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Feedback

Is golf handicapped?

Although I have not applied for reinstatement to amateur status, with the exception of a selective program of teaching, I have been apart from the fulltime business of golf for three years. Prior to entering the real estate business, I held head professional positions at four northern California courses, came close to being selected ahead of Bud Erickson for the LPGA executive position and devoted seven years of energy and drive toward creating full acceptance for United States Golf Handicaps, a service organization.

For many months I have been sorry to see increasing evidence of the losing battle being felt in golf. The crest of popularity golf experienced in the early and mid 1960's has been deteriorating with alarming consistency. Your account of the address made by Arnold Palmer to the 50th anniversary meeting of the GCSAA in Toledo gives further evidence of this trend. For what it may be worth, I would like to volunteer some positive "feedback".

In 1962, United States Golf Handicaps was created by a broad minded group who recognized a need that existed then—and still does. This was a computerized service offered to some 80 percent of the paying, playing golf public who were unable to establish the vitally needed golf handicap. Before this crusade came to its financial demise in 1969, USGH created a subscribing following, at its peak, of nearly 6,800 members. This figure was still some 3,000 below the membership needed to reach a break-even point and, with a tight money situation and no promotional budget, USGH faded away. However, in those seven years I learned a great deal about an extreme weakness in the world of golf. For one, I found that a great segment of the enthused playing public who could be classified as affluent, suffered the lack of a handicap simply because of an archaic ruling which calls for membership in a club recognized by the United States Golf Association.

I find it tragic in a sense when USGA, in order to stem the flow of red ink in their operations, can do no better than to enlist Arnold Palmer to lend his name to a money raiser aimed at the neglected golfers of the country who are asked to send $12 in order to obtain a USGA decal, bag tag and a rule book.

New enthusiasm, and the kind of enthusiasm that could endure and create new growth, can be generated if USGA, PGA or the National Golf Foundation (or all three) can find some way to provide a handicap to every golfer for going on 25 years. He has been at the same club during his entire career as a head pro. As a colleague, I am proud to work with such a club professional.

Recently, we honored him with a dinner for what it may be worth, I would like to think if offers a forum for your ideas on topics that could endure and create new growth, as does neighboring Stam-}

Proud of his pro

I am writing to let the industry know about J. D. Ruffner, a man who has served the business for on going 25 years. He has been at the same club during his entire career as a head pro. As a colleague, I am proud to work with such a club professional.

Recently, we honored him with a dinner at a forum for your ideas on topics we have or haven't covered in GOLF BUSINESS. Readers interested in expressing their views can write to Feedback, GOLF BUSINESS, 9800 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44102.
Idea file

Don’t get caught with reorders down
Waiting till the last minute to reorder a particularly hot item can get you into trouble. If it looks like something is selling well and should continue to do so, place your reorder as soon as possible; don’t wait until you have the last piece on the shelf.

In softgoods, the pro should attempt to make a second and third color choice. Reorders are always difficult to get, since manufacturers are usually working on their next line, when you make that reorder.

Anticipate what your members and customers will want to buy. Often your good planning will lead to less reorders and less waiting by your customers and you.

Presenting the check can become an art
Making sure every detail of your club or course foodservice is exact can come right down to handing the check to the customer. It’s a little thing, but in the competitive foodservice industry, the little pluses can add up to big profit. Teach this to your staff.

If a reservation has been made, be sure to hand the check to the person that made it. If that is not the case, attempt to establish who is the leader at the table or who is in charge. If two people seem to be competing to pick up the check, hand it to the person who asks for it first.

Try to present the check on a tray. Have the waiter or waitress write his or her name on the back with a short “thank you” message. An added touch may be mints on the tray.

Communicate course moves with members
If the high cost of maintenance has put you into a bind on whether or not you have too many traps on your course, think over your plan to eliminate those sandy areas before you do it.

Some golf course architects have gone to the deep-faced trap over the last few years, but this trap has been a headache for many superintendents. Certainly, they are more difficult to negotiate and are a continuous problem with the threat of a washout always present.

The bunker of yesterday seems to be returning with its fairly flat surface and mounds that were grass covered. Whatever you decide on traps, be sure to tell your golfers what you have planned. It will save a lot of explaining in the long run.

Pros may find lessons are worth their time
How important are giving lessons? Foremost in the mind of the player is the fact that as he or she excels, there is a good possibility they will play more golf. That’s added profit for you in the added number of rounds and the additional pro shop merchandise they may buy while at your course.

Members or customers that really do want to improve their games will stand out. They will pay the price to be better. The professional, in turn, should get a fair price for his expertise.

Time is an important factor to the professional. In giving a playing lesson, the professional does not have to play. He can coach. This will all depend on what the player wants. Playing lessons can be a way a pro can handle high volume.

