

Sitting Around the Tee and Talking It Over

*—some random observations
on the pro golf business*

By ARTHUR GRANT, CHARLES HALL
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ARTHUR GRANT, pro-manager at Sagamore Spring G. C., Lynfield Center, Mass., has an operating policy he sums up this way: "Always be courteous to everyone." Grant makes that more than a phrase. It's a tough job to do for golf has a quality of showing up a man's true character. If a fellow's inclined to be unduly exacting and get red-eyed about anything, this part of his disposition shows up at the course and harshly tries the patience of the pro, who, as a free-born American citizen, yearns to smack the unreasonable rough-rider squarely on the button. It takes balance, judgment and all around first class character for a pro to handle the chronic complainers, but Grant does it in a way that not only draws play to his course but plenty of business into his shop.

Below is a letter from Art showing how this policy of interested courtesy works out in beating cut-price competition. When it works with fee course players who are most liable to the cut-price come-ons, it should work even better at the private courses. Grant says:

Grant Gets 'Em

"Here is a tip that might help some of the boys make a few more sales before the season is over. As you know, I am the pro manager of a semi-private course about 15 miles north of Boston, and have done a very good business although the course is only a season old.

"There are quite a few of my players who have been buying their clubs in Boston at some of the cut price stores. One day last week one of them came to me on the first tee and asked me why it was he always sliced his ball off the tee, but never sliced it on the fairway, so I went to work and straightened him out as well as I could without holding up the other players on the tee.

"At the time there was a pro visiting me. He walked over to me and said: 'I think

you are very foolish to be giving out free information to those guys as they never take any lessons or buy a club from you—and you don't get any thanks for it. I would tell them nothing.'

"I thought it all over and finally decided that he was wrong.

"A few days later the same player walked into my shop and said he had decided to get a real set of clubs and take a few lessons. He said he was all through with the bargain clubs and trying to teach himself the game, and he was going at it right. He said his tee shots were much better that day, and he appreciated my helping him that day as he had invited a friend up to play with him and wanted to play fairly well after telling the friend he could play golf.

"I sold that same man a \$75.00 outfit, and he has started on a course of twelve lessons. He has had two already, and is improving.

"An interesting detail of the case is that while I was giving him a lesson the other day this same pro happened to be playing here, and asked me if that was the same fellow who asked me to tell him what was wrong with his tee shots. Then I told him about the sale and the lessons. He said he would try that same stuff. I think this policy might help some of the boys.

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Pro Selling As Hall Sees It

Plenty of use of the "fine Italian hand" is necessary in the pro's conduct as a money-maker believes Charley Hall, Birmingham, Ala., pro. Charley calls attention to the fact that if the pro becomes considered as a nickel-chaser by his members he defeats his aim of making a good profit.

In an interesting letter to GOLFDOM'S editor Hall expresses the opinion that too much stress can be placed on the merchandising end of the pro job. The big boy from Birmingham picks his word well as the first of Webster's synonyms for "stress" is "pressure." We fully agree with Charley that evident sales pressure is a bad thing

for the pro to exercise on his members, but under no circumstances do we wilt any in our belief that the pro must consider merchandising one of his most important functions. He has to sell so smoothly that the idea of service to the members rather than profit to the pro is uppermost in the minds of the members. That's a slant that makes pro merchandising difficult. The manufacturers, too, must appreciate that one big reason why the pro is firm as the leading factor in establishing the golf market is because golfers consider the pro's selling as primarily a service to them and not an effort to push off on them something a fellow must sell to earn a living.

"Straight Salary" Menace to Makers

The following excerpt from Charley's letter will agitate the gray matter in many pro skulls and give manufacturers food for thought.

"After studying and gathering information wherever I could, I have two definite ideas that will help the professional as a whole. First, he must be educated in banking; the service the bank can give him; the importance of established credit through some reliable bank, and the importance of this credit in his standing as a professional and merchant.

"My second thought is, the professional has not made himself attractive enough to the manufacturer. As far as I know, there has been no effort on the professional's part to emphasize his importance as a customer builder and distributor. In my mind, there can be no denying the fact the manufacturers owe the professionals much for the increase in business.

"There could be no greater tragedy happen to the manufacturers than have all the professionals go on solely salary jobs. The sale of golf goods would suffer a real slump. This is not impossible if the manufacturers keep giving the stores the inside track in prices.

"I am of the opinion too much stress can be placed on the merchandising end of the professional's duty, so likely to stamp him as a dollar-grabber. After all, a professional is supposed to be a professional man, and not a merchant. A professional cannot hold the respect of his members by being considered mainly a merchant.

"First and last, he must be a teacher and diplomat; merchandising should be, for the professional's outward actions, a side line. His action toward his members must be that of artist and teacher."

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How many pros cash in during the winter on the fine personal contacts they

have made during the playing season? The number of star amateurs who are in the security business apparently has tipped off some of the bright young pros to what can be done by a good golfer selling stocks and bonds.

Elmer Biggs, pro at the Peoria (Ill.) Country club is a bond salesman during the winter, and a good salesman, too. He knows his stuff in the bond line and makes a profitable and proper use of his extensive acquaintance among wealthy men and of his knowledge of security details.

Another fine young fellow has left the pro ranks to engage altogether in the security sales game. Eddie Murphy, formerly pro at Ridge C. C. (Chicago District) resigned as pro before this season opened and went with a Chicago house. Friends of ours who are in a position to know say that Eddie is doing very well and is highly regarded as a promising captain of finance by security buyers and sellers.

British pros credit Hagen with having had a whole lot to do in advancing them toward the same sort of pro-member relations that the American pro and club member enjoy as a matter of course.

Additional evidence of "The Haig's" happy part in this development is available in the recent news that the Moortown Golf club, where the Ryder Cup matches were played, elected the skillful and swarthy Walter an honorary life member on the occasion of his visit as captain of the All-American team for the Ryder cup.

Norman Huntley, honorary treasurer of the Moortown club, notifying Hagen of his election, wrote, in part:

"I am enclosing you herewith the card which we have had prepared in connection with your honorary life membership of this club, and I am requested by the committee to again express their great pleasure upon that election. We hope that you will enjoy that membership for many many years, and whilst perhaps you will not be able to make active use of it very often, it may remind you of the very happy occasion which prompted the conferring of it."

Winter clubs wanting expert men as pros, greenkeepers and managers are invited to ask for GOLFDOM'S list of available men.