

The old pro

Watches progress in golf schooling

Freddie McLeod, 1908 National Open champion and for many years professional at Columbia Country Club, was talking to Jock Hutchison. Jock won the 1920 PGA and 1921 British Open Championship. For a long time before his retirement, Jock was pro at Glen View Country Club and, before that, at Allegheny. They became expert teachers. McLeod said to the other veteran, "Jock, the first five years we were teaching golf we should have been paying our pupils."

"It took me at least 5 years before I found out that men and women who were getting the most out of my lessons were learning more than I was teaching them. Now I believe that every good golfer, pro or amateur, I ever have known learned far more golf than ever was taught them. That certainly goes for me. But now what bothers me is that we who make a profession of teaching golf didn't learn earlier how to get through to the pupils first so they could teach themselves to learn as our expert players do."

It's taken too long for what McLeod noticed to become generally and usefully applied. Everybody in golf has suffered because of that delay. Years ago I read in a golf magazine of about 1900 that 90 percent of all American golfers scored 90 or higher. Several years ago I read another magazine's survey of many district golf association handicap records and public course pro estimates indicating that scoring averages may have deteriorated and now 95 percent of the nation's 12 million golfers score above 95.

The slow progress in better scoring by those who play golf as a pleasant game certainly is not due to a lack of competent instructors in the fundamentals from which the game can develop into a skilled scoring art. Club pros for too long a time have been regarded as ex-caddies instead of authoritative instructors.

Club officials have not seen that the better the standard of play is at a club, the more play there is and the larger the volume of business and membership applications. Private clubs which are worried about their tomorrow have been completely blind to the importance of golf instruction in attracting and serving the members they want and need.



The public courses and privately owned daily fee courses are even low in their business rating because of their failure to use free basic golf instruction to attract revenue at hours when business is dull.

I see the brilliant sunshine of tomorrow in golf business as the result of the tremendous recent advance in golf instruction made among boys and girls at the major universities and leading high schools by the collaboration of the physical education departments of these schools, the educational program of the PGA, and the dynamic organization and coordination work of the National Golf Foundation. Unless you have been at one of the Foundation seminars you don't know what is happening to improve the popularity, the enjoyment, and the proficiency of young golfers who are going to be leaders for many years.

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