

Pro Training a Big Job for Leaders

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IN THE grill room at Oakmont during the National Open I was sitting at a table with several well-known business men who also are prominent in the world of golf. They were exchanging opinions on the reasons for the great growth of golf in the United States.

After a number of possible and valid explanations for the remarkable development of golf in this country had been advanced one of the men commented, "I think the type of the pros who established the game in America had a whole lot to do with the way it took on."

Right he was. As I look back on the careers of the earlier professional golfers in the United States it occurs to me that they were more concerned in doing the game some good than they were in their own fortunes. The invariable trait of these pioneers was a splendid sportsmanship. One of their first acts was to develop a school of home-bred pros to help in furthering golf. But of their own status as business men in a business nation they apparently cared little. They were thrifty, blessed with wives who were good "managers," and they were good family men so they had no difficulty in getting by in those days of the dawn of golf's great popularity in America. Then came the typical American rush. There was a demand for pros far beyond the supply of competent men available. This demand continues. Although there are plenty of so-called professionals out of berths many clubs are looking for experienced and thoroughly qualified pros and finding it hard to get them. The clubs that have these men are keeping them. The reason, I think, is that there are too few places where the younger professionals can be properly trained before they embark on careers of their own.

Pro's "Red Schoolhouses"

There is only one place for a young pro to learn his business and that is under the supervision of a man who has made a success at this work.

Think of the influence on the business angle of American golf that spread out from some of those early pros. They had



not the problems of "downtown store" competition to contend with nor any of the other perplexing merchandising problems of present-day pro shop operation, but they did inculcate in their assistants the simple virtues of diligence, thrift, resourcefulness, carefulness and honesty, and these still remain the cardinal factors in successful professional merchandising. Some of those trail-blazing pros I call to mind are Willie Dunn and Willie Marshall, Dave and Jim Foulis, Stewart Gardner, Horace Rawlins, Isaac and Jack Mackie, Willie Anderson, Gil and Ben Nichols and Jim Herd. Boys who finished training under them made good. The youngsters had to have the stuff in them or they didn't last.

The old school pros were hard taskmasters. Their boys spent plenty of time on the bench learning the now languishing art of individual club making. It was arduous work under exacting masters. From that point the acolyte worked up. Now it

is a case of different times and different manners. Even with the veteran pros they follow the policy that their assistants must be led and not driven, that the masters must not be dogmatic and dictatorial.

The New Policy

If I were a club hiring a young pro I would make it a point to investigate the training the boy had undergone. I would learn something about his mentor, and if I found him to be the right sort of a man I would be fairly certain that the youngster bearing his endorsement for a job was satisfactory. The established professional, individually and through his sectional organizations, which are groups of the national Professional Golfers' Association, is taking today a most conscientious attitude toward the development of younger professionals as business men. They are doing this consciously. The veterans used to do it unconsciously as a matter of pride in their work and a contribution to the good of the game.

The pioneer professionals who are still active and the eminently able younger men are allied in the common cause of studying their business that it may be made better for them as well as advance in promoting the enjoyment of golf by their members and the rest of the populace. The good professionals are finding their efforts bearing fruit at a number of points. First, they are hearing from golf clubs and supply houses a sharp decrease in the condemnation of pros generally. They have earned for the worthy in their profession a realization that there are good and bad pros just as there are good and bad stock brokers, bankers, lawyers and even clergymen. They are receiving a general acceptance of the policy that the profits of a well managed pro shop are the due of the professional who is able to make these profits and give thorough satisfaction to his members. It is but simple justice that a man whose season is but a few months and whose salary is nominal in many cases should be allowed to make a respectable income from his operations as a salesman of golfing supplies as well as instruction. He deserves the co-operation of his club to this end.

This alliance of the able older and younger pros on the present basis is receiving its most substantial recognition from the outside in the practice of many of the clubs to consult the sectional P. G.

A. bodies before engaging a professional. Internally the work is resulting in the pros talking business when they get together instead of engaging in a round of golf with unduly heavy wagers and then a session of jollification.

It will do every club good if its officials will study the work of the professional golfing bodies today and learn how these allied organizations are striving to serve golf by making their members better business men. Then, I feel sure, the professional who is truly representative of his calling will be granted the cordial and tangible co-operation he so greatly needs from the executives of his club.

Twilight Mixed Foursomes Build Club Income

AS A SURE builder of dining room business during the week the Park Ridge (Ill.) Country Club has found that a twilight mixed two-ball foursome leaves little to be desired. These events at Park Ridge are held every Tuesday evening. Play is for nine holes which allows plenty of time for the participants to finish in time for the dinner at 8 p. m. after starting at a time convenient for the men who have a set time for leaving business.

Buffet suppers are served following these events. Prize awards and impromptu speeches constitute the program. Not only does the event bring at least 80 meals to add to the club's income, and frequently well over a hundred "added starters," but the affair is one of the best promoters of club unity and general acquaintance that could be staged. No wife is allowed to play in the same foursome with her husband. In this way the women are made cordially acquainted with each other, which usually is a difficult matter in a metropolitan district club.

Each event is conducted by a committee of one man and one woman who pick the prizes and arrange the pairings and details of the supper entertainment. The chairman and chairwoman for the succeeding week are named by those of the week preceding.

Tuesday is women's day at Park Ridge and although this might seem to be a detail working against the popularity of an extra nine holes, experience has proved to the contrary.