



THE CLASSICS

From the classic era of clubmaking


By Bobby Grace

Four and a half decades ago when I first started hunting and trading for collectible classic clubs, I was fortunate to have a few mentors who were very well educated on these clubs and were very focused on the best items to collect. One of my best friends to this day, Bobby McKee from Clearwater, Fla., back in 1975 recommended that I focus only on drivers, wedges, and putters. He said that these were the Tour player's "Money Clubs." In other words the Tour players, mini-tour players and great amateurs all valued these clubs more than any others because they were clubs they grew very fond of and were usually irreplaceable. I used this knowledge to build a very successful business in the mid-1980s as did other well known collectors and dealers such as Randy Jensen, Bob Kent, Bobby Farino, R.H. Sykes, Jim Butler and a few others.

This is not to say a set of irons is not worth collecting. I saw an incredible set of 1969 Wilson Staff Bullet Backs from a fellow collector in California that definitely turned the prop on my beanie. These had "GEORGE ARCHER" stamped in the back of them and the sweet spot was literally worn out on almost every iron. If you know your Masters history, George Archer won the Masters in 1969, so that very set of irons was most definitely in his bag for that win. That's a gamechanger. Turns a regular set of irons into a museum piece and almost priceless.

Obviously I am very fond of putters and have personally owned more than 850 Wilson Palmers and over 500 original 8802s and have sold them to plenty of Tour players in the 1980s and 1990s.

A famous Tour player who loved putting with the Palmers and 8802s was Gary Koch, who was one of the best putters on Tour (20+ years with his Palmer). Others were Greg Norman, Ben Crenshaw, and Larry Mize, who won the Masters with his 8802.

In this and future columns I'll feature some of my favorite collectibles that I find worthy of stashing under the bed. 



6-SCREW M-85W EYE-O-MATIC. Wonderful example of these clubs, all original and very valuable to this day.



FAT LEATHER PADDLE GRIPS. Some beautiful examples of the original grips that come on the Wilson Palmers. Solid burgundy, burgundy w/ silver lining, solid brown. (Not shown is the most common black w/silver lining).



8802 A beautifully conditioned Wilson 1962-63 "Designed By Arnold Palmer" with original large leather paddle grip. Grade 9.8+

Bobby's Classic Club "Hot List"

The following clubs are very collectible in today's market.

Drivers

- 1) MacGregor M-85
- 2) Tommy Armour 945
- 3) Tommy Armour 693
- 4) Toney Penna MacGregor Eye-O-Matic woods
- 5) M-43
- 6) Tommy Armour Jumbo BJM & BJD
- 7) Ben Hogan MacGregor Tourney

Wedges

- 1) Wilson Staff 1955-1959 Black Button Sand Wedge
- 2) Walter Hagen Black Button 1956-1958 Sand Wedge
- 3) Wilson Leo Deigel Dot Punched Sand Iron
- 4) Wilson Johnny Revolta (Highlander & Championship) models
- 5) Wilson Gene Sarazen 283 Sand Iron
- 6) Wilson Denny Shute Sand Iron
- 7) R-90 Rounded Sole

Putters

- 1) Wilson (Designed By and Non Designed By) Arnold Palmer
- 2) Wilson 8802 with original Fat Paddle Leather Grip.
- 3) George Low Wizard 600 Bristol & Sportsman models
- 4) MacGregor Frank Sinatra 1963 Invitational Putters
- 5) Zebra adjustable early models (No Ram on them.)
- 6) Ping putters with Gary Player's signature on them.
- 7) Tony Lema Westerner
- 8) Ping Anser (KBI in Cavity) BeNi in the heel of the face.
- 9) Ping Redwood City originals
- 10) Tommy Armour (with other Pros names on them.)

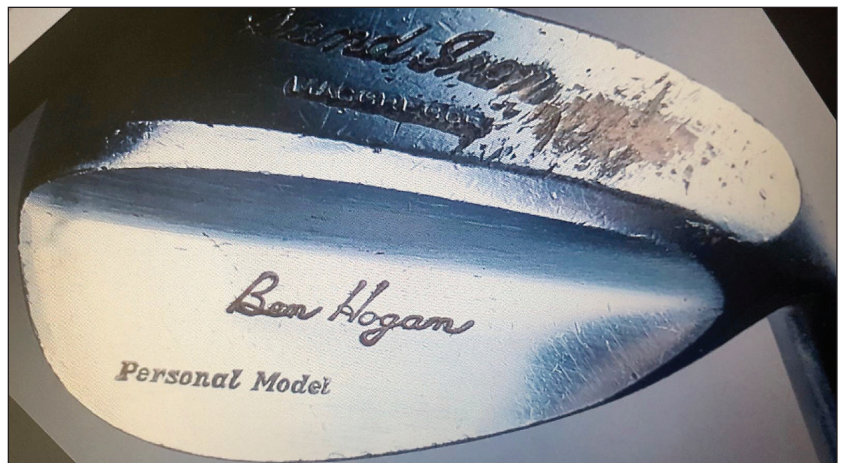
Bobby Grace is a putter designer and classic club collector. He and his wife, Ann, live in Highlands, N.C.



GEORGE LOW WIZARDS

One of the most widely sought after classic putters is the George Low Wizard 600 Bristol and Sportsman models that Jack Nicklaus made famous by winning most of his professional victories while using these. Every classic club collector on the globe was hunting high and low to get their hands on one. To this

day they still command big money. Pictured above, at left, is the ultra-rare George Low "Sideways Stamped" Sportsman Wizard 600. This was one of the very few prototype Sportsmans stamped sideways. Next to that club are three Bristol Wizard 600s, which are still sought after to this day.



BEN HOGAN'S OWN "PERSONAL MODEL" sand iron that sold at auction for thousands of dollars. In my opinion it's a priceless piece!