Selecting suppliers: a manager’s headache
If you are the new club manager on the block, you might be pressed to decide if you should stay with the suppliers used by your predecessor. There are some simple rules to consider when you go about selecting a supplier.

Sources can be developed from local advertising, the phone book, or the Chamber of Commerce in the area. You might need only a couple leads, but that might be enough. Soon after, have a sales representative call on you. See if he is attentive to your needs. His ability to understand the club’s problems will soon surface.

Consult with other managers in the area to get some background on suppliers you may be leaning toward. They can probably give you an idea of what kind of service to expect.

Control perennials with spot treatment
Stemming the influx of perennial grasses can be a spring hassle for the superintendent and since selective herbicides have little effect on them, nonselective products have done the trick.

Several applications must be applied for perennials to subside. Reseeding may be necessary for the treated areas. Parquat is a popular nonselective which many superintendents are using to combat perennials.

Always follow label instructions when using such products. Strict adherence to directions is imperative.
Personal

Shop around for savings accounts

If you are lucky enough to have any money to save these days, be sure to check around at different banks and savings and loan institutions before you store that hard-earned cash away.

The amount paid in interest will vary from one place to another. Under the law, savings and loans are allowed to pay up to 5 1/4 percent on passbook accounts, but the law does not force them to actually pay out the maximum. Be sure to check what you will actually get.

Time deposits, which are held for longer spans, will get you a better interest rate. For instance, some certificates can gain as much as 7 1/2 percent, if held for more than 4 years. Always be sure to check the minimum balance required to earn interest.

Underinsured? Don’t chance it

Inflation’s rise has played havoc with the insurance companies over the last 5 years. More often than not, though, it is the homeowner or renter who will pay the price of being underinsured.

Costs to replace items stolen or lost through fire have gone up drastically. Basic homeowners policies developed by companies are probably the best buys you can get these days. They practically cover all eventualities. Still, though, there are always the catches. Be sure to always read and attempt to analyze the terms along with the agent.

If you are really interested in the worth of your home and the possessions within, you might hire a professional appraiser to estimate the cost of the building. An insurance company may not accept the estimate, but it would add more credence to your case, if you were making a claim.

Going to the hospital? Plan your choice

With the high cost of health care with us, a common sense approach to going into the hospital has to be adopted when you know you are going in. You won’t always have a choice, but if you do, exercise it.

Try and get into the same hospital where your doctor is accredited. Avoid being admitted on a Friday, if your tests are scheduled for Monday. Weekend stays are just as expensive as weekday stays at the hospital. Avoid the additional cost. Unnecessary room and board charges can be billed to you for tests that can be conducted when you have outpatient status.

Although it might add to your trauma, check to see if the hospital offers walk-in operations. Many hospitals are utilizing this technique now. You can get the operation the same day you enter.

Even your plants need clean living

Dust, dirt, and whatever else floats around in the air can get onto your plants and hinder their effort to breathe. From time to time, clean those leaves with a damp sponge to get the grime off.

Some plant people even suggest taking the plants under the shower and gently running water over them. To make sure the topsoil is not lost, place an aluminum foil collar over the topsoil.

If there are dirt stains on the leaves, use a mild soap to get them off. Never use a detergent. Always look for pests on plants.

Pamphlet helps size up those charities

Do you ever wonder if the money you give to charity really gets there? A new booklet from the Council of Better Business Bureaus can help you find out if the people at your door are on the level.

Door-to-door agencies are looked into in the pamphlet. Those meeting BBB standards on such items as how much of the donations goes for administrative costs are covered.

If interested in the information, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope and $1 to the Council of Better Business Bureaus, 1150 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

You can improve your gas mileage

Getting better gas mileage doesn’t require an internship at the test tracks in Detroit. Common sense and better driving habits can help you save money when it comes to gasoline.

Smoothness may be the answer. Quick stops and starts in traffic can cost you gallons. Start your move into traffic with reasonable acceleration. Don’t blow off the line like you’re at Indianapolis. Holding your foot steady on the pedal will help on the savings. Bursts of speed, sudden lane changes, and quick passing all waste gas. On superhighways keep your speed at 55 mph.

The best results will come from a properly tuned engine. Tires should receive the proper pressure.
GOLF CARS

Manufacturers move toward safety standard

With the government on hand to put in its opinions on the subject, the biggest golf car makers met in Chicago in December to nail down some industry safety standards.

As liability problems begin to loom larger in the market every day, the car companies have been speeding along in their collective surge toward safer vehicles by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. John Liskey, from the CPSC's voluntary standards division, was on hand in the Windy City to see what the manufacturers had come up with. The process, though, has dragged on for more than 6 years.

On hand for the companies were James Wenzel, Don Dickman, and Jack Woods from AMF Harley-Davidson; L. A. Benton from Johns-Manville; R. Davis Taylor from Taylor-Dunn; John Dwyer from Polaris E-Z-Go, and representatives from HMK-Marketeer and Pargo.

