



GOLF SCORES: NO GENERATION GAP

Last year the handicap scores of 31,098 members of the Chicago District Golf Assn. clubs averaged between 91 and 92.

A golf magazine in 1900 estimated that more than 90 per cent of American golfers scored higher than 90.

So, after 72 years, millions of golf lessons, better playing equipment and course conditions and the Professional Golfers' Assn. of America's concern with instruction, one has to ask why more progress hasn't been made in the scoring of millions of golfers who pay for playing the game and who pay others for specializing in playing golf.

The PGA should be giving a lot of serious thought to this matter instead of being overly concerned about where 25 per cent of its members might play at low prices and at preferred starting times in Florida during January and February.

CDGA figures should be typical of private club averages nationwide, except perhaps in the South and Southwest where the climate permits more play, hence better scores.

What is the average score of the largest group of golfers—the pay-play golfers? Who knows? Our somewhat educated guess would be that it is higher than that of private course players.

The average scores of the tournament professionals, who specialize in playing golf, have shown tremendous improvement in 72 years.

What's the difference?

To over-simplify: The ordinary amateurs are "taught." The experts "learn." Pro golf instruction hasn't yet discovered how to teach pupils how to learn to teach them-

selves. The secret of success of every respected golf teacher whom I've known in more than 40 years covering the golfing scene is that they all teach the pupil to teach himself or herself.

The CDGA handicap figures have immense significance to professionals who want to be good teachers: CDGA handicaps are: Class A, up to 12, 8021; Class B, 13 to 18, 9557; Class C, 19 to 24, 7901, and Class D, 25 to 36, 5619.

The breakdown by clubs is very interesting and deserves more study by competent, thoughtful members of the Illinois PGA than it probably will get.

The present habit of giving half-hour lessons is obsolete, ineffective and unsatisfactory for pupils and clubs and is not doing any good to the able professionals with reputations as instructors.

If you couldn't lift your glass at the club bar, and a doctor was called in to examine you, he wouldn't need a half hour to figure out that your arm was broken. A golf professional, likewise, doesn't need a half hour to tell any normal pupil how to work out the cure for slicing, hooking or topping.

Too much of that half-hour lesson time is wasted in confusing the pupil or in not showing him the way to self improvement. That situation isn't the professional's fault. He has inherited an ineffectual system, and neither the professional nor his club seems to be able to break loose and give value to the pupil.

Look at the small, diminishing lesson revenue in February's GOLFDOM, in the Marketing and Survey issue (p. 68), then do some thinking.

Shinnecock Hills GC at Southampton, N.Y., was the first golf club in the United States in which

the golf course and clubhouse involved extensive planning and expense. It was incorporated on September 22, 1891.

So, September 22, 1891, is the recorded date of the birth of the business of golf in the United States. Earlier dates in this country record golf as a game, not as the beginning of a gigantic business.

In the past few months in this the 82d year of American golf business, there has been news that clearly indicates drastic changes ahead. If your career and money are invested in the golf business, you had better regard thoughtfully the significance of these changes, although some of them may seem at first to be merely routine.

For instance, you might think seriously about MacGregor Hunter's resignation as professional at the Riviera CC in suburban Los Angeles Pacific Palisades after 23 years. This isn't just another pro job change. Hunter becomes golf consultant for his employers, the executives of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, who see big changes coming in club business.

Hunter has been averaging more than one-third of a million dollars a year for 10 years in pro shop sales at Riviera.

Hunter's views make sense. He now is 43, having been born into the golf business. His father, Willie, 1921 British Amateur champion, became Riviera's professional, and his sons began learning golf there as members of the junior classes.

Hunter's mother, his wife and a charming and competent woman, whose name escapes me, did one of the earliest, biggest and most attractive jobs I ever saw of merchandising women's and men's apparel in a pro shop. Their work was so profitable, it quickly had

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nationwide influence.

Hunter says that the Riviera shop was so successful he could hardly spend time playing golf with or teaching members. He had done well playing in tournaments as an amateur and professional, then began making so much money in clothes that he was losing his identity as a golf professional.

Hunter says that pro shops got big in soft goods selling while the department stores were sleeping, but now the picture is changing and

shortly there will have to be drastic changes in pro shop apparel selling to beat the store competition.

With his useful background as an official of the Southern California PGA, Hunter is the local opposition to one of the PGA's most persistent demands: that of complete shop concessions for the professional. Hunter maintains that this policy is an archaic element that should be and could be replaced by an attractive and rewarding salary and bonus plan. This would enable the profession-

al to develop a program that draws and serves more members better and allows him to attend to what should be his specialized area of business. Hunter declares that the shop concession is the reason why too many professionals have bad credit ratings. These fellows have been caught in a losing struggle of trying to finance what actually is club business, he says. He asserts that private golf clubs generally do not look realistically at their businesses and throw away money by having \$30,000 a year chefs cook hamburgers.

Slow play is getting to be deadly at private clubs, Hunter says, and for a reason I haven't heard before. Tournament-paced golf takes up more time than a harried business executive or his company can afford during the week. Hunter says that one of the urgent, important ideas a club professional has to put over to his pupils, men and women, is to play faster golf. But how is a professional going to do that when he can make more money selling ready-to-wear apparel?

Inevitably there will be a violent shake up in the Tournament Players Division pattern. The satellite or minor league circuit unhappily came too early to Houston with a \$405,000 purse—\$41,000 in first prize money—and with very few exceptions a field that couldn't attract a gallery the size of the gate between a couple of dull baseball clubs. No wonder Jimmy Demaret and Jackie Burke, heavily interested in the Champions GC at Houston, don't want the Houston Open at their course. The TPD can't guarantee a first-class field at a tournament any more than the Tournament Bureau of the PGA could. Even the \$500,000 World Open at Pinehurst next fall, isn't sure of an all-star showing. What power does the TPD have to improve conditions for sponsors who work hard and get hurt? There'd better be a satisfactory answer soon or the Golden Days of the journey-men pros will be over. □

CORRECTION

Apologies to champion long hitter of the '30s, *Jimmy Thomson*, for the mis-spelling in the May issue (page 6) of his well-known name.

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