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Lester Electrical

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The old pro

Sees pros as golfers do

After a professional has retired and his club makes him an honorary member, he gets playing and talking with his members and their old and young friends as one of them. Then with some shocks he echoes the plea of Bobbie Burns, "Oh wad some power the giftie gie us to see ourselves as others see us."

I have the feeling I am very lucky to have had my members know what a pro was supposed to be and do. When I was growing up with my clubs to be a member of the family, a pro simply was a competent and friendly man hired for assuring members and their families all possible pleasure from golf. It was that simple. What got me by was that I was lucky enough not to think of my job as complicated.

Now I find too many times, to my alarm, that younger club members and golfers in general aren't clear about what a golf professional is.

And as I talk with younger pros and read in the PGA magazine and elsewhere about the PGA educational program, I am not sure that all of today's pros know what ideas the players have about the reason for the pro. Today's golfer is inclined to think of the home professional as a man selling golf balls and clothing and shoes and sometimes clubs in a store somewhere near the first tee, as the man who collects for golf car rental and fixes starting times, as a nice guy customarily hired by golf clubs and fee courses. They don't often enough think of him as a teacher.

If the pro were thought of first as a teacher, golf business would be better for everybody in it and would give more pleasure and better scoring to the millions of amateurs.

A primary reason for the formation of the PGA was the development of competent instruction. Bob White, George Sargent, the Mackie brothers, Alex Opirie, and a few other of the PGA Founding Fathers were essentially instructors. Greenkeeping came next and clubmaking third in the qualifications of a good pro when his employers knew clearly what they needed. The teaching pro always could get good clubs made by a specialist assistant he hired.

Now there is fogginess about the pro's service and value, and it is shown by the shocking figures of a PGA survey. The survey showed 38 percent of pros receive less than \$1,000 a year from lessons. Lessons account for less than \$3,500 a year for 78 percent of professionals.

The whole golf lesson pattern needs drastic modernization as the first of the PGA's services for the progress of golf. That's what an old pro sees as today's young golfers' viewpoint.

golfbusiness

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