



# HERB GRAFFIS

SWINGING AROUND GOLF

## DO SUPERINTENDENTS PLAY ENOUGH GOLF?

A golf professional whom I regard as a first-class businessman made me wonder about that question when he said that he wished he could play at least a round a week with the club's superintendent.

This professional is a veteran. He was a caddie in the days when many courses were managed by pro-greenkeepers. He knows that there is more play when the condition of the course is good. Then shop sales are better. The old pro says, "With all the improvements in machinery and materials, the superintendent's job is tougher than it used to be. Now most golfers expect the course to be perfect always, but from the divots, ball dents and cigarette butts on greens and bottles, cans and packages that are tossed around, I am afraid that there are too many golfers who don't appreciate that they, too, are responsible for the condition of the course.

"Our superintendent is one of the finest young men I've ever known in golf. He works day and night. He's worth every penny the club pays him. I can't imagine any man on his job knowing grass and landscaping better than he. But he's got plenty to learn about golfers. And how can he learn that? He's too busy worrying and working on grass to learn about the needs of golfers of whom he is one and typical: overworked, worried and needing the escape golf can give.

"I know what he's up against. It's my trouble, too. I have too many things to do before I can play golf and be reminded of what golfers are up against."

If every superintendent and professional at every course would play a round a week of golf, they would know what should be done to make the course a more pleasant playground.

What the superintendent, professional, club officials and members need is a golf course that's a nursery for golfers before it's a nursery for grass.

I had to laugh when the old pro concluded, "What am I dreaming about, playing with my friend who runs the course when I don't even have enough time to play with the members I should play with at least once a year? This is a job with a hell of a lot of simple problems that are hard to solve."

There are a lot of lessons the golf business can learn from the tennis boom.

The first is that members will pay a good price for what they want at a good club.

Those tennis schools that involve tutoring, playing and living expense, charge \$90 a day and have all the pupils their pros can handle. Yet, in the opinion of country club management, tennis usually is a deficit operation for the club, because tennis players don't yield profitable bar and restaurant volumes.

Recently the graphite shaft phenomenon has surprised officials. Golfers will spend the money for something they want. Professionals have been amazed at seeing graphite-shafted drivers, costing more than \$100, showing up in bags of players who haven't bought clubs in years.

One professional told me last winter, "What worries me is that my club doesn't know how to use what I know about golf."

That statement shocked me. Mac Hunter, whose wonderfully helpful father I'd known previously, told me he was switching from a fine job at the Riviera CC to be in a consulting business and direct sales of a graphite shaft company, because he didn't feel that, as a club professional, he was doing the good that he knew he could do for golf and his club and golfers.

A couple of fellows in the shop were asking about lessons. My friend said, "There is the book. There are 41 lessons ahead. I really wish I could take care of you right now, but I have to tend the store and sell balls and shirts. Then I have to make out the tickets for cars and guests, assign starting times and set things for our ladies' tournament next Tuesday, tease a member into buying the new clubs he ought to have instead of the museum relics he has and settle a rules argument while my assistant is at lunch."

Hunter went on, "This is the sort of situation common at many pro shops. It makes me believe completely that you are right in what you've been writing about the old half-hour lesson being out-grown. In most of the lessons I have booked, I would do better for my pupils and the club and myself in a few minutes by showing the pupils how to teach himself.

"I've never had to spend much time really teaching golf, except to show the pupil how to learn a few simple things. Then I allow him to work it out for himself.

"If my club and I could figure out sensible use of my time on the lesson tee, we would have more good golfers."

When the National Golf Foundation

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hired Don Rossi to run its show, subject to the policies and budgets of its directors, golf business was very lucky. That has been proved.

Rossi had been a high school and college athlete, coach and official. He has been a successful salesman of golf and other sporting goods. He has done, unquestionably, the best job of directing and conducting a military physical conditioning and athletic recreation program since George Washington ordered his troops to stand in a circle and kick each other in the fanny with blanketed feet to keep from freezing at Valley Forge.

Rossi was early and loud in recognizing that golf has a dual nature, as a golf and as a business. The shy ones, sometimes, have suggested that Rossi is too forceful, but none of his bosses nor anyone else in the golf business has questioned his quality as one hell of a strong team player who looks and works for a big, bright tomorrow in golf business.

Rossi got his National Golf Foundation staff together early this year for a look at the golf business of today and

tomorrow. It probably was the most significant event in the business phase of golf. To a reporter who sees golf as surging over from the toy department into business and social and general news pages, the program that Rossi's staff presented had many important stories.

Certainly not the least important to professional golf was the survey on golf education by Lorraine Abbott.

It must be a shock to male professionals to learn that Ms. Abbott gets around to more golf instructors than any other golf teacher. She gets around to many seminars run by the golf physical educators at colleges and universities. About 65 per cent of private club lessons are given to women. The collegiate division between boys and girls is about 50-50.

Ms. Abbott reported at the Golf Foundation's annual round-up of golf business that there'd better be far more accent on golf learning than on golf instruction. The instructor has not modernized his or her methods to make the pupil the responsible party in the lesson, with the teacher supplying a few basics from which the command of

pretty fair golf technique could be worked out. The male professionals long have known that effective golf instruction is about 80 per cent learning and 20 per cent instruction, but haven't been able to modernize the technique or shake away from the obsolete half-hour lesson.

The National Golf Foundation is planning to update its classic film of the elementals of golf. It has been seen by six million people. It is the primer. It's being changed because the dress fashions have changed.

The foundation's primer on golf is a book that has sold 400,000 copies in its present edition. In the original giveaway, the dime and quarter edition, the book had the world's largest circulation of any sport instruction book—725,000.

Modernizing the script of the golf instruction film may or may not be historic in sports.

Where is the genius to do this job?

Golf has been looking for him for about 70 years, ever since the playing lesson went out of use because golf club professionals didn't have enough time for it. □

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