

FINDING A JOB: IS THE PRO ALL ALONE?

by NICK ROMANO

A principal criteria in choosing a career these days is to make sure a job is waiting for you when all the rigors of education are completed.

This is not true for many PGA apprentices coming into the job market now, and what might be even more alarming, things aren't getting easier for their older, more-established Class A colleagues. Whether anyone wants to admit it or not, the club professional is heading for an employment crunch.

According to PGA statistics for 1974-75, Class A membership was 5,227, although that figure now is projected to be around 6,000. The apprentice classification falls on about 5,000 individuals. Obviously, it is becoming clear, there are as many head professionals holding positions, as there are assistants looking for those same spots.

There is a problem and no one realizes it more than the pros in the PGA's 39 sections around the nation. For the long range, the PGA is currently involved in a marketing and public relations program tuned toward the country's golf course owners. At present the National Golf Foundation says the United States has about 11,000 golf facilities. Of course, not all of these employ club professionals.

Through its marketing program, the PGA hopes to alleviate its employment headaches by attempting to convince club owners and officials there are many advantages to hiring a PGA professional. In 1975, the PGA conducted a survey among its members to find out their feelings on a number of aspects of the business. Heavy emphasis, though, was placed on salary.

Director of Sectional Affairs Don Smith, who deals with employment as part of his duties, says the survey has been completed and will soon be released to club officials and owners around the nation. If owners and officials find there is a need for the PGA pro at facilities where one was not hired previously, it might help ease the tight job situation. Again, though, this only deals with the long range situation.

Smith and his office are engaged with the day-to-day employment picture and even Smith, himself, questions the effectiveness of the effort.

"Our service is not the most adequate. I guess the employment service should be self-supporting to a degree," Smith said. The service, which according to Smith is at least in its third year, has no one running it on a full-time basis. This alone might attribute to the problems the national organization has had keeping its membership well informed on changing positions around the nation.

In essence, the service puts out about 15 employment bulletins a year to pros interested enough to pay a \$25 fee to handle costs for bookwork. As expected, the majority of PGA members involved in the service are of apprentice status and as such, the bulletins are designed for them.

PGA statistics for the 1974-75 year showed 222 members using the service, but only 35 positions out of a possible 47 vacancies were filled, a fulfillment percentage of 77 percent. A number such as 47 seems rather limited when thinking of the turnover going on yearly.

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One of the reasons for such a limited number of clubs involved, according to Smith, is the PGA has never really actively publicized its national service to clubs, although he admitted many of them know about it.

"Clubs are becoming aware of the service. We don't charge clubs for doing this. If they tell us what they are looking for, we attempt to fill the bill and generally get a nice reaction from both sides," Smith added.

Attempting to fill a job need from a club, the employment service checks both sides of the situation. The service gets in touch with the PGA pro who was at the club to find out why he left. As Smith says, the PGA is not interested in sending one of its members into a bad situation.

Making clubs aware of a pro's availability to employment is what the service is all about. Smith noted that the PGA is interested in convincing clubs PGA trained individuals are able to deal with people and since golf is a people operation, this might be one of the greatest advantages in hiring a qualified professional. "The pro is not a person fronting for a golf facility," says Smith, "Dealing with people is important."

Optimism is indeed something Smith and his service has to offer, but that doesn't mean he and the PGA are blind to the job market. "I can't say I am happy with the situation. There are a lot of good professionals having a tough time getting a position right now.

"It's obvious the business schools are turning out more professionals than are employable. The apprentices are becoming a dominant part in the market," Smith commented.

With all its efforts, the national employment service's biggest problem might be that its task is too huge. Coordinating the employment situations for all PGA sections might even be an unrealistic job. Smith said timing was the biggest headache the national service has in getting information about positions open to those on the bulletin mailing list. "By the time we get an opening out to the membership, it's already filled."

Even though, many PGA members were in favor of a national employment service starting, there are indications many of the sections are satisfied they can handle their own employment problems by themselves. Of course, the idea of the national service was to provide club professionals the opportunity to find out about jobs in other areas of the country, they might be interested in moving to. For the most part, that function of the program has not been as successful as many would have hoped for.

For the most part, pros stay within their own sections and find out about openings either through word-of-mouth or by the hard work of the section employment committee.

Of the 33 PGA sections responding to a recent survey, 31 have an employment chairman, 28 have full employment committees and 26 have established a formal set of employment standards. All are becoming more active in getting PGA members hired at clubs

looking for professionals.

One of the most productive section employment services in the country is handled by the Metropolitan PGA section in New York. According to Charley Robson, who is a full-time staffer of the Met in charge of employment, his section has a good plan to help both clubs fill jobs and pros find them.

"When we hear about an opening at a club, we get in touch with them and tell them we are interested in a meeting to discuss the positive aspects of employing a PGA professional.

"We attempt to talk about how they can improve pro shop revenue, while being realistic on projected income. All in all, this type of practice has proven very successful for us," Robson said.

Country clubs which have never employed PGA pros are the hardest to convince, according to Robson. Usually these facilities are one-man operations and aren't interested in plugging into the section and its service. As with the national, the section service is filled with names and resumes of apprentices looking for a better opportunity toward their Class A status.

Last November, Robson counted 30 section members on his job seeking roll, but admitted that by winter's end, between 75 and 100 would be looking. The Met section service is actually set up with the apprentice in mind, but there are usually at least five Class A pros in the section, at any given time, looking for another club.

