



HERB GRAFFIS

SWINGING AROUND GOLF

GOLF PRO OF THE YEAR: AN UNHERALDED AWARD

What is the most difficult of all sporting awards to win? What award is given for distinguished service to the most exacting of all sports fans? What award can be won only by a super-star competing with 5,000 stars? What is not only the hardest to win, but the least known of all awards in professional sports?

The answer is easy: The award is the PGA Golf Professional of the Year Bob Harlow trophy.

This year's winner, *Warren F. Smith*, is professional at the Cherry Hills CC of Englewood, Colo., a Denver suburb at which several national

championships have been played.

Ralph Guldahl, Vic Gezzi and Arnold Palmer, all known to the enduring fame of record books, won championships at Cherry Hills before Smith became the professional there. The late Rip Arnold was Smith's predecessor.

The playing champions all accomplished historic feats with much less work, strain and worry than Smith has on his job at Cherry Hills. Walter Hagen, the man who put tournament professionals into Big Business, told me that the reason he quit being a club professional and became a tournament specialist was because tourna-

ment play was much easier work.

The golfing public has not been propagandized to appreciate that the Golf Professional of the Year award is by a long way the most difficult achievement among the multitude of awards in professional and amateur sports. There are about 800 pro football players, approximately 600 major league baseball players, maybe 300 collegiate football players and a few hundred pro and collegiate basketball players to choose among for awards by juries of coaches and sports writers.

The PGA Golf Pro of the Year award is made from among 5,000 home professionals who are screened by their peers in 37 sections of the PGA and a group from the PGA Advisory Committee, which includes a dozen highly respected members of golf clubs. No other professional sport has a keenly interested advisory board of similar capability, who are more ardently devoted to the best interests of their sport.

The Golf Professional of the Year must be a man who has shown exceptional ability and unselfish service to his club members and their families, his community and his profession.

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Left:

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Center:

MANHATTAN PERENNIAL RYEGRASS

Right:

KENTUCKY BLUE GRASS



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In those three areas, every home professional is expected to serve exceedingly well. The PGA has established that standard.

There are 11 million golfers who would gladly hail the Golf Professional of the Year, but many of them never have been educated by the PGA to be aware that they are one group of fans who are getting something besides bunion on their fannies for what they pay professional athletes.

The old order is changing among intelligent sports fans and foresighted writers.

I heard the song of the new dawn the other day at my own club when a member said, "You talk about what fine boys these pro millionaires are, but they've never done a thing for me. I'll stay with my own pro. He gives me free tees."

One of the brightest, soundest business women in golf told me she had recently attended a meeting of club professionals.

"They were sedately dressed, carried attache cases and were quite solemn and coldly businesslike. They

had little to say about golf itself. They were in contrast with the pros before them, who acted as if they were very happy to be working at passing along the fun of golf."

I was shocked at learning that this keen young woman had seen sharply what I had only felt. That great old idea about golf being fun—the idea that made the game and the business—is wilting.

Tournament pro golf is getting near to being just another trade. If a plumber should get \$45,000 for four day's work, he would seriously damage the image of tourney golf.

The home professionals are suffering, or at least risking, the loss of a glorious asset—the fun of golf.

The money began to drop seriously out of the lesson business when lessons ceased being fun. The PGA teaching programs got to be as deadly as performances in surgical amphitheatres. The teachers talked to teachers and the pupil became a second thought. It still was fun to take a lesson from the old timers and a few of the younger men who realized that golf was supposed to be fun.

Pro shops have the Lord & Taylor, Neiman-Marcus air, and do a volume up to \$500,000 a year.

That's wonderful, but what fun is it to members? I've never seen a cash register laugh.

It could be that what the smart, young businesswoman saw about the businesslike professionals now might be the key to a lot of the troubles of private clubs; people apparently have forgotten that the big idea of golf is fun.

Joe Dey certainly has earned his money in his five years as Commissioner of the Tournament Players' Division of the PGA.

In the first year Dey was with the PGA, he was worth to the journeymen all he got in his five years.

The fact is that when Dey came into the TPD, the golfing public and the home professionals were well fed up with the tournament players.

Unappeasable complaints came from the vocal minority of the tournament professionals who talked a tough game. After all, tournament golf had been made and mainly supported by the unpaid work of many thousands of amateurs, who conducted tournaments

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as tax-exempt operations for charities, boys' clubs and other welfare outfits. These people were getting more irritated than the home pros with the attitude of journeyman professionals asking for easier living and more money. The men and women amateurs who were the main supports of the tournament circuit and a basic reason for the TV deals, observed that the journeymen professionals were getting more money out of the tournaments than the causes under whose sponsorship the events were being played.

A more pleasant bunch of pro sports personalities never had been involved in such an unpleasant situation. The PGA had given virtual autonomy to the tournament group which comprised about 3 per cent of the association's membership. Yet the tournament committee never had been able to run its business satisfactorily to players and sponsors.

By 1965 it became obvious that pro golf was two businesses: the service and market development business of the home pros and the show business of the journeyman pros.

Hence it was decided that it would

be better if the current journeymen split away from the PGA and a new, competing circuit was formed by the PGA. Baseball has benefitted by two leagues, so had pro football. Why not pro golf with an ample number of able and magnetic kid golfers coming out of colleges?

So, as early as 1965, the troubles of tournament golf had reached the stage of getting into print. The tournament situation was so thoroughly screwed-up inside and outside, that journeymen and home pros and sports writers were wondering who'd come up with the answer. The first answer suggested was the name of John Dey, for 34 years the United States Golf Assn. executive secretary.

After Dey was mentioned as the possible Answer Man for the tournament golf dilemma, some said Joe wouldn't take the job because he had dignity, serenity and a comfortable, if not opulent, salary with the USGA.

Then in 1968 the split came in the PGA, and the tournament players desperately needed a name to give them face again. Palmer, who was the most publicized pro since Walter Hagen, had

been mentioned too often as a millionaire to qualify him as friend of the people.

Then the PGA civil war reached the point where lawyers for both sides took over. So for dignity and good name, Dey was offered enough salary and fringes to get him to leave the USGA.

Dey was the lucky and smart Big Difference for the tournament players. He got them back in good standing with the golfers who have money, power and influence.

The tournament circuit now operates just as it did in the pre-Dey days. The problems of sponsors, scheduling and the dangers of unsavory elements intruding haven't changed much. The prize money, considering the increase in golfers and inflation and favoring tax laws, hasn't increased. The international competition of tournaments and the exploitation by pro star management who are in golf only for the money are still serious and growing problems.

Only Joe Dey has been the big difference. Sure enough, Dey was the name the journeymen pros needed. □



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