

The old pro

Who's the pro know?

I had to become retired and an honorary member of my club before I realized I was guilty of the sin of not knowing some members. I'd been with the club almost 30 years. All of a sudden I thought, "I've been stealing from people I love and who were mighty good to me."

The great burst of light came when at my retirement party I danced with a daughter of an old member. She said, "I'd always wanted to play a round with you, but I wasn't ever good enough and I was afraid I'd be embarrassed."

Then the lesson I should have been learning exploded in my mind. I had been drinking enough to be honest without thinking. I said, "If you weren't scoring well enough to play with me that was my fault. I am the one who should have been embarrassed. I'm going to tell your new pro never, never let that be said of him."

That little incident at a wonderful party kept me awake that night and thinking for the years since I have been retired.

Now I think that there is one thing that a pro can say about being confident he has been a success on a club job. That is if he is able to say, "None of my members — man, woman, or child — ever was afraid to play with me or any other good golfer."

What the answer is to playing with all the members, I don't know. I wish I did. I have been lucky rather than well organized as a businessman in having so many of my members know me. In a vague way I think my club over all these years hasn't been too well run not to have me playing with all the members.

The women are smarter than the men. They have a "beat the pro" event every spring when I played a few holes with a lot of the girls, and if they tied or beat me net I gave them a golf ball. I have made a lot of lasting friends by using the wisdom of business golf, missing a putt now and then. But still, playing only a hole or two doesn't get them over the stage-fright of playing with the pro.

A great thing about golf and its wonderful handicap system is that a person who can play fairly uniformly to even a 30 handicap will enjoy playing and never get trimmed badly on any golf course in the world by anybody else. He's got to be given this basic training by his own pro on his own home course. If he hasn't learned this lesson his pro is the one who should be embarrassed by not playing more educational golf with his member.

At this late date I know no club member should be shy about playing with the pro. It is a pro problem, not that of a member. Know your members, or you don't know your job.

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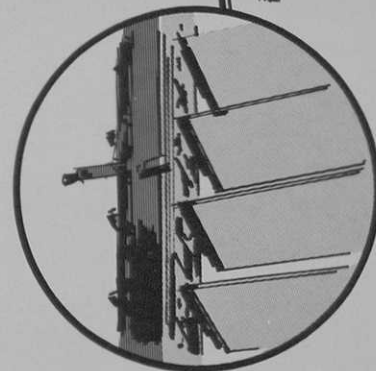
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