



52

Sir Sean Connery and Ian Caldwell

Sir Sean Connery is one of the most instantly recognisable stars on the planet: eternally famous for his signature role as James Bond and one of the first people you think of when the term ‘celebrity golfer’ is mentioned. In short, he loves his golf. However, it may come as a surprise to learn that he had little interest in the game before his epic clash with the infamous *Goldfinger* – probably the most famous match in the history of golf. US golfers are well aware of the legendary battles in golf’s folklore: Vardon vs Taylor, Hogan vs Snead and Nicklaus vs Watson.

If quizzed, however, much of the general public would probably think of Bond vs *Goldfinger*: a contest seen by tens of millions of people.

Shortly before filming *Goldfinger* he told his dentist, Ian Caldwell, who was at the time English Amateur Champion, that he had to learn to play golf for the latest film in the James Bond series. Ian had recently secured his first National Title by winning the English Amateur Championship after working on his swing

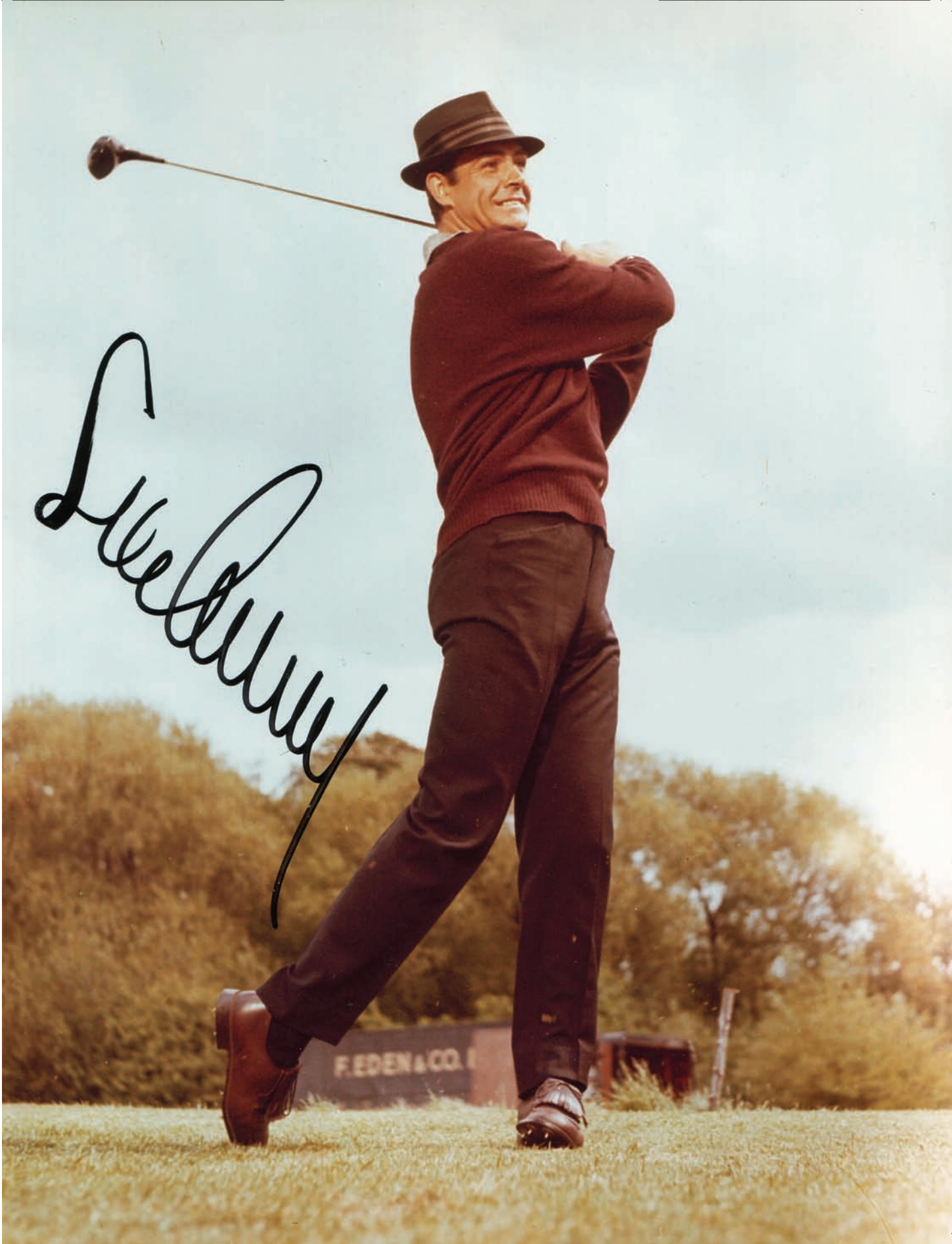
with Leslie King. He had tried other teachers without success and they had never given him the necessary technical push to win an amateur ‘major’. He told Sean that the only man who could make him look a convincing golfer was the man who had finally helped Ian achieve his own personal ambition.

