

Playing hickory in the Old World

When Dr. Michael Hurdzan goes to Scotland or Ireland he plays with wooden-shafted clubs. Why?

"It's my way of gently protesting that you don't have to have [expensive] graphite-shafted clubs. You can enjoy the game with whatever equipment you have.

"Secondly, it gives me that feel of what links golf was all about. A lot of times I play with

a reproduction gutty ball. When I played St. Andrews I played one hole with a real 1890s gutty. It allows me to relate to what golf was like at that period of time. Wooden shafts were popular until the '30s."

Playing with wooden-shafted clubs, Hurdzan said, is "a different brand of golf. You don't hit the ball as far. You have to be a lot more accurate. You have to learn to keep the ball down."

Hurdzan Collection

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"As it ended up, they probably both came out of Mac's own library. *Golf in America* has his signature and personal stamp in it." And the value of *Scotland's Gift* today? "A thousand dollars."

• Then there's a little paperback written by Robert Trent Jones Sr. The booklet was to be auctioned and Hurdzan wanted it so badly he bid \$95. "The auction results came out and I didn't get it. I was stunned." A friend who bid \$225 himself told Hurdzan it had sold for \$375. A short time

later, Hurdzan received a packet in the mail from architect Roger Rulewich, who had ripped a page of one of Hurdzan's books while photocopying. The packet contained the Jones book — signed by Jones and by Rulewich, who wrote: "For someone who collects rare treasures from the history of golf from someone who only manages to destroy them."

• In the realm of clubs, Hurdzan has many sets, but perhaps none as special as the wooden-shafted set made by George Nichols Co. in Scotland. While in Scotland, he visited the Nichols company and asked an old clubmaker about his

clubs. The man couldn't believe a set still existed intact, but when Hurdzan showed them to him, the clubmaker "broke down and cried," Hurdzan said. "He remembered those particular clubs."

• There is a world of clay pipes — you know, the kind you see the old Irishmen smoke in "The Quiet Man." Hurdzan found one, with crossed golf clubs, in a flea market in Columbus, priced at \$15. He bought it and later discovered it's worth about \$2,100 because the end isn't broken.

• Then there's the rare Braille Book for Golf, printed 1935.

• The greatest treasure of all is a Rembrandt print, *The Cloven Player*, sometimes called *The Golf Player*. Circa 1660, it is a second-state printing of a man golfing.

Club-fitting and teaching devices, scores of wood-shafted clubs ("I would buy any wood-shafted club for \$10. I've got thousands of clubs I've bought for \$5."), club buttons dating to the 1700s, an array of unique clubs — Hurdzan has them all.

"Among new items, I usually look for something that's not going to be on the market long — that I know is weird, or so ridiculous it won't be around long," he said, "like the putter with a level on it, which you can hide with a shutter. How many of those will sell? Not many. But my son 50 years from now will have an oddity."

On the one hand, Hurdzan said, "I've overdone it here. I collect everything. There isn't anything on the market that I wouldn't try to get some of." But on the other hand, "I get dupes to trade, but I never sell anything."

Hurdzan laments that golf collecting has become a business, and, today it is "buyer beware."

"A lot of people now are in it for the money, unfortunately," he said. "When I started, it was just collectors. And it was inexpensive. You could amass these things. A book like this that I bought for \$50 is now \$600 or \$700. And, not only is it a business, but there are forgeries. You have to be very careful."

His advice for collectors beginning today? "You have to decide: Are you collecting as an investment, or for something that you love. If it's for something you love, pick what you like — if it's books, stick with books. Then isolate yourself to instruction books, architecture books, travel books, whatever."

