

## The O'Connor Clan

*"For oft when in O'Connor's van to triumph dashed each Connacht clan".*



Mention Galway Golf Club and in the same breath is the name O'Connor. They are synonymous. Just as the exploits of the O'Connor clan in golf are renowned around the world, so too is their birthplace where they learned to play the game.

The name Christy O'Connor is steeped in the legend of golf in Galway as perpetrated through the ready deeds of father figure Christy Sm. and proudly carried on through nephews Christy Jnr., Eugene, Frank and Sean. While the last-named three have carved their own niche on the resident club side of the game, it is through their playing standards that the famous Christy Sm. and Jnr. are revered.

Christy Jnr. readily acknowledges the influence his famous uncle has had on his career. "He is the biggest single influence in my golfing life. I will forever be in his debt. He taught me everything. I dream of being as good as my uncle. . . . but I know I will never be better", he says appreciatively.

That, in turn, Christy Sm. is proud of "the nephew" was borne out in a moving public gesture when Christy Jnr. sank the final putt to win the Irish Open. Waiting in the wings to acknowledge the effort was the uncle with a bottle of champagne to mark the family occasion.

Christy Sm. was born within a wedge shot of the seventh tee. He recalls his early life vividly. The son of a small farmer and one of a large family, he says: "Life was tough in those days and to help out I used to caddy at the

Galway Club. In between rounds I spent hours on end chipping and putting around the first green. In time I became a fanatic. When I eventually turned to golf to try and make a decent living I knew I was a fair old player. But I never imagined that my life would be all about big tournaments, traveling the world and winning money. There were not enough hours in the day for me to practice my golf. But it was all worthwhile".

To win regularly in the cut throat business of pro golf a player must be able to stand up to constant pressure in any type of situation and weather. The swing must never lose its rhythm and that is precisely what has stood to O'Connor ever since his younger years in Galway where he built it through endless hours of practice.

As well as his long-lasting, repetitive swing, O'Connor is driven by determination. Although the mounting years have obviously taken their toll, he can continue to win big money in a game now dominated by professionals much less than half his age, because, for all his success and the trappings that go with it, he has somehow never lost his competitive spirit."

"I come from a modest background", he explains. "This has given me an appreciation of the value of money. You could say I'm the classic example of the I hungry fighter. I've certainly had some very successful times but I remember the lean times as well" he adds. Apart from playing in major tournaments Christy Jnr. is currently recognized as one of the leading golf designers in the country. His greatest achievement to date has been the construction of the Galway Bay course across the bay in Oranmore. He is one of the most popular competitors in the professional field, a warm and friendly personality that is added to by his quite expert facility to play the accordion and spoons!

Christy Sm. has not yet, publicly at any rate, revealed a musical talent. Suffice to say he allows his golf to make the music - and what a sweet tune he plays!



*Christy O'Connor Junior*

That "graceful, beautiful and rhythmic swing" has itself the serenity and impact of a fine musical score.

### **CHRISTY O'CONNOR Sm. Tournament Victories**

1955 Swallow Penfold	1967 Carrolls International
1956 Dunlop Masters, Spalding Tournament	1968 Gallagher Ulster Open; Alcan International
1957 News of the World P.G.A. Matchplay	1969 Gallagher Ulster Open 1970 John Player Classic
1959 Daks Tournament, Dunlop Masters	1972 Carrolls International
1960 Irish Hospitals Tour, Ballantine Tour	1976 P.G.A. Seniors; World Seniors
1961 Carling Caledonian	1977 P.G.A. Seniors; World Seniors
1962 Irish Hospitals	1979 P.G.A. Seniors
1963 Martini International	1981 P.G.A. Seniors
1964 Martini, Jeyes Tour, Carrolls International	1982 P.G.A. Seniors
1965 Senior Service	1983 P.G.A. Seniors.
1966 Gallagher Ulster Open; Carrolls International	

### **CHRISTY O'CONNOR Jnr. Tournament Victories**

1974 Zambian Open  
1975 Carrons International  
1975 Martini International  
1989 Jersey Open  
1992 British Masters  
1976, 1978 Winner with E. Darcy of Sumrie Better Ban  
Tournament.

### **OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

3 Carrons Matchplay Championships  
2 Irish Dunlop Tournaments  
2 Hennessy Cup  
3 Dunhill Cup appearances in 1985, 1989, 1992  
6 World Cup appearances - 1974, 1975, 1978, 1985, 1989, 1992  
Lowest score in Benson and Hedges (63) and Grange G.C (61)  
1976 and 1983 Winner of Braid-Taylor medal  
Winner of Tooting Bec Cup in Royal St. George in 1985  
First Irish Professional to play in U.S.A. Masters and in Johnny  
Walker Tournament.  
2 Ryder Cup appearances in 1975 and 1989. In '89 his famous  
second shot to the 18th green enabled Europe to retain the Ryder  
Cup.



*Dermot Faller and Kevin Wallace at the presentation of prizes, 1960.*

### **OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

Holder of a record 10 successive Ryder Cup appearances from 1955 to 1973.  
10 Irish Professional Championships.  
7 Irish Dunlop Tournaments  
15 World Cup (Canada Cup) appearances between 1956 and 1975.

Winner of the Tooting Bec Cup for the lowest single round in the British Open - 1961 Royal Birkdale (67),  
1963 Royal Lytham (68), 1969 Royal Lytham (65).