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HERB GRAFFIS

SWINGING AROUND GOLF

Wasteful too often; smart too late; usual story: I have a hunch private golf clubs are going to adjust to the recession and inflation quicker than they realized. Clubs have conquered these troubles in previous periods of worry. The clubs are comparing notes on a realistic basis and making corrections. They are heeding the warning signals.

At a Chicago District Golf Assn. meeting last fall, L. B. Calamaras of the Ridgemoor Country Club, reporting for the membership committee said of the 49 clubs submitting data, 1,568 members below the authorized quota were recorded. This meant a shortage of about 32 members per club and the deficit in expected revenue at these clubs for a year was over \$5 1/2 million.

Naturally there was discussion. There were 250 persons at the meeting. They talked frankly. It was admitted the tendency of private golf clubs was to over-extend themselves with unnecessary spending and needless improvements. Isn't that often the case? David McNish, a southern banker and experienced as director of several golf clubs, not long ago noted in GOLFDOM that the sort of accurate and helpful market survey a business would regard as highly valuable could be made easily at a golf club, but it appeared difficult to get club officials to heed the obvious business directives of such a survey. The situation with a lot of golf clubs is that they are so plainly over-extended that tightening without eliminating constructive expense should not be too difficult.

Sales good for pros who made themselves Santa Claus: Reports indicate that pro shop Christmas sales were better than expected. The explanation is simple — the pros and their assistants worked harder on golf Christmas gift selling.

Sales of clubs apparently in-

involved much more trade-ins than customary for years. Several pros said high school and college boys provide a quick market for the trade-ins and were traders themselves. The profit per set of woods or irons was cut but overall the revenue was satisfactory.

Green Section welcomes girls: The USGA's Green Section possibly is sport's most important public service body. Its research in extending the use of grass for ornamental and utilitarian purposes as well as for all outdoor sport has been and continues to be a major factor in the beautification of the United States. Through its Mid-Atlantic, Mid-Continent, Western Southern and Eastern offices, its nationwide contacts with turfgrass experts at state agricultural colleges and experiment stations and because of its visiting service to golf clubs, the Green Section certainly knows golf and golfers.

So when Elbert S. Jemison, Jr., chairman of the USGA Green Section, announced the annual award for distinguished service to golf through work with turfgrass was being given to Fanny Fern Davis there was significance in the action. The award meant the Green Section recognizes the high importance of women in the modern management of golf courses. Gone are the days when the womens' tees can be tossed in any spot ahead of mens' tees, when the superintendent has his whole force working on the course and testing sprinklers on Ladies' Days. Past also is the time when the divots on ladies' tees and their approach areas are about the last places to get attention from the course staff.

In giving Mrs. Davis the recognition long due her, the Green Section signals that women will soon begin to get a voice in the management of golf clubs. Fanny Fern Davis, the

little lost sister of golf course business who came to glory at the USGA annual meeting in New York, was the bright young scientist who came to the Green Section from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture when John Monteith, Jr., Fred Grau and other Green Section men went into military service. There they brought the Green Section know-how to quickly getting grass on airfields and keeping down dust which was causing deadly accidents and seriously reducing engine life. The Green Section men had many other answers the armed forces urgently needed.

Mrs. Davis kept the Green Section operating, serving golf courses and military installations. Her research figured in the development of chemical weed controls that drastically altered golf course maintenance methods and immensely improved the appearance and playing quality of golf courses.

Taylor and team tell of year's tournaments: Congratulations and thanks to Dick Taylor for an entertaining and informative collection of golf tournaments articles. Dick assembled the lively prose and excellent color photos of the year's major tournament performances under the title "The World of Golf 1974" taking the material that had appeared in *Golf World*, which he edits. It is a great book for the golf tournament fan. The price is \$9.75. The publisher is *Golf World*, Box 2000, Southern Pines, N.C. 28387.

What's replacing the caddie replacements: Now that golf has become the largest games business in the United States, do not ever forget that it was the caddies who really made golf the country's national game. All the master merchandising minds we have in golf business, the billion of dollars in golf properties and annual revenue and expenses, would not be here without caddies.

Pioneer Scottish pros in the United States were the most inspired business geniuses sport has ever had. There had been many a cow pasture golf courses over here — playgrounds of Scottish immigrants like the Apple Tree Gang — but golf really never got established in the United States until the early clubs imported their professionals. Those pioneer American pros sniffed more money than they thought was in the whole world. Then they became

acutely aware they had to make their clubs successful or the pros would go broke. And never shall it be said that a Scot will go broke without putting up one hell of a smart battle.

They made a strong play on the caddie angle. They put across golf to the kids as a game that paid them for learning. What other game could do that? So, by 1940, a high percentage of the brightest lads in the United States were caddies. These were the kids who became members of the best clubs and officials of a lot of the clubs and high men in American business, professions and politics.

One time I was overseas and an important businessman asked me if I happened to know a fellow who lived around Chicago. I always had been cagey about those questions, so I replied, "Yes, I've heard of the man. What about him? My British friend said, "This fellow has one of the most brilliant, soundest minds in business." The man mentioned I had seen in a locker room a few months before. My friend, the internationally prominent businessman, after a couple of pleasant snorts, asked "Do you remember where we first met?" and I replied, "No, I am so old I can't remember where I met Columbus, Lincoln and Washington." This man, whose name a lot of you would know, laughed and said, "I thought so. I caddied for you along time ago at Sunset Ridge."

When I think of maybe 50 caddies I have known who have become highly successful businessmen and the hundreds of men prominent in every area of American business and professions after getting through college on caddie scholarships, I absolutely shudder at the prospect of caddies being phased out of American golf. With the caddies vanishing, golf had better replace them . . . or else.

The golf car is vital to the economic health of many golf clubs and fee course operations today. At many courses there no longer are caddies available. There are approximately 300,000 golf cars in use. This does not mean that 300,000 lads who might become golfers and golf club members are being displaced. At the majority of metropolitan district private clubs members are required to hire a caddie, when available, for each car

with its two passengers. The lad is supposed to save time in locating balls and carrying clubs to players. The enforced system works pretty well according to our observation although we have noticed there could be considerable improvement effected by caddie masters studying modernization of this sector of caddie employment.

Certainly the golf car has greatly increased golf play at times when the kids are in school and play by older or ailing men and women who need a car to go 18 holes. But do not forget that possibly the majority of golfers prefer to walk around golf courses. There has been virtually no slump in applications for the caddie scholarships financed by the Western Golf Assn. and 25 other amateur bodies. The Western Golf Assn. granted almost 100 Chick Evans caddie scholarships to begin 1975. These lads are carefully screened. They are boys who would not be able to make the colleges without the aid of golf associations. In most cases the caddie scholarships of the golf association have been the foremost group in scholarships rating and leadership at the colleges and universities they have attended.

When you examine the growth of golf from a hard cash look you find it was the club pros who made the market for the tournament pros and it still is very much that way. Tournament golf interests kids who want to make big money having fun. Why should they care about belonging to golf clubs?

Probably the most important committee of the PGA right now is the Junior Golf Committee. The committee has to get about 300,000 boys and girls — the same number as there are golf cars — active on golf this year. The National Golf Foundation seminars for golf instructors at universities, colleges and high schools are the most foresighted valuable work being done as golf market insurance and promotion. Club effort in this area is spotty. That is too bad because in these times when families are questioning the cost and usefulness of club membership, children's eager interest in golf would supply much of the right now, with caddie replacements uncertain, junior promotion is an essential job in golf. □