

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Christie's 'Origins of Golf - The Jaime Ortiz-Patino Collection', 30 May 2012: Preview](#)

Lead

When I was a lowly employee of Sotheby's back in the early 1990s, one of my tasks was to travel north to Scotland to work on the annual sale of golfing memorabilia, writes Simon de Burton.

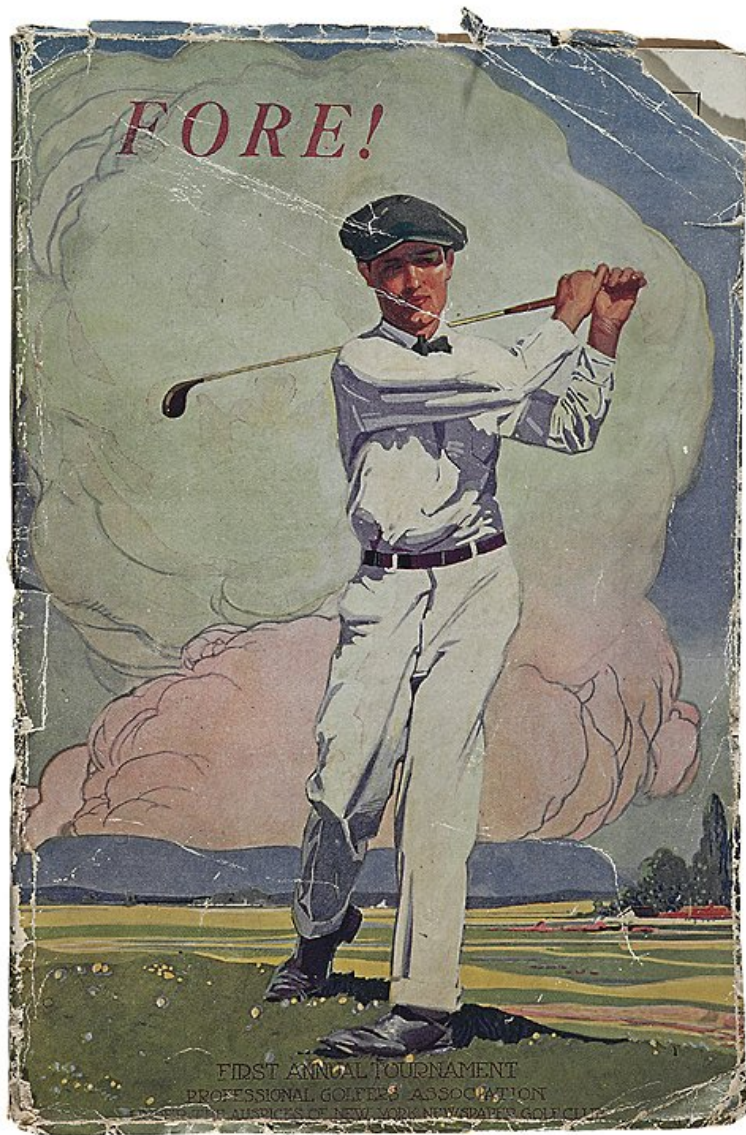
At the time, Sotheby's was a pioneer in the field and set numerous records for everything from feather-filled golf balls to blacksmith-made irons and early golfing paintings.

Invariably, one name would dominate the post-sale results lists at these golf auctions - that of Jaime Ortiz-Patino, the grandson of legendary tin magnate Simon Patino who, at the time of his death in 1947, was thought to have been among the five wealthiest men in the world.