Ian popped into the School recently with his son, now also a regular, and a fine +2 golfer. He told us of his Amateur Championship and his recollection of the final holes of a nerve-jangling afternoon.

Coming up the 15th hole, Ian had a four-hole lead and was dormy four. All he had to do was keep his nerve and the English Amateur Championship was his. Unfortunately, keeping his nerve was not easy. He lost the 15th, lost the 16th and then he lost the 17th. He couldn’t hit one decent shot. He slashed at his drive, tried to manipulate his approach shots and yipped his putts.

He needed at least a half at the 18th to win. After a nervous drive and half hit iron, he faced an 80-yard pitch, which





Lee Trevino





he had to hit stone dead if he was to fulfil his dreams. As he approached the ball, he asked himself what he could do and replied, "I'm now going to be in the Golf School. I am standing on the mat and Mr King is teaching me, telling me just to concentrate on the swing and not to worry about the ball, just make a movement through it and not try and hit it." He made the most excellent of swings and the ball finished six inches from the cup. The title was his.

Forty years later, we still can't think of a better mental approach when faced with any golf shot, especially a high-pressure shot. Think of Frenchman Jean Van der Velde at the 1999 Open. If his mental approach had been the same as Ian's, he would have gone

down in history as a winner of the most prestigious title in golf.

Sir Sean Connery continued seeing Leslie King long after the completion of *Goldfinger*. He became an avid golfer and, in later years, bought his wife and son in for lessons. We haven't seen Sean for over thirty years. However, a short while ago a young woman resident of Barbados came in for a series of lessons. As is the norm we asked her who recommended her and she told us it was Sean Connery.

Coincidentally, *Goldfinger* was filmed at Stoke Park, a lovely parkland course in Buckinghamshire which has been our sister club for the past fifteen years. It is where we take our students to fine-tune their swings and the first place we take our beginners to hit their first outdoor shots.





53

Bob Toski

In the mid-1990s, shortly before Leslie King died, we were contacted by a representative of legendary American golf coach, Bob Toski.

He told us that Bob would soon be making his first-ever trip to the British Isles and that the one person he would be most honoured to meet above the Queen or the Prime Minister, would be Leslie King.

Unfortunately, due to Mr King's ill health, he was unable to meet Bob, but we did, and spent an afternoon in Surrey watching him teach.

We had a long chat with him and he told us how much he admired and respected Leslie King. He also found it fascinating that two similar teaching philosophies had grown up entirely independently on either side of the Atlantic.

Jim Flick is another teacher of legendary status and a close associate of Bob's and they have worked extensively together over the years. Jim is also a fan of Leslie King and with technology making the world a smaller place, we frequently see him on our TV screens extolling the virtues of our old master's teaching.

He particularly admired Mr King's instance on training and perfecting a controlled shape through the finish and

often refers to how Leslie King built Juli Inkster's swing from front to back!

Sadly, Mr King never did meet either Bob or Jim but we are grateful for their tributes and acknowledgements to the work of Leslie King.

