA10 brought \$105,780 in 2021), and a similar card with a run of only 100 signed and numbered cards like that in Lot #7 in PSA7 brought \$24,724 (for reference a PSA grade 10 did \$369,000 in 2021 but that’s about as good as it can get); other possibilities include finding a “Sign of the Times” Autographed series, the “Players Ink” autographed cards, and the unsigned Tiger “Tour Swatch” which contains a small section of a PGA Tour worn red shirt (about \$2K in PSA10).

Other limited edition Tiger rookies include the UD 2001 “Promo” series and “Tour Threads” series and the rare Employee only “Slam” run of only 325 cards. A few later produced UD non-rookies featuring Tiger can also be very valuable, such as the card in Lot#16 (PHOTO 5), a 2013 UD “Precious Metal Gems” “Purple” with only 125 unsigned cards that was available only to UD employees, which did \$8,372 in PSA8, and the UD “Exquisite” card in 2014 having images signed by Arnie, Jack and Tiger on one card and a “Sign of the Times” card signed by both Tiger and Rory.

The December 1996 Sports Illustrated for Kids magazine



PHOTO 4



PHOTO 5

contains what many consider the actual Tiger Rookie with very few in a high grade because Tiger’s card is the center card of a sheet of 9 other sports people and the perforations along its margins make for very few having a high grade (PHOTO 6).

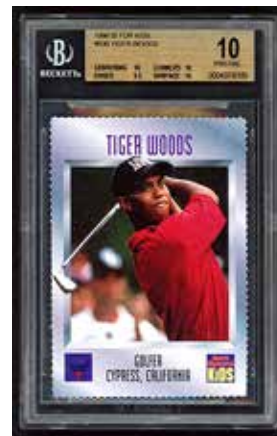


PHOTO 7

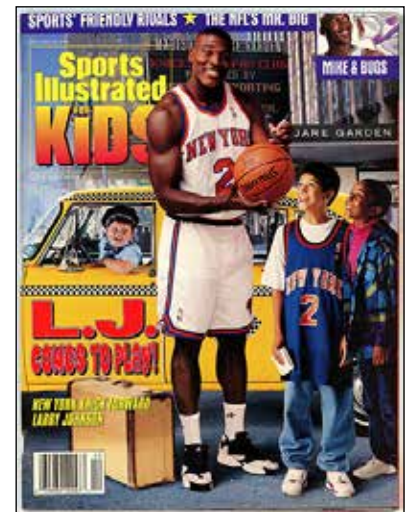


PHOTO 8

Lot#6 (PHOTO 7) in BGS10 with a POP of only 12 examples did \$18,575 (There are 23 10’s in the PSA’s database. In February 2022 a BGS10 did \$55k and in April 2022 a PSA10 did \$41k). GAA Lot #83, a BGS 9.5 with a POP of 106 did \$3,349; Lot #130 in PSA6 did \$412 and Lot #223 in PSA4 did \$276, so it’s a gamble if you bought the whole SI magazine (PHOTO 8) in Lot#50 for \$1,466 unless you want this cool item intact. Little appreciated is that there was also a 1999 S.I. for kids with a Tiger containing a non-rookie Tiger card.

Also accepted in the rookie arena for Tiger are the “1998 Champions of Golf Masters Collection” in a box released by Grand Slam Ventures (PHOTO 9, at right) that includes all Masters winners



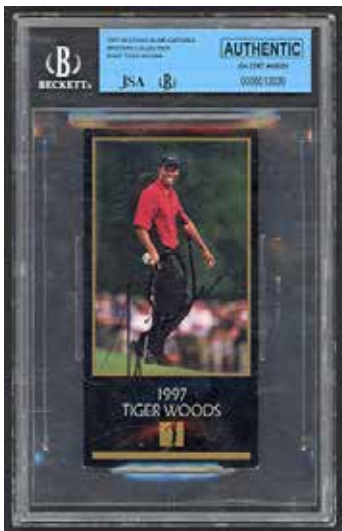


PHOTO 10



PHOTO 11



PHOTO 12



PHOTO 13

though 1997 so you are sure to get a Tiger rookie. They came in a printed “gold ink” version and a rarer applied “gold foil” version. There was also a large uncut sheet of all the cards which was produced through 1999, with many removed and submitted, sometimes referred to as 1997-99 cards. Lot #229 is a sealed box of all “gold ink” cards for \$716 but few of Tiger’s cards in the set grade high because of their black borders and Tiger’s card is at the bottom of the shrink-wrapped bundle and is often damaged. There are only two 10’s in over 8,000 submissions and no known 10’s in the gold foil variation. (In 2019 an ink 10 did \$64k and a foil \$120k. PSA 9’s do about \$1k and 7’s about \$125). Lot #21 (PHOTO 10) is non-graded but slabbed with an authenticated Tiger signature and is the only signed one known, selling now for \$8,372. (In January, Lot #69 at The Golf Auction was a very scarce Tiger card put out by Nike in 96 or 97 (PHOTO 11), which, ungraded, did \$2,176, possibly a real sleeper?)

