First Year As Pro Demands

Careful Planning

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Among golf pros, it is generally acknowledged that the first year as the head pro is the most important one they ever have. This is the proving ground, the indoctrination to full responsibility, with its resultant pressures and strains. It is here that the young pro must immediately establish himself and lay the ground work for the career in golf which he hopes will ultimately lead to a lasting satisfaction and secure, prosperous future. The steps to be taken in gaining a permanent berth in golf are many and varied. There is no iron-clad, rigid method to follow. It varies with the individual, the club and the members whose actions and interests must be analyzed, before a tentative program may be charted.

With these things in mind I am reviewing here the conditions which lead to my being accepted as pro at the Skaneateles (N.Y.) CC and the subsequent period wherein I encountered certain basic problems which a pro must deal with, and the procedures used to cope with them.

In February, 1949, I learned that the Skaneateles job was open. I knew it to be a nine-hole course with about 300 members and from my past experiences as assistant I felt I was qualified to handle the job, so I applied for it and was accepted. I had been the assistant to my father at the Bellevue CC; also had been assistant at the Atlantic City CC and the Baltimore CC and from the teachings I received from each of these positions I hopefully went forward in my new job. I felt that the teachings I had received from my father gave me an advantage over most young pros, as it gave me a more complete knowledge of the numerous conditions to be met.

I was fortunate in getting off to an excellent start at the Skaneateles club. The pro shop was brand new and the club gave me a great deal of leeway in making suggestions for the development of the facilities. My first move upon taking over at the club shortly after before the season opened was to set up a complete summer tournament schedule, in conjunction with the tournament committee. This included sweepstakes each week-end, a member-guest tournament, a club championship, a handicap tournament and home-and-home matches with clubs in the vicinity. The ladies had a similar schedule with exception of the week-end sweepstakes. I also instituted an A and B classification for the ladies forming a nine and an 18-hole division.

Studies Demand Carefully

In stocking my shop, I carried only premium quality merchandise, ordering in fairly small quantities until I could evaluate the strength of demand. The books were checked regularly to keep an accurate account of sales, and inventory was restricted to enable me to retain sufficient working capital and still provide a wide variety of merchandise for the members. A word of caution here to aspiring assistant pros who will soon become head professionals: care must be used in purchasing equipment, to avoid acquiring items which are short-time fads, and fail to move after the initial buying interest has lagged.

My bookkeeping system was very simple. I instituted a double set of books—one cash and the other charge. The latter was used to carry the trade account plan which I had arranged for the members. Each morning, to facilitate an exact account of my stock I put the same number of balls, tees, caps, socks, etc. in the showcase. In the evening I tallied these items, entering the number sold and their value. Floor merchandise, such as clubs, bags and umbrellas, was entered on a daily sales report and at each week's end, I computed the overall amount of merchandise sold. In this way, I was able to foretell accurately my replacement needs from one day to the next and to make a fluid adjustment as it became necessary. By checking my sales in this manner I was able to carry a small, but complete, stock.

I adhered to a rigid shop schedule. My assistant and I were at the shop at about 8 o'clock each morning. Our day lasted until the last player had left the course. Many of the shop duties were intrusted to my assistant who proved a capable aid. By careful detailing of our tasks we worked in close harmony with each other. Clubs were cleaned on the same day they were used. I made it a policy to remain in the shop until all the clubs used that day
were cleaned irrespective of how late it would be till the chore was completed. Clubs which were in need of repair were placed on the work-bench and we usually had all repairs completed by 11:00 the following day.

