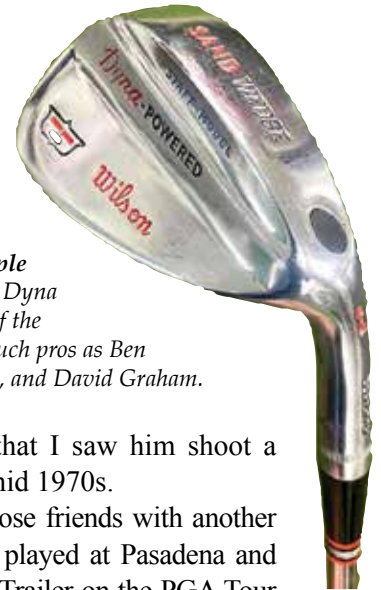




THE CLASSICS

From the classic era of clubmaking

By Bobby Grace

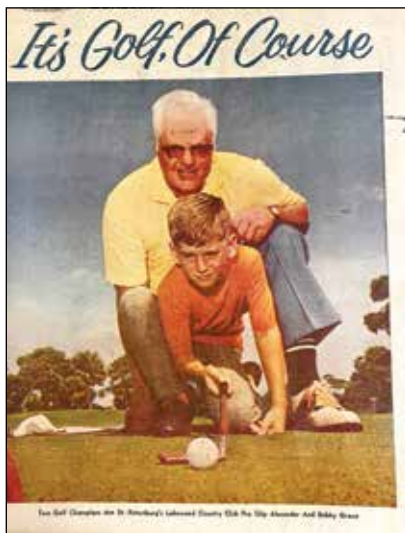


A near-perfect example of a 1958 Wilson Staff Dyna Powered sand wedge of the kind once favored by such pros as Ben Crenshaw, Andy Bean, and David Graham.

I have to start this article with where I grew up and how “Classic Clubs” found me. In 1960 my father built a home across the street from Pasadena Country Club in St. Petersburg, Fla., where I, the youngest of six kids, grew up. Pasadena CC, built in 1925, was the home of the longest continuous running PGA Tour event east of the Mississippi. Walter Hagen was Pasadena’s first professional.

My father, who was a member of the club, was a student of the game and a fine player. He won the Club Championship in 1956 and 1967 and beat some great players to do so.

I began to learn the game at age 7. My teacher was none other than Skip Alexander, a former Ryder Cup player. Under his expert and patient guidance, I became a tournament winner by the age of 9 and, at 13, became friends with well known Tour player Dick Mast, who practiced at Pasadena when not playing the Space Coast Mini-Tour events.



Learning from the best. A young Bobby Grace gets putting pointers from former Ryder Cup player Skip Alexander, his teacher at Lakewood Country Club in St. Petersburg, Fla. The photo dates to 1968.

Mast used a very strange, very old, sand iron I had never seen before: a dot punched R-20 from the mid 1930s. His wedge game was the quality of Lee Trevino’s, which is to say, like Houdini. I was able to spend a lot of time with Dick who was very generous with his time, especially to junior golfers who had an appetite for the game. I soon discovered that Dick was an expert on high quality golf clubs that were no longer in production. He played with a special set of Spalding Synchro-dyned Irons from the 1960s and a Deep Faced model 28 Spalding Driver (which he hit so well it was unreal). He also putted with a hard-to-find hickory shafted Otey Crisman mallet

A Gene Sarazen 283, the first sand wedge made with a big bounce for the bunker. It was the forerunner of the great wedges to come, such as the R-20 and R-90.



(stamped SELMA, ALA) that I saw him shoot a number of 63s with in the mid 1970s.

I soon met and became close friends with another very unusual character who played at Pasadena and worked on the True Temper Trailer on the PGA Tour – Dave Rennie. I could fill an entire book about Dave, but he was an expert at repair, re-grinding irons and wedges, and knew everything about every shaft made. The Tour players loved him!

“Rennie” lived a mile from my house, so I would ride my bike to his house and sit on a stool in his carport/shop to watch him work on old MacGregor Drivers owned by the likes of Greg Norman, David Graham, Ray Floyd, and many other famous players. I couldn’t believe my eyes as he explained how these woods were made in the 1950s and used to win all the Majors and other Tour events from the 50s through the 80s. Dave knew which club every Tour player played with and liked.

Before long, I became addicted to learning about these rare clubs so many good players were frantically searching for. By the time I was 15 I had been schooled by Andy Bean, David Graham and Ben Crenshaw on their favorite sand wedges (the 1956 and 1958 Wilson) at one of the Tour stops near our house. They told me they would buy every one they could find because it was one of the most important money clubs in their bags.

Their enthusiasm started me on a lifelong journey to locate and acquire as many classic gems as I could find. To this day it’s as fun to find a great club as it was when I was 15.

With this introduction, I plan to share a series of articles about classic clubs, along the way sharing my knowledge and passion with veterans and newbies alike.

Happy Hunting!

Bobby Grace’s putter designs, including the famous “Fat Lady” used by Nick Price, are known throughout the golfing world. His company, Bobby Grace Putter, innovated radial face inserts for putters. From his North Carolina studio he continues to fit amateurs and pros alike, all the while working on putter designs and materials. He and his wife, Ann, live in Highlands, N.C.