Jack Nicklaus’ most popular rookie card is the 1981 Donruss Card #13. Of the 3,700 such cards graded by PSA, 173 are 10’s (prices average \$6k for 10’s and \$500 for 9’s) but Lot #12 (PHOTO 12) is another special circumstance as a BGC “Black Label” 10 with only two in their database, thus doing a whopping \$27,196. Nicklaus has a second card in the set for his being the Stats Leader in iron play that year, a PSA9 in Lot #155 bringing \$79 and an un-slabbed stats leader in Lot #243 signed by Jack doing \$208. That set also contains the rookie cards for Tom Watson and Lee Trevino (expect about \$200 and \$40 respectively in PSA10).

Lot#128 was a boxed 36-pack (180 random sealed cards) (Photo 13) which might produce a Nicklaus rookie, doing \$1,718, a price not likely to be approached any time soon. The 1982 Donruss set card #16 is not Jack’s rookie, but because of lower production it did \$208 in a PSA9 in

Lot#156. (Of the 546 PSA graded, 34 are 10’s which average \$2k). The 1971 Barratt & Co. “Famous Sportsman” card #6 is Nicklaus’ earlier and possibly “true” rookie as seen in Lot #35 in PSA8 (PHOTO 14) bringing \$1,466 (44 of the 379 cards graded by PSA are 9’s with no 10’s so expect \$12k in 9). Another highly collectable Nicklaus card is the 1973 Panini Campioni Dello Sport card #375 (with 4 of 111 cards being PSA10; expect \$4K) and in Lot #93 a 1979 Venorlandis Nicklaus card in PSA10 did \$257.

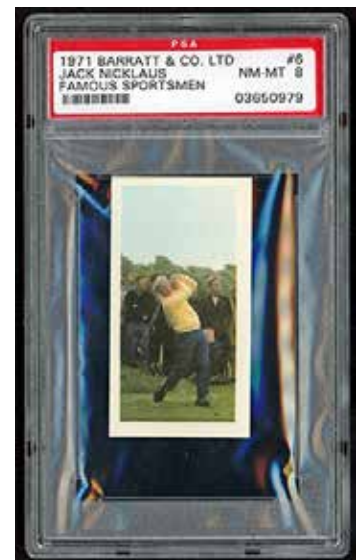


PHOTO 14



Arnold Palmer’s rookie is the 1965 Bancroft Tiddlers “Giants of Sport” (1926) hand Cut Card #26 which in Lot #24 in PSA8 did \$2,198 (PHOTO 15, above). Bobby Jones’ rookie is the Lambert & Butler Who’s Who in Sport (1926) card #2



PHOTO 16

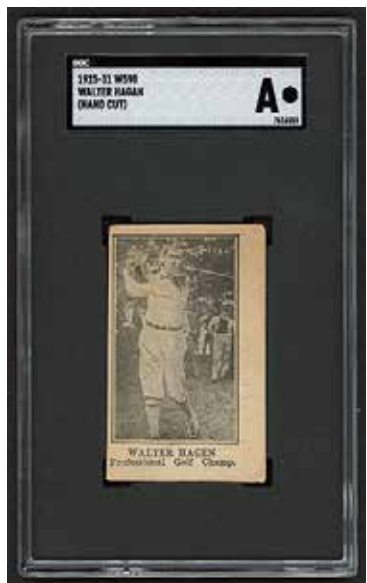


PHOTO 17



PHOTO 18



PHOTO 19

which sold in Lot #88 (PHOTO 16) in PSA4 for \$547 (of 330 such cards graded by PSA there are 56 4's but only one 10; expect \$40K for PSA9, \$7k for 8, \$3K for 7 and \$2k for 6). Outside of golf, the 1932 Caramel set of 32 cards of various sportsmen are very highly collected so the Jones Card #3, while not his rookie does \$100K in PSA9 with none higher, \$20K in 8, and \$8K in 7.

The other golfer in that set, Gene Sarazen, while not his rookie either, does \$30k in 9. Lot #87 is the 1925-31 W590 Walter Hagen rookie card -Hand Cut (only 36 have been graded by PSA, BGS and SGC combined with the highest a 4) with this card evaluated "Authentic" by SGC brought \$411 (PHOTO 17).

Since not all of those cards were produced in 1925, the attractive 1926 Spalding Champions cards of Hagen with similar rarity do \$4k in 9. There is also card #39 in the 1926 W512 group. Ben Hogan's rookie is the 1951 Berk Ross set Card #16 (PHOTO 18) with Lot #221 in PSA6 bringing \$276 (of the 101 cards graded by PSA the highest is an 8 with POP 11, expect \$3k).