Stability in the Met is in relatively good shape among a membership of some 200 Class A pros and 175 apprentices. One of the oldest PGA sections in the nation, the Met has a high respect factor going for it and that counts for salary too, with the average yearly income at \$18,000. The figure is based on a short season ranging anywhere from five to 10 months at some clubs.

Robson calls attention to the fact that handling employment problems on the local level is the best solution for the pro and his questions. In the Met section, though, Robson notes the emphasis is on the young, educated professional in favor of recertification and other national association programs.

Although, not all sections are able to have a full-time person in charge of their employment service, the most popular way to take care of these matters is through committee and none is more experienced than the Northern Ohio PGA's, chaired by Jim Logue.

Logue, 34, is head professional at Brookside Country Club in Canton and is in charge of an active service. "More often than not, we find ourselves educating clubs in how to hire a professional. A lot of clubs have had the same man in a position for 20 years and all of a sudden, through retirement of their pro finding another job, they have to start from scratch.

"We talk with club personnel and if they ask us what we think might fill the employment needs for them, we tell them. We never attempt to influence a club on who to hire," Logue said. There are 100 Class A members in the Northern Ohio section and Logue's section service usually handles about 25 or 30 different resumes a year.

Prime interest for Logue is centered around the abili-

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ty to convey to the club the section's standards of employment and also what the club should expect from the professional and in return, what the pro should receive from the club.

Turnover, of course, is a good way to see the stability of the professional in the job market and according to figures supplied by three associations involved in golf business — PGA, GCSAA and CMAA — the pro is moving around more than any of the trio of main management personnel at a country club.

The PGA's Smith says about one-third or approximately 2,000 of the 6,000 Class A pros change positions within a year. This figure is high when comparing information supplied by James Brooks, director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America's Employment Referral Service, on turnover in the superintendent ranks. Twenty percent or about 800 of the GCSAA's 4,000 members switch jobs during the season. Although, no percentage figure is available on turnover, the Club Managers Association of America in a recent survey of over 820 of its 2,700 members found 57 percent of that 820 had been at their present position for at least four years and half of those had been on the job for at least nine years. These figures do speak highly for the staying power of club managers in their respective part of the market.

Both the GCSAA and CMAA's referral services work closely with clubs across the country in search for either superintendents or managers. In 1975, the GCSAA handled some 200 resumes on superintendents looking at advancement. According to Brooks' staff, the GCSAA chapters don't actively organize chapter employment services, as PGA sections do, so much more work falls on the "ERS". Much is true for the CMAA.

No one really has a philosophy on why superintendents stay on the job longer, but it might be attributed to the psychology that goes along with the job. A superintendent looking for a new opportunity on a national basis has a harder job though, than the pro. According to GCSAA Director of Public Relations Doug Fender there are several state superintendent associations that have no affiliation with the GCSAA and thus receive none of its services.

At CMAA national headquarters in Washington, D.C., the referral service is a real two-way street, as clubs run ads in a CMAA bulletin which tells managers where jobs are open and another publication is available to the clubs, listing managers available for positions. If employed, the CMAA member looking for a job pays \$25 for a 13 week listing on the bulletin, but if the member is unemployed, there is no fee. Over 260 managers run listings with the CMAA in any given week, but association personnel feel only about 100 are serious lookers.

For all the efforts of employment services on both the national and section levels, it's still up to the coun-

try club and its owner or chairman of the board to sort through the resumes and find the right candidate to fill the vacancy.

A random sampling of club officials around the country by GOLFDOM found most don't use association employment services as a way to fill positions.

One club that hasn't had to look for anyone for either its professional or superintendent spots for at least two decades is the Lafayette(Ind.) Country Club. "Our head pro has been with us 20 years and our superintendent has just recently retired after 30 years," said Dr. Morris Lord, Lafayette CC chairman of the board.

Lord commented that finding a pro and superintendent was easy compared to the job of finding a club manager. "The whole situation is lousy," said Lord, "I think clubs should look at the possibility of having two types of managers, one for food and the other a general business manager." Lafayette handles over \$400,000 a year in gross food sales among a total membership of 840.

Doug Jesanis, co-owner of Pine Grove Golf Club in Northampton, Mass., uses a word-of-mouth technique in finding job applicants. "We probably get about three to five applications here during the year." With a semi-private membership of 250, Pine Grove has a full-time superintendent, but only a part-time professional. No extensive food service is available.

Making employment a science is part of the business of running country clubs and an expert in the field is Robert Dedman, an official of the Club Corporation of America, which handles management of 21 golf facilities out of offices in Dallas. "The art of employment should be a three-part job. First, you have to access a man, look at both his long and short suits. Second, after a man is hired, you have to keep him attracted to stay with the club. Thirdly, it's up to management to establish an organization and motivating plan that will get people interested in growing with the operation."

Dedman's theory of employment has proven successful for his firm and for its employees. "We look at many applicants over the year, but since we run so many clubs, we can transfer our people from club to club. More often we attempt to promote from within. This usually turns out to be the best for all concerned."

Whether it be a big or a small club, there are pros in the country that see finding a job as one of the most frustrating things about pursuing a career in golf business.

Happy with his present spot as head pro at Pinecrest Country Club in Brookville, Pa., Terry Hart sums up the feelings of a lot of young pros when he says, "Nationally, it's tough to get a job today. You work a long time to learn all the things to be Class A and then you can't find a job."

Changes occur in the marketplace everyday and the same economy affecting the factory worker has an influence on club professionals. Through the efforts of the PGA and its sections, the pro of today has a better change to keep pace with employment.

Hopefully, the efforts will be enough. □