

## MOVERS & SHAKERS PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS GALLOW



### THE PASSION AND THE PEN

TIM O'CONNOR

He possesses an elaborate filter 'twixt mind and tongue, a rare trait among sports media more wont to share their "expert" opinions with anyone within earshot. And he moves about with an unharried pace and placid demeanour that have likely contributed to a face belying his 48 years. It's those characteristics that have helped endear Tim O'Connor to a host of legendary figures, from rock star Peter Gabriel to golf legend Moe Norman.

President of O'Connor Media, whose client list includes ClubLink and Nike Golf, the Rockwood resident is public relations consultant and an award-winning scribe with two books to his credit: *The Feeling of Greatness: The Moe Norman Story* (see p. 39), and *The Ladies' 1924-1999: A History of the Ladies' Golf Club of Toronto*.

The past president of the International Network of Golf, an association of about 800 members of the North American golf media and industry, and a member of the Golf Writers Association of America since

1989, O'Connor has been published in a host of major periodicals, including *Golf Digest*, *Golf*, *Links* and *Golf Canada*.

So thorough is the level of immersion in his golfing heritage that one suspects O'Connor took his bride, Sandy Halloran, just to keep the Irish bloodlines pure.

"I started caddying at Sunnyside, in London, at about age 10," he recalls. "My dad, who was a good, avid player, would drop me off at the caddyshack. When I got older, I got asked to caddy in the club championships. I'd also caddy for my dad in tournaments—that was when I really started to get juiced about golf."

By the time he was 16, however, music had consumed O'Connor, who played electric bass guitar in basement bands. "They were good bands," he contends, "but there were always these personnel issues. I took a year off school with this one group. We were rehearsing five nights a week and were ready to go out on tour when our drummer disappeared. It was like Spinal Tap. So we went to

the police. Turned out he was wanted on a bunch of counts of breaking and entering. That's when I knew my rock 'n roll career was over. I think my biggest gigs were playing for a polka band. I wore these pink and silver shirts."

O'Connor's editorial prowess, though, got him the role of music editor—and eventually editor-in-chief—with Western University's student newspaper, a job he later parlayed into a stint with Canadian Press, interviewing the likes of Robert Plant. But the obsession soon turned back to golf, and O'Connor's appetite for it became voracious.

"John Gordon gave me my lead into the golf business," O'Connor notes. "When he got the job at *Score* magazine as a managing editor, he knew I could write and that I liked golf. My first article was with Ben Kern and his chiropractor Peter McKay. The story was about how to swing without putting your back out. For the cover, we worked with this medical illustrator, but it ended up looking like a naked golfer in Saran Wrap. It was horrid—quite the start for my first article as a golf writer!"

Nonetheless, O'Connor's reputation continued to grow, sparked in large part by the success of his Moe Norman project. "The book was really well-received by golf professionals. It made me feel good because there were so many myths and embellishments about Moe.

"[Teaching professional] Mark Evershed first introduced me. That's how I gained Moe's trust—by being introduced by someone whom Moe himself trusted."

O'Connor has always had the knack for discovering what makes someone tick, whether it was legendary pro Ben Kern ("a phenomenal guy to spend time with"), whom O'Connor worked with on a number of projects, including the student guides and instructors' manuals for the RCGA's Future Links program, or Mike Weir. "By talking about kids, I was able to get a sense of what Mike's true priorities really are. At Tour Q-school, he kept a baby bib in his pocket. When he started to feel a little nervous, he'd put his hand in, feel the bib, and would remember what's really important."

O'Connor seems to have that same perspective on life. It's what makes him a better writer, and a better person.

TED MCINTYRE ○