The famous 1900 Copes set of 50 cards includes the rookie cards of Old Tom Morris (PHOTO 19) in Lot #45 in PSA4 doing \$5,064 and Young Tom in Lot #46 also in PSA4 for \$1,774. The remaining 48 slabbed cards sold in Lot #44 for \$8,972. While those lessor



PHOTO 20

cards individually might not justify that price, the full set makes quite an impression and can garner the owner a named spot on PSA's prestigious "Set Registry" listed in order by quality. Regarding modern cards, a "base" rookie card for Dustin Johnson is the 2012 SP Authentic Extended "Retail" with Lot #271 in PSA10 doing \$66. But Lot #107, his "Red" edition (PHOTO 20), with only ten numbered cards produced, did \$498 in PSA10 (POP4), which seems quite the deal.

PHOTOS

If you don't have any golf cards up your sleeve, maybe you have vintage photos that could do the trick. They too can be certified or slabbed, cataloged into populations and evaluated for "Type". *Type I* is a first generation photo from an original negative printed within two years of when the photo was taken. *Type II* is from an original negative but printed after two years. *Type III* is a second generation photo from a duplicate negative (created by taking a picture of the original photo) or is a wire transmission within two years. *Type IV* is a second generation or later and printed after two years.

Type I's tend to be sharp, may have old paper slug captions or date stampings on the back as many were created by Newspapers for their own use or as originals for secondary wirephoto's. It might be older than any date on the back as photos were reused. The evaluation compares the content with the stated date of use, any printing on the photo and slugs, sharpness, characteristics of the paper, etc. A wire photo might be quite sharp and have captions within the print or have attached paper slugs.

Regardless of Type, content is king. Lot#18 is a 6-by-8 Type I of Jones congratulating Horton Smith in the first Masters in 1934, bringing \$56,329 despite the notations



PHOTO 21

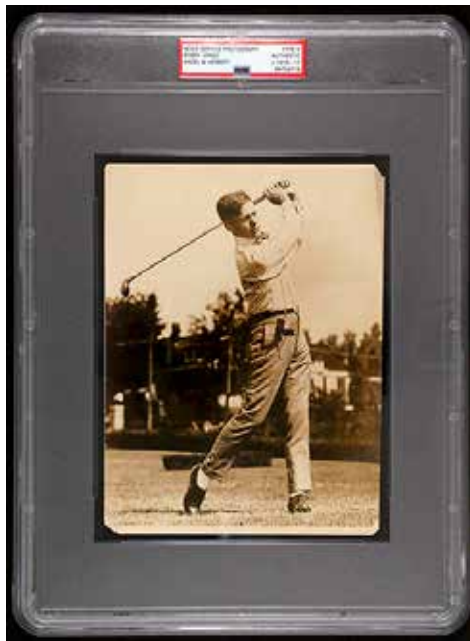


PHOTO 22



PHOTO 23

on the front (PHOTO 21). A Type I of Alister MacKenzie putting on the eighth green at Cypress Point went for \$8,156. A 3-by-5 snapshot of Jones teeing off on 1st hole at the Old Course during 1930 British Am went for \$7,415. But, Lot #136 of Jones teeing off in final round 1925 U.S. Amateur at Oakmont brought only \$282 as a Type III. Yet Lot #137, a 6-by-8 of Jones swinging at age 15 is also a Type III but did \$3,619 because there are so few photos of a younger Jones playing (PHOTO 22).

Nicklaus clutching the Claret Jug upon winning the 1978 Open was a Type I and brought \$498. A Type I press photo of Tom Watson at swing finish at an Open did \$120 while one of Mickelson at age 21 (PHOTO 23) watching his approach shot did \$240. A Type I of a 16-year-old Tiger competing in the 1992 Western Junior Amateur went for \$910.

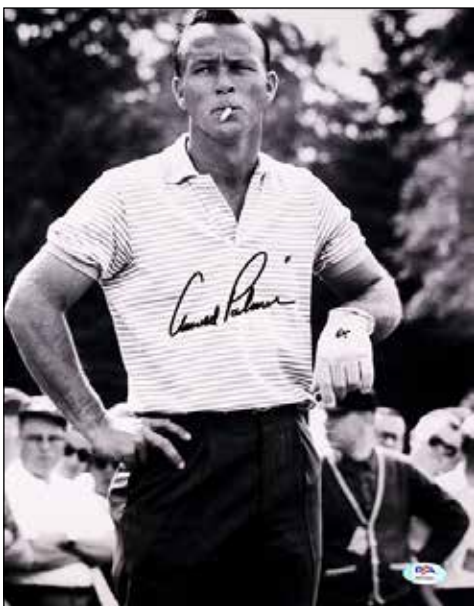


PHOTO 24

and a signed color photo of him kissing the PGA trophy in 2000 marked #6 of 100 offered by Upper Deck did \$1,212.

