The American public is fundamentally sports-minded. Americans like to play, to go places and watch sports events, and to read about them. There's more attention paid to spectator sports because of the ease of sitting but the most intense interest in any spectator or participant sport is shown by those who are proficient at the sport.

Interest in a sport increases in direct proportion to proficiency. The pro sees that in noticing that his lower handicap players play more than the high handicap golfers. The golf clubs certainly learned in the years closely following the 1929 depression that golf interest and proficiency were closely related. The low handicap golfers, despite their financial set-backs, found some way to retain club membership. The higher handicap golfers quit the clubs and gave up the game.

Although this basic fact of the direct relationship between golfing proficiency and financial soundness of the golf club is constantly in evidence nothing of consequence has been done to apply the fact. The average of all golfers' scores is higher than 95 and it is certain that the 95 golfer can't be considered to be getting full advantage of his golf club regardless of his enjoyment of the bar, the restaurant and companionship.

Lesson Basis Is Obsolete

It isn't the pros' fault that the average scoring is so high. The pro, when he gets a chance, takes athletically inept older people and when an instruction program is kept, brings them down into the mid-80's. This is an amazing achievement considering the awkwardness of most of his adult students.

The fundamental reason for lack of proficiency of golf club members is an obsolete basis of pro-member instruction relations. The same old system of lesson booking and payment by individuals which was in effect when professional golf started still prevails. That is the fault of directors of golf clubs. They haven't thought about making their clubs sounder by increasing the golfing proficiency of the club's members.

There is an urgent need of stimulating interest in the membership of country clubs with ideas to get more members interested in golf and the other related activities and facilities of the club.

Prospective golfers have been accustomed for many years to sign up for either a series of lessons or to take lessons singly, but, all in all, most golfers spend very little for golf instruction. However, when a member is inspired to take lessons, there is every probability that he will not only purchase golf clubs and other golfing accessories, but, also, because he is spending more time at the club, he will make use of the dining room facilities. All of this builds up his house account much more than the member who is not as active.

Directors can easily determine which club members are active — those who take lessons and play golf — and strike an average of their monthly accounts; then compare it with the average account of the inactive members. This will show the Board how many thousands of dollars the club has lost in revenue due to the lack of a good golf instruction program for the entire membership.

A "Club" with 8000 Members

In the practice fairway business, my plan was to get the golfers to use and enjoy our facilities by giving them personalized attention, and by using a simple, understandable method of instruction. The result was that my fairways grew in size and in volume of business, until it necessitated employing six other golf professionals to assist me to serve some 8,000 golfers who were listed with us. If this can be accomplished at a practice fairway, surely it can be more easily done at a country club where there is a closer relationship between the club members and the golf pro.

A golf pro who can arouse enthusiasm among the members is worth real money to his club, and some of the best jobs
in this country are held by golf pros who rarely have time to play competitive 
golf, but who do outstanding promotional 
jobs at their clubs.

Lessons for Every Member

My suggestion is this: If a nominal fee 
was added to each member's bill for golf 
instruction, entitling him to a given num-
ber of lessons for the season, it would 
mean that the golf pro would receive a 
minimum fee from golf instruction alone, 
and require him to employ a better staff 
than he usually has been able to afford 
in the past. At the same time this would 
increase the percentage of active golfers, 
and would result in a more active use 
of the club by more members. Is it not, 
therefore, reasonable to assume that the 
monthly accounts would increase?

There are very few clubs who at first 
would be willing to operate in this man-
ner, because in most cases the clubs are 
trying to get by as cheaply as possible. 
But as George May advertises: “You've 
got to spend money to make money.” You 
would not, in this case, be spending the 
club's money, but would be giving the 
member something for which he joined 
the club in the first place, and encourage 
him to take advantage of golf instruc-
tions for which he has already paid. Also, 
you as the Board of Directors will be 
making every effort to see that the mem-
bers get their money’s worth, besides 
creating a situation for your help where-
by they will work from the heart and 
pocket-book and not from the clock.

George May has done an outstanding 
job at the Tam O'Shanter CC, and gives 
his members as much per dollar spent 
as at any club I know of. This is partic-
ularly noteworthy when it is remembered 
that he took over the club when it was 
practically bankrupt, and built it up to 
where, among other things, it stages the 
largest tournaments held anywhere. This 
was all done by careful planning, and 
by spending money to make money. But 
even George at his club with an out-
standing pro instructor, Bill Gordon, has a 
multitude of high handicap golfers who 
can't be considered fixed assets.

No doubt most of you read the financial 
pages of the newspapers from day to day, 
and have learned that competition is 
again here in the business world. Don’t 
think for one moment that your club 
won't have stiff competition with other 
restaurants and places of entertainment, 
and with other sports. While one sport 
will advertise for your member to be a 
spectator, another will appeal to him to 
participate, and they will spend thou-
ands of dollars in an effort to get him 
to patronize them. The golf industry must 
be right in the middle of this group, 
getting more people to play and to use 
its facilities, if it is to meet the tough 
competition offered by other sports and 
amusements.

Golf as a business depends on teach-
ing people to acquire a skill that is na-
tural to comparatively few young men 
and women. In no other sport is the ele-
ment of instruction as important to the 
business phase of the sport as it is in 
golf. And as long as golf clubs continue 
to allow the lesson situation to be handled 
in an out-grown manner the clubs will 
be exposed to abrupt changes of member-
ship and financial condition.

I learned that in switching from club 
pro jobs to successful operation of golf 
ranges where I quickly saw that I'd have 
to develop steady and increasing patronage 
through instruction or go broke. I didn't 
go broke by a long way, simply because 
I applied the same principles of business 
promotion and increasing customer in-
terest and proficiency that golf clubs 
should have applied long ago.

Iowa Short Course Scheduled 
at Ames, March 14-16

The Fifteenth annual Iowa Short Course 
and Conference for greenkeepers is sched-
uled to meet at Iowa State College at Ames, 
March 14-16. Speakers for the program 
will include noted educators including Drs. 
Fred Grau, Dir., USGA Green Section and 
O. J. Noer, Milwaukee. A feature of the 
conference will be a question box at the 
beginning of each session. A printed list 
of questions will be compiled in advance 
from those sent in by greenkeepers prior 
to the meeting.

Sessions will start at 1:00 pm. Topics 
will include discussion of the following: 
fertilizers for fairways, greens and other 
turf areas; the latest information on fun-
gicide experiments; watering; aeration; ma-
achinery; and DDT and other insecticide 
developments.

H. L. Lantz, Head of Pomology Subsec-
tion at State College, handling arrange-
ments for the conference, anticipates an 
attendance of more than 150 from six 
states. Inquiries concerning meeting and 
sessions should be forwarded to him.