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HERB GRAFFIS

SWINGING AROUND GOLF

THE VALUE OF A PRO

What is a golf professional worth to his employer?

The answer, generally, is, "Whatever he can make out of his job." That, usually, isn't the businesslike answer.

I've seen cases in which the answer should be corrected to, "About what the club is worth," because during World War II, there were country clubs that were kept alive through the work of their professionals.

I've seen other cases in which the professional has been a liability to his club.

One of the many bright examples of a professional's high value to his club was told to me by a friend. He had been considering buying a home in Southern California for retirement or as a winter residence.

He said, "My wife and I played golf at many attractive places. At a dozen spots we had friends who formerly had lived around Chicago. Something went bad with my game, and I was losing interest in golf and in Southern California. When a game goes from bad to terrible, winter is winter anywhere."

"My wife kept shopping around. Finally, we rented a place at Rancho Bernardo, without much enthusiasm on my part.

"Then, bored and disgusted with my golf, I thought I'd kill some time by taking a few lessons. I went to Bob Gutwein, the Rancho Bernardo pro.

"He watched me hit a few shots. He said, 'When you get home, have your pro get you clubs with more flexible shafts. You've outgrown these. Those springier shafts will put the life in your swing that your muscles haven't got anymore.'

"Gutwein wouldn't sell me the clubs he recommended. He laughed and said, 'Your pro has been waiting long enough for this sale.'

"Gutwein showed me how to teach myself the body turn I needed to get me really hitting shots again. He is one of those pros who teaches you how to teach yourself.

"The Rancho Bernardo scenery and its course and everything about the place began looking good to me."

My friend remarked, "You can tell anybody that Bob Gutwein gives fine golf lessons. They should be great. They cost me the price of a lot and a house at Rancho Bernardo."

Here's an instance that shows how much a pro is worth to his club.

Early returns, to the highly satisfying extent of 25 per cent of the questionnaires mailed, indicate that the National Golf Foundation's survey of golf facilities and their use will be immensely valuable as a marketing guide.

Don Rossi, the foundation's executive director, knew from his experience as a golf salesman that marketing statistics urgently needed up-dating. His directors emphatically agreed. Lack of an authentic scorecard of the golf market was penalizing buyers and sellers. Judging from the returns to the initial questionnaire, the executives of golf clubs and fee courses also are very interested in learning the correct score of amount and location of golf play.

An impressive, but not at all unexpected fact, is that the returns to date have been from the more efficiently operated facilities. They have their figures readily available.

It's no news to anyone who's been around in the business that a lot of clubs and pay-play course officials have only the vaguest idea of how the business stands.

Several years ago, GOLFDOM suggested that those professionals whose responsibilities and work at clubs went beyond the conventional, be known as golf directors. We've been surprised at the way the term has caught on and

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happy at the excellent choices of men holding these posts. Among the latest to be named is Les Frisinger at Quail Ridge, a large resort community north of Golf, Fla. Les is president of the Florida Section PGA. He began as a caddie in Defiance, Ohio, and was pro at Cocoa-Rockledge (Fla.) CC, then at Jacaranda CC in Ft. Lauderdale. Superintendent at Quail Ridge is another star, Fred Dickson. Joe Lee designed the course.

If you think caddying is rapidly vanishing because of the prevalence of the golf car you will be corrected by learning that applications for caddie scholarships are rising in number. The Western GA alone with its Evans Caddie scholarships has 868 young men in 29 universities nationwide. The Par Club, composed of golfers contributing \$100 or more a year toward the scholarships, has 6,089 members. There are many thousands of golf club and fee course golfers who contribute \$5 a year or more.

Alex Radko of the United States Golf Assn. Green Section and Fred V. Grau, who once was the working

head of that most useful organization, smile at references to The Forgotten Man in course maintenance.

They figure it's about time something is said about The Forgotten Woman in golf maintenance history.

That lady is Fanny Fern Davis, who worked on the development of 2-4-D in 1943 and 1944. She was with the Green Section and, I believe, with the Department of Agriculture. Other researchers patented the material, and it was marketed first in 1945. It revolutionized golf course and lawn maintenance by its control of broad-leaved weeds.

Pro shop sales made a great recovery in 1973 despite bad weather in many areas of the country the first half of the year.

Talk about graphite shafted clubs is credited with helping boost club sales by getting many golfers to realize how old their clubs are. Graphite shaft prices, though, make steel-shafted top line clubs look like bargains.

Professionals didn't hold onto apparel, which wasn't selling. They converted their stock into cash with some profit made by cutting prices.

Inventories were so well cleared that Ernie Sabayrac at his company's annual sales meeting reported that booking of 1974 business on August 31 was 10 times what it had been the same day the previous year. Increase was partially accounted for by salesmen starting two weeks earlier than in 1972.

In the new year on new jobs: "Dutch" Hood as professional, Amelia Island Plantation (Fla.) Links from Greenville (S.C.) CC . . . Sam Adams to pro job at Huntington Hills CC, Spartanburg, S.C., from CC of Spartanburg . . . Johnny Bulla, professional at Pagosa Springs (Colo.) GC new nine.

Joseph P. Tonetti, retires as manager of Somerset Club, Boston, to be food manager consultant. He will make his headquarters at Torrington, Conn. He is a successful veteran manager, having been at Mohawk GC, Schenectady, N.Y., New Haven CC at Hamden, Conn., Cavalier Beach Club, Virginia Beach CC among others.

Bob Erickson is now professional at Royal Palm Yacht CC, Boca Raton, Fla., from pro-superintendent post at CC of Orangeburg, S.C. □

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