

The Pro's Job is No Gold-Mine

By HERB GRAFFIS

ONE time last season I heard a young pro at one of the representative metropolitan district clubs kidded for having the softest job in the world. Some of the members guessed at his annual profit, and the lowest estimate was \$10,000. The boy wished it were true so intently he could offer only a halting but earnest denial.

The case was typical. Most club members far overestimate their pro's earnings and the result is that the pro is confronted with half-hearted buying help from his members because they think he already is sitting on top of the financial world. This general situation is one that calls for some action on the part of club presidents and the chairmen who have executive charge of the pro department. One pro puts it in this manner: "If the members would give the pro the same buying consideration they used to grant to their pet bar-tenders, we'd make some good money out of our shops."

Mutually agreeable club and pro relations are important to a smoothly running golf club. You'll find an increasing number of club officials who recognize the truth of this statement and who go to some effort in seeing that the pro gets all of the club business that rightfully is his. Attention to this matter is essential for the pro either will have to make more money out of his shop, in many cases, or get more of a salary from a club that already has plenty of expense. Failing in either, or both, the club loses a good pro.

Here's the Wail

Recently I have spent some time with a number of pros trying to figure out just where they stand as business men, and what their chances are for making a good business profit out of professional shop operations. Some of the manufacturers have given me some good tips, as those who are leaders in the manufacture of high grade golf goods are very much on the level about seeing that the pro is made a prosperous merchandiser. Lumping the pro data together, the average pro I have interviewed talked about like this:

"The pro to his club is like a child to a family. The pro depends on his club and if the club fails to discharge its responsi-

bility toward the pro member of its family, there's something wrong somewhere.

"Big stocks, rather than hand-to-mouth buying, must be the policy in most metropolitan district pro shops. Their customers won't wait and there are so few customers in the pro's individual market that he can't take a chance on losing the profit on a sale or losing future business by allowing the customer to get the idea he can't buy what he wants at the pro shop.

"One reason that other retailers can get by is because they can cut prices and quality. The pro is ruled out on this. He is committed to a fixed-price basis. Manufacturers whose balls are sold at sporting-goods departments may work themselves into a great sweat when these outlets cut the prices, but the stores continue to get the goods some way. Let a pro cut prices and he won't get any more of the merchandise.

All Is Not Gravy

"Well, what are you howling about, with a 25% to 33½% profit, no rent, no deliveries, no charge accounts.' That's what the average business man would say to us. Now let's see just what expenses we have. Let's take the case of a fellow who is going a \$10,000 business a season at his club. There probably are 350 members and 150 wives and daughters who also might make part of the potential market. Here are some of the expenses:

"Burglary insurance, \$180 a year; fire insurance, \$50 a year; auto for business use (club travel), \$400 a year; miscellaneous tools, \$25 a year; assistant pro, \$1,260 (7-month season); club cleaning boy, \$700 (7-month season); (above two items include board and room); balls for personal use, \$150; miscellaneous merchandise, \$100 (prize gifts, etc. for advertising); golf clothes, shoes, caddy-hire, etc, \$250.

"There is a total of \$2,915 that I think is average overhead on an annual \$10,000 business having a gross profit of less than a third. Try and find the net profit with the naked eye, and then decide whether the pro ought to have all the sales he can make at the club. Remember, these figures are on metropolitan district clubs.

"Some of the golf club presidents may question the item of balls. The above given

figure was obtained from four pros in a metropolitan district. The pros don't get balls free by the dozen for the asking, despite the general impression to the contrary. In fact Santa Claus goes past him on almost everything. If a pro plays quite a little golf during the season it is not hard to figure up a ball expense of \$150 at wholesale price.

"Members are amazed when they figure up the number of brands of balls carried by the average good pro shop in the 'big time.' Here is an actual list made at one of the Chicago District pro shops, showing the manufacturers' names and the number of differently marked (mesh and dimple) and priced balls carried during the 1927 season:

U. S. Rubber	4
Spalding	4
P. G. A.	1
Wilson	2
MacGregor	2
Wanamaker	4
Walter Hagen (L. A. Young Co.)..	2
St. Mungo	4
Dunlop	2
Goodyear	2
Harlequin	1
Wright & Ditson	1

Twenty-nine different kinds of balls carried in stock! Figuring the cost roughly at \$80 a gross, the pro has around \$2,320 tied up in balls alone at the start of the season. The average pro, however, would have about 20 different balls, or a \$1,600 stock. Ball stocks turn over around five times a year and clubs, with a reasonably good big stock, only 2 times. It's no unusual thing for an established pro to commit himself to \$5,000 in purchases before the season really opens. If he wants to have a stock big enough to satisfy all of his members, the chances are that he will have to carry over about 20% of his stock of clubs from one year to the next. Try to figure profit with such a frozen asset. It's hard for me to do.