Sets Lesson Program

I usually gave lessons in the morning or evening. The afternoons were left open to make myself available to the particular needs of the members. I gave no lessons on Saturday or Sunday as I spent both of these days on the first tee starting the players. I remained there between 11:00 and 2:00 on Saturday and from 8:30 to 10:00 on Sunday as the concentration of players starting is the greatest at these hours. Concerning lesson promotion: I utilized several methods to stimulate interest. One program established involved children between eight and 14 years old. As part of a supervised children’s program for athletic recreation, lessons were given three times a week free of charge to these children. This served as a strong attraction to many parents who ordinarily might have overlooked the advantages to be derived from personal instruction. After observing the rapid progress made by the youngsters, a large number of parents took lessons. I greatly encouraged the junior members from 18-22 to take a stronger interest in improving their games. At every opportunity I took an active part in helping these young people to develop their shot-making ability. This also seemed to attract the older people to the need for lessons.

I played very little golf, as I was busy with lessons and course maintenance. However, when I did play, I made it a point to play with a different group of members each time. By doing this I was able to play at least one round of golf with each of the members before the season was over. Consequently I was successful in dividing my time with each of the club members in fairly equal amounts.

Week-end sweepstakes were one form of sales promotion which I used. A seasonal fee was charged each member and various merchandise was distributed as prizes. About once a month putting contests were held for the children and I would give the winners suitable prizes. This seemed to attract the older members to buy their golf supplies from the shop.

Since my duties as professional did not encompass greenkeeping, I was not responsible for the course maintenance. However, I worked in close contact with the green committee, offering suggestions when requested and doing whatever I could to help keep the course in the best possible playing conditions. I spent several hours each week with the greenkeeper discussing with him various improvements from the golfers’ viewpoint, such as placing of cups, position of tee markers, trimming of branches, etc. By taking interest in course activities beyond his normal scope and availing himself of the friendly and expert help of the greenkeeper, the young pro builds a firm foundation of good will with the club members. Diligent attention to such details as I have cited is repaid ten-fold by the re-

UNDER SHELTERING PALM

Sixteenth green at new Alondra Park CC with a palm as a hazard in the green. This new 18 in Los Angeles (Calif.) County was leased to private operators, Sims, Hollingsworth, Horell and Price who supplied money the county didn’t have for constructing another course.
MEMO to
the Chairman,
Entertainment
Committee:
Yours for the asking—a headliner for your
next club party

* * *

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compliance with his employment, when a
sudden dip of a wheel into a rut or hole
flung him from the machine, and caused
him permanent injury.

His parents, in his behalf, sought com-
ensation for the injury under the state
Workman's Compensation Law. The club's
employment of the boy was illegal under
another state law; and since it is a gen-
eral principle of law that parties to an
illegal contract cannot benefit from it in
the courts, the decision in this case de-
nied the right of either the boy or his
parents to obtain compensation at the ex-
 pense of the golf club.

Officials of country clubs and other
golf courses may note that the law does
not compel them to come within the
operation of Workmen's Compensation
Laws. The general plan and procedure
by which they subject themselves to such
laws are outlined in detail by the statutes
creating them. The chief feature is the
consent of the management filed with the
Commission or Board, accompanied by
payment into the insurance fund of the
amounts specified, or obtaining insurance
policies, or giving bond, according to the
requirements of the particular statutes of
the respective states.

On the other side of the picture, if they
do not bring themselves within the pro-
visions of these laws, and happen to be
sued by employees for accidental injur-
ies arising out of the employment and as a
consequence of it, the law will deprive
them of their common law right to defend
on the ground, either that the employee
assumed the risk, was guilty of contribu-
tory negligence, or was barred under the
fellow-servant doctrine. That is the pen-
alty for not shielding themselves by com-
plying with the provisions of the
Workmen's Compensation Laws.

FIRST YEAR AS PRO
(Continued from page 66)

gard the new pro is held by those people
whose opinions he values most, his club
members and his associates in working
for the club.

I wish to stress that though well
coached by my father, I gained im-
measurably from my experiences while at
the Baltimore and the Atlantic City CC
and if every young pro will, while he is
still an assistant, work hard, study the
business and learn to organize the pro
shop, he will someday obtain and hold an
excellent club job. As a final word, I wish
to mention that young pros should have
no intention of participating in other than
regional tournaments during the season
until well established at his club, unless
by full understanding and consent of club
officials regarding the National Open
and the PGA.