

Small town golf progress has MORE "DOUGH" FOR THE PRO recommended as paying policy

By HERB GRAFFIS

IT will be a happy era for more than a thousand of the golf clubs in the United States when they pay their pros more money, to say nothing of the joyous time it will be for the pros. In a good many of these cases it will mean, all by itself, the difference between having a club of comparatively few members, and they only casually interested, and having a lively, pleased "standing room only" roster of the best people in the community and a real place for them to enjoy golf.

Lately I have been doing some visiting and writing among golf clubs in the smaller places. Many of the places I have visited have course locations that are enchanting the metropolitan golfer with their scenic beauty and golfing possibilities. In this respect the average small town course has a big edge on the metropolitan district clubs. But you'd weep to see how easily corrected architectural mistakes make some of these courses tragic messes on the landscape, how utterly neglected fairways and greens make golf a joke, and how even the ghosts of dead hopes have all but left some places. Some ex-caddie, maybe still in his teens and rarely three years older than the voting age, is around the place, hoping luck will award him enough dough at the end of the year to get him out of town. A few lessons to some of the women, a few club and ball sales, a little practice to "keep his hand in" and that's the day.

Yes, it may be partly the kid's fault. Maybe he should be "making a job for himself," but, my dear Mr. President, you know most of us are unfortunately inclined to act like human beings and work according to our wage scale. A good caddie, with a fair break in luck, could make in a metropolitan district season about what the pros at a large number of the smaller town clubs get for their season's work.

On the other hand I have seen places where there are 9-hole courses that are gems. Most of their hazards are natural, the fairways are in good shape, and with an even break in the weather the greens

are remarkably good. The members play a lot at the club, the clubhouse parties are the bright spots in the community's social life, and the club ends with a balance in the bank at the end of the year. In these instances I have seen recently of notably successful small town clubs, their pros are getting money enough to lay up tidy little balances, and their appreciation of this opportunity is plainly shown by the character and value of their service to their clubs.

How the Pro Helps

Don't kid yourself that the pro doesn't earn every cent he gets at these places. He is pro and greenkeeper and house manager as well, for the cook and waitresses, when the club has them regularly, depend on him to help things go smoothly in the clubhouse. He takes an interest in the condition of the course and clubhouse and the satisfaction of the members, for he isn't on the verge of "starving to death," and can concern himself with the development of the club's affairs instead of worrying about his own immediate future.

His members show the result of the club officials' co-operation with the pro for they buy good golf merchandise from him instead of getting bargain (?) second-rate stuff carried as a necessary evil in sidelines by local stores that are by no means qualified as selectors of golf merchandise or suppliers of helpful sales service to golfers.

He is proud of his course. There's not much money he can spend on it, but he makes every nickel count, and he's a long way from being above manual labor on the course himself when he sees some work that has to be done or when he can show the nearby farmer who maintains the course how to do it better.

The average club official would be surprised at the number of letters concerning course maintenance matters we get from pros at the smaller clubs who are anxious to bring their establishments up to big city standards. Orders for books on turf development and course architecture and

construction come in from the ambitious pros in the smaller towns at a rate to identify these men as one of the most promising factors in the progress of golf outside of the metropolitan territories. There are a lot of fine, ambitious young fellows being developed as small town pros right along, and a lot of mighty good, but sadly discouraged and underpaid, boys in these situations today. Of course, there are some of the small town pros who are temperamentally hopeless and valueless, but the survival of the fittest takes care of them.

If the smaller town club is to make the most of its splendid opportunity in golf it might as well make up its collective mind now that money must be invested in a carefully selected and competent pro. The club will save money over a two or three-year period and get ahead in flourishing fashion by picking the right man and giving him enough to make the job and the opportunity attractive. There are plenty of good boys, studious, energetic and conscientious, to supply this crying need. Some of them have small town jobs right now, but have about abandoned hope and interest because of the short-sighted policy of under-paying that too generally prevails.

I've talked over my observations and conclusions with club officials, manufacturers and professionals and find that they check with me. So it looks from where your correspondent sits now that the slogan for advancement of good golf in the smaller towns should be "More Dough for the Pro."

Bike Rangers Speed Up Course Traffic

TODAY, due to the greatly increased popularity of the game and the apparent increase in ardency on the part of the players, the expediting of heavy week-end play has become a more pressing question than ever before.

Vincent X. McGuire, head of both the Old Westbury Club at Garden City, L. I., and the Clearview Club at Bayside, L. I., working with his Green committee chairman, seems to have hit upon an ingenious solution of the problem with uniformed rangers equipped with bicycles.

These rangers are given roving commissions and are furnished with a set of easily readable course rules. Whenever there is hold-up on the course they speed to the point of congestion. If slow players or lost

balls are responsible for the clogging, the ranger approaches the offenders and, in a nice way, tells them that he is acting for the Green committee and that golfing manners demand that slower players give way to the faster ones. He shows them the rules and his authority for approaching them and asks if they don't want to let the players behind them go through. "At all times the duty of the ranger is to interpret the club rules to the members rather than enforce them. Of course, the ranger must be a neat appearing, courteous young man with more tact than authority," says President McGuire, commenting on his latest innovation.

"However, this is purely a matter of proper supervision and schooling by the caddy master or some other duly constituted authority. In our case I thought, and our Green committee heads agreed with me, that the approach and contact of the ranger, or traffic man, was so important that we personally took a hand in his education and instruction. Our rangers not only look to the speeding-up of play but also to violations of playing procedure. By this I mean if impatient players are driving into the match ahead of them, which sometimes happens in the best of regulated clubs. The ranger takes up the complaint of aggrieved players and adjusts it with those responsible. If players are taking divots and not replacing them, the ranger's job is to take up the violation with the caddies, not the players. All of which makes for better club spirit and adds to the golfing pleasures of our members, in my opinion. Carrying criticisms back to the locker room is hardly conducive to club camaraderie.

"We impress upon the rangers and the members that these men are there to make things pleasanter for all and not for policing purposes. They suggest and inform and can never demand anything. They are asked to report to the Green committee cases where members are not open to reason, and this precludes members making charges with possible consequent ill-feeling. Our members also tell me it is nice for them to know that when they are a half-mile from the golf house or club house that there is always within beck and call an employee ready to render them a service.

"Unless the system shows some marked weakness not yet revealed, the Green committees at both Old Westbury and Clearview, I am quite sure, will continue it in force."