

What's in the Pro Job?

*The Bright and the Drab Sides of
a Professional Career Analyzed by*

BOB WHITE

AMONG the obstacles that are handicapping the work of putting golf on a business-like basis is that of delay. It is difficult to get a golf club's operations on as substantial basis of promptness as that of a well conducted business enterprise, but there are plenty of places wherein avoidable delay penalizes the club and its employees in more ways than that of unpardonable extravagance.

One of these sources of vexations and costly delay concerns the employment of a professional. I have often wondered why a pro job reported open in November is not filled until March, with everyone on the anxious seat all winter. The golf manufacturers are forced to make up rush stocks at the last minute and the pro shop doesn't get operating properly until the season is pretty well advanced, so everyone pays the cost of the last minute rush. Even when the selection of the pro is "cut and dried" the other pros, who are eagerly awaiting an opportunity to make a connection, are not given treatment that really is fair, because definite news of the appointment has not been made.

Some of the delay would be avoided if the pro knew just how to go about getting connected with the right club for him. He would be able to "sell" himself properly. One thing that a pro should think about is a cold-blooded analysis of his job. One of the troubles with pro golf is the fact that many so-called professionals who have so few qualifications for a pro job are calling themselves "pros" and subjecting the legitimate pros to competition that victimizes the able pros and the golf clubs alike. These pseudo professionals get into the pro business thinking that everything is all "peaches and cream." But golf as a professional's source of income makes stern demands.

Let us consider the advantages and disadvantages of a golf professional's career. For the purpose of discussion, we will limit the various angles of the subject to seven topics, placed in three groups for

closer classification. To most of us, the item of financial interest is first to be considered and it will be so regarded in this article.

Financial Advantages.

1. No rent problem for shop.

2. Trade secured without advertising expense.

3. Income fairly good.

4. Possible "tips" on business deals from members.

Physical Advantages.

1. A healthful career.

Social

Advantages.

1. Opportunity to meet a very desirable class of people.

2. Opportunity to travel.

Financial

Disadvantages.

1. Uncertainty of business due to weather conditions.

2. Difficulty of collecting certain charges.

3. Danger of loss of stock by robbery.

4. Department store competition.

Physical

Disadvantages.

1. Mental and physical strain of teaching.

Social

Disadvantages.

1. Uncertainty of permanent address.

2. Possible disfavor of the "all important" member.

For proper explanation, let us devote a paragraph to both sides of all the points as listed above, bearing in mind that no particular professional's position is being considered but merely the profession as a whole.

Money Angles

1. The item of rent is always very important to one in business and it is undoubtedly a splendid aid to the professional to know that this overhead is eliminated. It is only fair that the club furnish quarters for the professional at no cost to him since it is clearly seen that he is under a handicap because of his dependence upon weather conditions. These are particularly uncertain in the early spring.

following a winter of unemployment for the average professional golfer.

2. Advertising has always been considered a great aid to business, and the fact that the professional secures his trade without more than a small item of this expense is an advantage to him. But, on the other hand, he cannot pick his customers and almost all professionals will vouch for the fact that there is always some money "standing out." Unless the golf club protects the professional in his financial dealings with the members, there is quite likely to be a definite loss to him each season.

3. The golf professional's income is usually satisfactory, despite the handicaps of weather and unpaid charges due him. He earns his money through strict devotion to his work. However, even conscientious effort may go to naught due to the fact that the average golf shop is easily accessible to thieves. Records are not available concerning the quantities of golf balls and other goods stolen yearly but to the writer's belief the figure is large.

4. Often in the course of a friendly match, a professional with some surplus funds to invest learns of a profitable business deal. However, that is a matter of uncertain results.

A real definite handicap to the professional is the tendency of department stores to conduct sales of low priced and often poorly made golf goods which affect the business of the professional at his club. This is possible because of the resources and far reaching facilities of the store, which competition the professional cannot meet without the co-operation of his members. Consider this, club officials: the department store has many interests, the professional only one. Which is more likely to give the closer attention to the quality of merchandise? If standard goods, the price is the same at either store or shop so why not help the professional whose business is necessarily limited to the members of his club? There are no restrictions of this nature imposed on the store. The professional will expand his stock to take in clubs of all prices if he has sufficient demand.

Health Side of Pros Job

1. Undoubtedly a golfer's career is a healthful one, combining exercise with the necessity of working outdoors, teaching and playing. But, there is a severe strain, of a mental and physical nature imposed.

If you compare the hours of a golf instructor with those of a college professor, a football coach, a music teacher, etc., you will find that the average professional is engaged in his duties longer and more arduously than any other type of tutor.

Social Advantages

1. In the course of his duties, a professional comes in contact with a high type of people who often take a decided interest in his welfare and aid him to secure greater benefits from his knowledge of golf. But the fluctuating fortunes of the average professional force him to change his position at frequent intervals. For that, of course, he can hardly be censured, but such traveling makes it impossible to reap the full advantages of all his friendships.

2. The opportunity to travel afforded the professional, particularly during the winter months when play on northern courses is suspended, brings him a great deal of pleasure, with the attendant expense. To travel during his active season, the average professional must sacrifice his income from business to a large extent in addition to railroad and hotel expense. His activities in this direction are also likely to create dissatisfaction at the club, particularly if it be a "one man" club with important influence behind "him."

Summing up the situation in a few words, it seems that the benefits and handicaps of the professional golfer should be considered thoroughly before the low scoring amateur and graduated caddie decide to enter the game as a livelihood.

Let each consider that while the sport is increasing in popularity, its very nature is such that professional golfers remain in their positions for twenty-five, thirty and thirty-five years or more. Charles Hunter was professional at the Prestwick, Scotland, links for more than fifty years and his son David has been so employed at the Essex County Country Club, West Orange, New Jersey, for more than twenty-five years. Other cases can be mentioned.

If the newcomer to the ranks of professional golfdom will be reconciled to a start at the foot of the ladder, that is as caddie-master or assistant professional, it will work to the future advantage of all concerned. Ability does not remain unknown on such a widespread testing ground as a golf course and the experienced and expert employee reaps his reward.