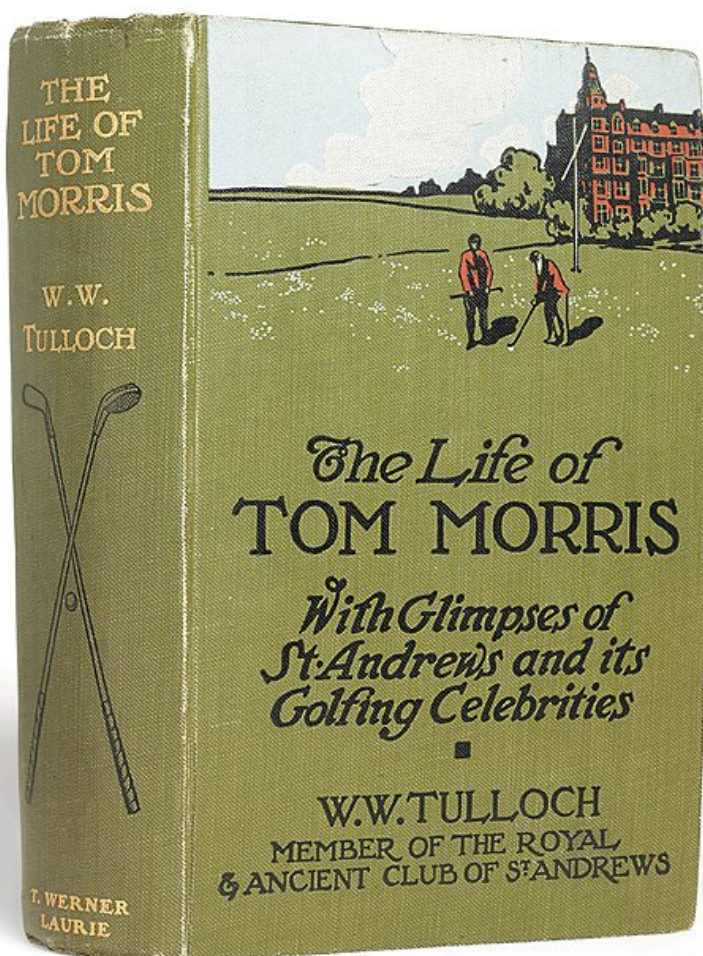
A Paris-born, Swiss-educated sophisticat with a love of golf, Ortiz-Patino bought Spain's Los Avos club in 1984 and created one of the game's greatest venues, renaming it Valderrama. And, once he had done that, Ortiz-Patino set about building his own private museum dedicated to the history of golf - hundreds of the finest and rarest objects, dating right back to the origins of the game in the 15th Century.







Now, auction house Christie's has been charged with disposing of the collection in a sale which is estimated to fetch in excess of '2 million. Highlights include Sir John Lavery's 'The Golf Course, North Berwick' which is alone tipped to realise '300,000; the preparatory oil sketch for probably the most famous golf painting in existence, 'The Golfers' by Charles Lees ('120,000 - 180,000) and a series of four pencil and grey wash images depicting important matches of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries by Michael Brown which could make '150,000 between them.





But it's the paraphernalia of the early game that really fascinates ' and this collection contains the best there is. An early 19th Century long-nosed 'scared head' putter used variously by the celebrated player Old Tom Morris and his sons Jimmy and 'Young' Tom is among several clubs set to fetch upwards of '70,000, others being a 300-year-old, blacksmith-made 'square toe iron' ('80,000 - 120,000) and a similarly ancient putter with a fruitwood shaft that is thought to be the one shown in an 1812 mezzotint of leading golfer Henry Callender.

Among many rare, feather-filled balls is a 1790 example marked with its maker's name and worth '15,000, while an even more remarkable gutta-percha example ' inscribed 'a new kind of golf ball... made in the year 1849' could draw up to '18,000. Elsewhere, the collection contains everything from Dutch Delft tiles showing golfers, ancient manuscripts bearing early references to the game, ceramics with a golfing bent and ephemera about the royal and ancient game that ranges from an ultra-rare invitation to the inaugural 1934 Masters tournament in Augusta ('6,000 - 8,000) to Thomas Mathison's 1793 work 'The Goff ' an Heroi-Comical Poem in Three Cantos'.

A description that could well be applied to my own attempts at tackling 18 holes...

'Origins of Golf' ' The Jaime Ortiz-Patino Collection.
Christie's, King Street, London SW1.
May 30, on view from May 19.

Photos: Christie's

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