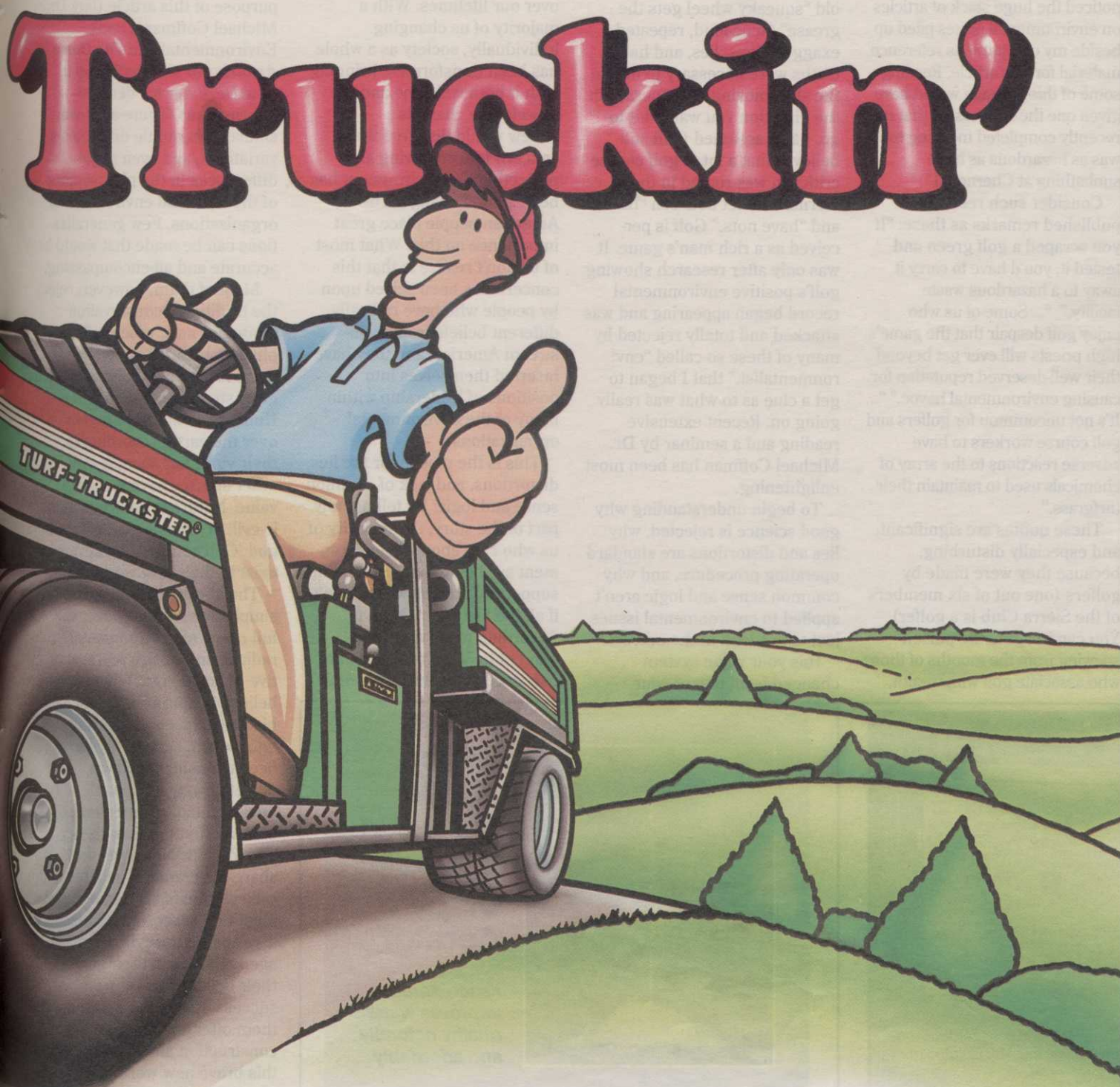
Other advice:

• Least expensively, a person can collect bag tags, pencils, tees, scorecards, balls, glassware.

• "I try to get the patterns to the golf clubs."

• "When I started out, if I could buy two second editions versus one first edition, I would buy the second editions. In retrospect, I should have bought the first editions."

• Join the Golf Collectors Society, which has regional and national meetings. "There are tables and tables of things for sale or trade. They have regional meetings as well."



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