In all, the government and the manufacturers discussed 26 separate areas of contention on the proposed standards. Both sides made compromises, as the manufacturers strive toward having the standards adopted and then published by ANSI (American National Standards Institute), national clearinghouse for all such safety material.

The gathering was instituted by the National Golf Foundation, which has been involved directly to drivers several items they should be aware of when operating the car. One item the CPSC recommended and adopted was to tell the driver not to start the car until all passengers are seated in the vehicle.

Liskey and the government did try to underscore the need for more visible safety features on the car itself. Some sort of handholds and body restraint system will become standard equipment on models in the immediate future.

Cars may eventually also be inspected by the government or an "independent third party," Liskey told GOLF BUSINESS. All in all, Liskey was optimistic about the movement the car people had been making toward safer cars, and the Chicago meeting was another step in the right direction.

Harley-Davidson's Wenzel is in charge of making the contact with ANSI now and filing the safety proposals with them. ANSI personnel will then analyze the standards through its bureaus and will look at each standard individually, accepting or rejecting each.
business or for the making of business contacts, I see no grounds for assuming that this is universally so, and thus that membership in a club automatically affects promotion and advancement.

Another contention the Labor Department made was that since companies were involved with such clubs, they, in actuality, were controlling the admissions policies of the clubs. This point was also dismissed by the Justice Department. The point made was that such club policies were not extensions of corporate doctrines.

Even with the issue seemingly settled, there is some concern in the industry that the new cast of Democratic characters may review the question of restrictive admissions policies. Once again, the national spotlight focused in on the club industry, at a time it can do without that kind of publicity.

Indications are that pressure groups for both women's rights and black rights groups will be keeping a watchful eye on the nation's capital this spring.

Quoting from Scalia's findings, the assistant attorney general made it clear he was not looking at Labor's case in a specific instance and the position of the OFCC "does not seem . . . to be of such uniform validity as to support the categorical prohibition which the memorandum would base upon it. Although some clubs are substantially used for the transaction of business or for the making of business contacts, I see no grounds for assuming that this is universally so, and thus that membership in a club automatically affects promotion and advancement potential."

For the moment, the parting shot of the Ford Administration on the OFCC and the clubs has quieted with the changing of the White House guard, but those in the club business will be keeping a watchful eye on the nation's capital this spring.
That is the best way to summarize the first year of the National Association of Public Golf Courses, as the group of public course owners goes into Year II of its existence.

St. Charles, Ill., outside of Chicago, was the site for the annual conference in conjunction with the National Golf Foundation's eastern workshop for daily fee operators. The Pheasant Run Lodge and its dinner theater even had Elizabeth Ray, former friend of former congressman Wayne Hays, on its marquee, but according to NGF Executive Director Don Rossi, the course operators had more than enough incentive to come to the seminars without Ms. Ray.

On that point, Rossi was right. More than 200 owner-operators from more than 15 states and Canada made it to the late fall meeting. All were interested in what was new in the business and how they could run their facilities better. Some just wanted to know how to save their facilities.

Probably the most sobering talk was presented by NGF Regional Director Jerry Claussen. Although Claussen saw significant growth in his Rocky Mountain region, he emphasized that the day of the small "mom and pop" operation was past and skilled, professional management would have to take over.

"From what I have seen, there is a lack of competent management in this market. And management, not market, is the key to success," Claussen stated.

New information was delivered in big doses, as such authorities as course consultant William Sherman, NGF Education Director Carol Johnson, turfgrass expert Andy Bertoni, golf course architects Lawrence Packard and Jack Kidwell, and PGA Director of Club and Professional Services Gary Wiren paraded to various seminar podiums.

Sherman zeroed in on the evils of the golf course owner not being aware of how local zoning can directly affect them. He cited a case in San Jose, Calif., in which the city placed zoning restrictions on an owner who wanted to sell his course to a home developer. In reality, the municipality wanted to obtain the course itself.

Johnson, along with PGA professional and course owner Don Essig III, went in depth on how the operator could make better customers out of his golfers by making them better players. Through the institution of added instructional programs, golfers could become better players and would directly increase their frequency of play.

As the amount of golfers at public facilities increases, said Johnson, it would only be natural for owner-operators to put some sort of program into action. "There is very little golf taught at public courses," Johnson commented. Her point was well taken in view of the fact that at least 75 percent of all golfers now play at such facilities.

Essig pointed to the importance of establishing the beginning handicap for the novice and encouraging the less experienced to find out as much about golf as possible. "The owner or his professional must adopt an enthusiasm about teaching the game. If you aren't interested in instruction, your students will soon...

A packed house was on hand for the NGF's eastern daily fee workshop at St. Charles, Ill., last fall. A variety of topics were covered for the more than 200 on hand for the multi-day sessions.
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