"With the clubs the pro has a tough job in selecting stocks. More woods are sold than any other type of club, with the exception of "trick clubs" that come in temporarily and boom the market. This past year there was a putter that got a great play. I have heard of plenty of pros who started out with an order of 25 of these putters and turned over their stock four times during the year. There also were some aluminum brassies, spoons and driv-

ers that were novel and went big. The matched-set idea promised to increase the rate of club turn-over but apparently both the manufacturers and the pros got tired of the idea and didn't keep on pushing it like it deserved.

"We have to get all the help we can from the manufacturers on selling clubs, and I think we have it coming. The pro makes the market for good golf clubs. If you doubt it, just consider this hypothetical case for a minute: Suppose a manufacturer made two brands of the same clubs; one of them a brand approved and handled solely by the pro and the other, one entirely for the department store trade. Which brand would the golfers be most anxious to get? The pro brand, of course. Department store experience shows that the clubs that go best are those for which the pro has established a reputation.

An Average Income

Bank president salaries are reputed to be the order of the day in the pro ranks, and very few members know how far from the truth this idea is. Outside of the salary, which usually just allows the pro to get by, there is club cleaning, averaging in most metropolitan clubs about \$1,000 a year, and the lessons.

"Take this average club of 350 members. The lessons, when they run \$1,000 a season mean that the pro is pretty good or lucky. The way the lessons usually go by months is:

May	\$ 50
June	200
July	450
August	250
September	75
October	20

"And there you have \$1,045 worth of lessons for an average season in the ordinary metropolitan district club. The members think during the high spots of the season that the pro is making a killing on lessons because it's rather difficult to get appointments. The reason is that the member is in a traffic jam.

"Help from the officers of the club will get the pros out of their present precarious position. The potential market of 500 people (in a club having 300 regular members) can be somewhat stirred up as buyers by the pro, and completely aroused if the pro has the help of the club officers. It ought to be considered disloyal instead of smart for a club member to boast of

buying his balls wholesale or from some other cut-price source, for it is taking away from the pro what little profit he ought to have in return for giving his entire and best efforts to the advancement of the club.

"The pro is no gold-digger and he certainly is no plutocrat. If our presidents and chairmen will help us get this idea across to the members our officials will make it possible for us to give our clubs "the last full measure of devotion" and not be worried to death wondering how we are going to keep our families with the comforts they should have in this land of the free."

And there you have the cases the pro wants to bring to the attention of his officials. Talk over with your pro how he can make a good business out of his job and you have done something that will have many bright reflections during your administration.

Hints on Remodeling Greens

By Charles Erickson, Minikahda Club

DURING the past twenty-seven years I have visited a great many golf courses in the United States and I have especially noticed the different methods used in grading, sodding and remodeling greens.

Thousands of dollars have been lost because of the awkward or slow methods that were employed through a lack of knowledge of the proper way to do the work.

The first thing to do when building or remodeling a green is to look it over carefully and determine how many teams and men can be used to advantage. Make a model of your green, and give the chairman an estimate, as near as you can, of its approximate cost. This, in itself, will give you some good experience.

When you do your grading, make it just as nice and smooth as possible. Then take a roller and go over it carefully. Now look over your green and see if there is any hollow or ridge, then take a sharp garden rake and true it up just as nice as it can be done. Before starting to lay the sod, always water it lightly, and it will not require so much water afterwards. Lay some light planks or heavy boards end to end across the green. Have a man with a wheelbarrow wheel the sod out on the planks to where it is wanted. Never wheel a wheelbarrow or walk across grading. Lay your sod close to the planks in straight

rows across the greens, using your planks for a guide.

As you get away from the planks in the center of the green, use some light boards to walk on instead of tramping on the newly-laid sod. Never walk on a newly-laid sod or grade before it has hardened; if you do you will have a lot of trouble afterwards. I always lay the sod and draw it with a shovel. In that way you can lay several thousand square feet in a day.

After your sodding is done take a heavy tamper and tamp where it is uneven. Now put on your top dressing, and it will only be a short time before your green is ready to play.

I visited a club recently where five men were at work laying a green. Three of the men were carrying the sod across the grade, one was laying the sod, and the other was sitting down tamping it with a brick. You can readily see this method was costing the club far more than it should, and when it was finished they did not have a perfect green.

A greenkeeper should always watch his step. If you do this you can save the budget, and it won't be long before your salary will be increased. Remember, always watch your step.

Amherst, Mass.—Massachusetts Agricultural College now has a seed analyst and a well-equipped seed laboratory for issuing authentic information on germination and purity tests for seed, in accordance with the state seed laws that recently went into effect.

Club officials desirous of getting in touch with greenkeepers, professionals and managers available for service this coming season may secure, without cost, a list of good men by writing GOLFDOM.

Don't delay in employing your men for the season. The demand for the best men is usually greater than the supply and the club that postpones action trusts too much to luck.

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