

# "Pros" Progress as Business Men

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THERE has been some thoughtful and valuable criticism of the golf professional as a business man. The professionals have welcomed it because constructive criticism is a valuable aid to the sincere efforts being made by all reliable professionals to elevate the standards and practices of their profession. But there also has been much said and printed about the pro that is spoken and printed without thought or deliberation and in wide variance with the facts. It is for the purpose of establishing a more thorough understanding and respect for what we have done and for what we are now doing, as well as for answering many baseless and ill advised comments regarding the business integrity of a characteristic majority of professional golfers, that I believe it well to state our position.

In the first place, I am confident that any thinking business man will agree that the business ethics of professionals generally are above those of most small retailers. Ask any of the experienced golf goods manufacturers and they will tell you that their credit losses among the representative pros with whom they do business are smaller than those they suffer as a result of doing business with the usual type of small sporting goods dealer, or other small retail outlets. Golf goods manufacturers who complain of credit losses among pros are those who do not exercise the simplest kind of business judgment in picking their customers. "You cannot condemn a nation," said Edmund Burke, and we might say, "You cannot condemn a profession," so why any sweeping indictment because of the shortcomings of a few? There are professionals who are hopeless as business men. We

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An outline of the work that is being done by the Professional Golfer Associations to secure warranted recognition for their members as business men of high standing is presented here by Alex. Pirie.

Much is going on behind the scenes to help the able pro attain his proper station as one of the country's most substantial and alert retail merchants. Other professional associations have adopted and are enforcing membership qualifications like those of the Oklahoma association Mr. Pirie mentions.

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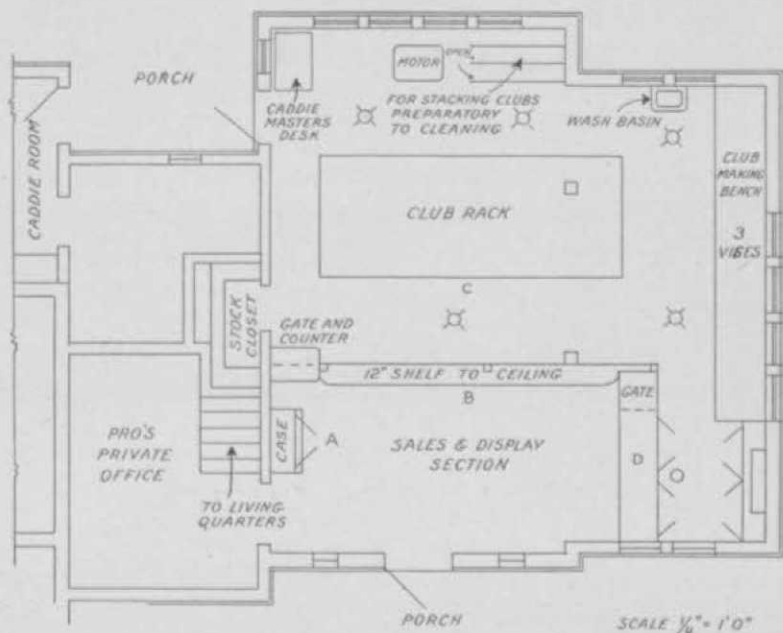
know it. But they are an exceedingly small minority and they are without standing in their association circles the way association affairs are being conducted today. The great majority of professionals are very careful of their credit standing, their service to their club and its members, and their helpfulness to the young men who are potential desirable recruits for professional golfing positions.

## Oklahoma Demands Credit O. K.

As an example of the way in which professional golfer state associations exercise vigilance over the business standing of their members, we may take the Oklahoma Professional Golfers' Association, which is one of the state and section groups, distinct by itself, but allied with Professional Golfers' Association of America as a unit of a national body. This typical sectional professional golfers' association has among its officers associated with Neal O'Sullivan, its president, such men as M. S. Fellers, vice president, Arthur J. Jackson, secretary, C. P. Vance, treasurer, and on its executive committee and board of governors, E. H. Dinwiddle, G. S. Hensley, G. T. Larson, H. E. Cole and R. B. Atkinson.

From its characteristic constitution and by-laws we quote:

1. "The object of the Association shall be to promote interest in the game of golf; to protect the mutual interest of its members; to hold meetings and tournaments for the benefit of its members; to assist any deserving professional golfer or assistant who may be out of employment to obtain a position, and to effect any other object of like nature that may be determined from time to time by the Association.



Plan of Pro shop at Longmeadow Country Club

2. "To assist golf clubs to secure the services of capable professionals.

And note in the following quotation from the Oklahoma constitution and by-laws, the first requirement of active membership.