While a nice Type I photo of Arnie at the finish of his swing while prepping at Troon for the 1962 Open did \$498, Lot #246 of Arnie smoking in a serious

pose with hands on hips and signed (PHOTO 24) did \$3,619 un-slabbbed and ungraded; which might be quite the candidate for slabbing if it's also a Type I. Of course, collectors often prefer to display their photographs outside of slabs so photos can have affixed stickers and be removable from their encapsulation.

TICKETS AND BADGES

Early Masters tickets can bring 10's if not 100's of thousands of dollars (a 1934 paper ticket with signatures did \$600,000 last year). In recent years the 1961 Masters badge (first year of the plastic full week passes) has brought \$2-3,000, including one signed by the winner Gary Player. But the one in Lot #5, slabbbed as a PSA10 (PHOTO 25) sold for \$12,688. It may have gone for 1/3 of that price had it arrived un-slabbbed and judged to be less rare. A very rare 1930 U.S. Open full week ticket at Merion did \$7,649. I expected a bit higher for a slabbbed 1986 Masters badge at PSA8 going for \$802, given that the population of 8's is only three with only three others higher, but the POP numbers for recent submissions are necessarily lower at the start. A 1986 badge signed by Jack did \$2,767. A slabbbed 2015 Jordan Spieth-signed Master's badge brought \$828 with no others submitted thus far; the autograph portion only was rated a 10. A certified authentic



PHOTO 25

Mike Weir signature on a 2003 Master's badge did \$172.

Signed debut tickets are highly sought and at the pinnacle is the Tiger-signed 1992 LA Open ticket from his first PGA event. Lot #3 (PHOTO 26) is the highest grade of the three such tickets ever submitted to PSA and is exceptional compared to the lower graded ticket sold last year by Golden Age for \$105,000, yet it did "only" \$27,195. Maybe because there was one less mega buyer amongst only a few at this level after the first one sold, or like other sports items there has been some softening after recent peaks during the Covid lockdowns when it is surmised boredom had people spending more time with their collections and the state of the economy is now on the minds of many. Whether this is nearing a bubble or just a bump in the road on some individual items, certainly compared to just a few years ago, such tickets and cards are still at dizzying heights, and many golf items have largely been overlooked, especially photographs.

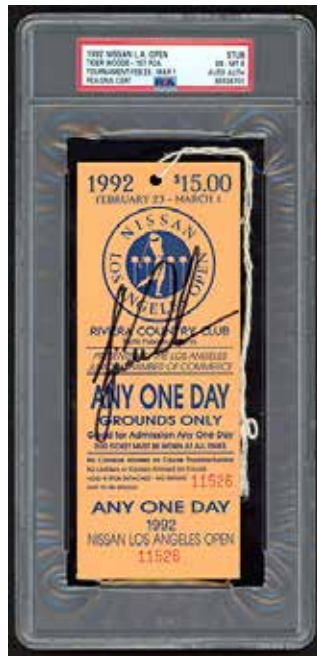


PHOTO 26



PHOTO 27

The Golf Auction

Recent auctions included numerous ticket lots and several vintage Type I photos including one of Jones surveying the construction grounds of Augusta for \$42,605. A nifty 34-inch tall Merion red wicker basket pin from the putting green did \$7,659 and Billy Casper's full size Ryder Cup "Captains" trophy brought \$32,201. But a supremely historic piece, which now resides at the USGA Museum, was the 1894 Runner-up medal awarded to C.B. MacDonald in what became an unofficial U.S. Amateur Championship that October after C.B. lost and complained that a true national championship requires an official governing body and standardized rules. The USGA was formed that December and C.B. went on to win the official U.S. Amateur Championship in 1895. (PHOTO 27)

Jeff Ellis Auctions

An unused W&J Gourlay featherball – \$16,685; Alex Patrick hand hammered gutta percha ball – \$2,015; 1895 Henley Union Jack ball – \$4,042;



PHOTO 28

a bronze ball mold for a mesh gutty – \$1,033; McEwan Baffing Spoon – \$3,112; 1893-6 Spalding transitional driver with earliest Baseball trademark (PHOTO 28) – \$1,592; Hackbarth forked hosel putter – \$425 and Ping Ballnamic 69 unused irons 2-SW – \$6,848 (PHOTO 29). In 1961 Karsten started making sets of cavity back irons by hand milling out twin cavities from the backs of usual forged clubheads. The offered lot is from the second run of 100 sets. Not only were these revolutionary cavity backs but they also had his double bent ballnamic shafts such that the grip aligns with the sweet spot of the face, an innovation that was soon banned.



PHOTO 29