"Professional golfers, regularly employed as such, who have a satisfactory credit rating with the manufacturers and dealers of golf supplies. Their assistants, provided they are over the age of seventeen years and have served for at least two seasons under a member of this association, shall be eligible for election as associate members."

Now, with standards like this, I maintain that the P. G. A. member in good standing has not only evidence of his superiority to the average group of small business men, but shows plainly, speedier progress in business methods than any similar class of men you can call to mind.

### Golf Business in Its Infancy

You have only to think back a few years when the first tidal wave of the golf deluge swept over the country. The pros were imported from England and Scotland where their income in their profession had been so small that when they got to this country with their families many of the pioneers were compelled to have the golf goods manufacturers finance them. I am confident that the history of these cases

will show that these early professionals were prompt to establish a high reputation for business integrity, and one that has exercised a strong influence over the majority of pros ever since.

The professional golfer associations, in promoting the progress of their members as business men, are confronted by situations that would deeply discourage most other organizations less confident of the high character of their membership. Golf's great growth has created such a demand for professionals that many who are unfit are given jobs. Some of the able professionals are worthy men who have been denied not only the benefits of a business education, but of a goodly part of any schooling whatever. The associations' job is to see that only the qualified are admitted to their ranks, and to help all their members learn the details of good business operation. It would surprise many to learn the extent to which the associations are going in these respects. The work is such that it is certain to earn the endorsement and co-operation of golf club officials and manufacturers.

One should not forget that the progress made by the professional golfers' associations is the result of work engineered by officials who have plenty of work to do in handling and properly servicing their primary responsibilities, their own club posi-

tions. The association work is done by elected and unpaid officers sacrificing their own time and energy and devoting to this work the exceedingly few spare moments a pro has during his busy season.

### Pro Bodies Co-operate

The national and sectional professional golfers associations are making rapid progress in their respective fields and it requires no great flight of the imagination to foresee the day when they will be recognized as a business man's organization, second to none. They are in harmonious relations with the United States Golf Association, the Western Golf Association and all other territorial associations with

whom they, as golfing organizations, come into contact. Much of this confidence has been established because they have gone quietly about attending to the things that concern them and doing their level best to put their houses in order. The substantial golf professional (and there are many of them) is weary of being unceasingly preached at by those who are most profuse with criticism and advice that unfortunately is lacking in constructive elements. He (or they) will go on however, in the future, as in the past, and the game of golf shall not lose anything by their steadfast adherence to the basic principles of their calling.

## Help Pro Buck Cut-Price Competition

WITH golf's comparatively recent great growth, there has come to many professionals a problem of bucking cut-price competition on golf supplies. With the older and more substantial clubs the pro's merchandising problem in this detail is not worth mentioning, for the members' business judgment and loyalty always give the pro an unbeatable "inside track" when his service, his merchandising, and his general business and personal conduct warrant.

In some of the clubs whose members are susceptible to the lures of the department store golf departments, the pro's loss of business has been so noticeable that the club officials have taken action to protect the interests of the man who is staking his livelihood on the prospect of a fair reward for his fidelity to his club job. One letter that was sent out to club members over the president's signature proved a tactful and valuable reminder that the club members owed their capable pro their business. This letter read:

### Protects the Pro

"—, the professional of our club, is paid a moderate retainer to give service to our members. As is the case in practically all clubs, the major part of his living must come from the profit he makes from the sale of golf balls, clubs, bags and other supplies, and from the lessons that he gives.

"Under good golf ethics, a member of a golf club patronizes his club professional when buying golf supplies, and thereby

helps his club to support a worthwhile professional—one who can be helpful to the members and a credit to the club. Do this and help your club.

"The profit that the golf professional makes on golf supplies is his living. He is entitled to it. Furthermore, it may be that any saving you effect puts you under obligation to someone who furnishes supplies to you at trade prices. This saving to you isn't worth the candle, and it takes away from your professional what he has a legitimate right to expect. Play the game—do the sporting thing, and give the professional his due.

"To have our club function in all its departments to the best advantage, there should be the most friendly feeling between the members and the club professional. During the course of the season there are many little things that the professional does for us as members, for which he makes no charge. Reciprocity in buying your golf supplies from him is helpful to the happiness of all.

"Very truly yours,

"PRESIDENT."

Griffith Bonner, the Kansas golf scribe, passes on to us another letter sent to all members of the organization. This letter reads:

"We know that every member of the Lakeview Golf club is anxious to do everything in his power for the club that a loyal member should do.

"Here's something that we all can and should do. Our pro., James Smith, is one of the best in the country—he knows his stuff like an expert golfer should know it,