

# Pros Tells Long Path of U. S. Golf Progress

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**T**O A PRO who will sit down and think over his business it must be obvious that pro golf is at the threshold of a new period. Some of us who count ourselves veterans in the game are still young enough to cash in, and cash in richly during this new day. We are not alone in having this opportunity, for the growth of golf has opened up new possibilities of increased earnings for the qualified greenkeepers and managers as well as for the able and foresighted men in our own department of the golf business.

When I started in pro golf in this country in 1910 I was put by destiny in a position to make a fortune, but I didn't know it, nor did hardly any of the other professionals who preceded me, or started about that time. We didn't realize how golf was to grow, and being primarily sport technicians rather than business men, we did not dwell on the commercial possibilities of the game. A few fellows like Bob Pryde and Joe Roseman grasped the opportunity to combine golf and the real estate business and today are rich men. They stuck to their lasts and have their money where it can't be taken away from them, something that can't be the boast of some of the boys who thought they were on the sunny side of Easy street by playing their members' market tips before stock nose-dived last fall.

With all the development there has been in daily-fee golf courses there still is lots of room for improvement in the location, construction

and operation of daily-fee courses and the experienced pro who will stack his knowledge and effort alongside the real estate owner's investment in property and cash continues to have a good chance at a fortune.

The daily-fee business is no "open sesame" to the mint. K. E. Goit, writing in the June issue of the Toro Mower company's magazine points out that the boys these days can't depend on rapid increases in real estate values and liquid asset status of real estate to run a shoe-string into a tannery via the fee course route. It's pay as they play to the course owner, these days. But still many owners of property are praying for quick property rises, and are finding at some dismal sessions with the bankers that they would have been in good shape if they had taken the guidance and participation of some good pro when their enterprise was being born.

The pros serenely slept when the fee golf course business was originating. They were asleep again when the man responsible for the Tom Thumb courses was making himself a millionaire in a year. Now let us hope there is some pro who is thinking out a way to get scoring on an interesting driving game that a dub can play? The way the nation loves to "lay on the ball" and the success of the miniature courses gives an idea of the possibilities.

In this daily-fee course business we are just beginning. Any pro with good business brains can



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do a lot to assure and promote the earnings of a properly located fee course, but the hard part of it is to sell himself and his record to the men with capital.

### Study Miniature Business.

Many of us made the mistake of thinking the miniature courses were "nut ideas" that wouldn't pay and would only last a troubled month or two. How many of us have studied their methods and seen what we can successfully apply to full sized courses? I am told that 60% of the miniature course play is at night. Now how many of us are figuring on the method, cost and probable effect on dividends of lighting systems that will make it possible to play eighteen holes after the evening meal? Minor league baseball earnings have responded in profitable fashion to this night lighting tonic.

I look back on my own history in the daily-fee golf business and cheerfully acknowledge myself a specimen of the professional who is too coy about cutting in for the pro's due share of the commercial golf profits he has piloted into the port of some other fellow's pockets. There's no lament on my part. These men with whom I have had, and still have, and the pleasure to be associated with, are first class business men. I've learned from them, and, I hope, have sufficient business acumen and energy to profit from my observations.

As this is one of those "True Confessions" sort of stories, the best I can do is to just review my own history in the American golf business. It's similar to that of many of the fellows whose careers as pros doesn't go back much more than 10 years. Read it over. The tale, except for names and places, probably is paralleled by that of 50 other pros. I think about it myself—about the fortune that old Harlem course has made—and would gladly kick myself were it not for it never being too late to learn, the way golf is growing in the United States.

### Tale of a Trail-Blazer.

When I came to this country in 1910, I worked one season with Brother Dave at Lake Geneva, Ill. Then I worked in the first golf school that was opened in Chicago. It was run by Geo. O'Neil and Al Naylor, Cleveland boys, and by Cliff Booth, who was assistant to Art Boggs at Kirkland. I'll never forget the time Booth and I borrowed a stepladder to hang the nets. The ladder was 15 feet long and

when crossing the car lines I got entangled in the elevated beams. This tied up traffic on Wabash avenue. A policeman came up on his horse and asked what to hell we were doing with the ladder. Being a little nervous I got my Scotch twisted and I said we were going to the "Gouf" school. He said he thought that we said goofy and called a wagon, but a friend explained that we were all right.

The following summer I was engaged as pro to the Riverside club. It had nine holes. I made good money and took a trip to New York where I sold and erected indoor nets, which paid me well.

Tom Bendelow, well known architect, had laid out a nine-hole course at Grand Beach, Mich., 60 miles from Chicago. I was sent there to start operations with a plan in mind to charge players as they played and to sell memberships for the season to people who rented cottages. This plan went over big and Grand Beach grew up overnight. Mr. Perkins, who was owner and president of the Fuller Adv. Co., helped the advertising. That was in 1912. I went to Scotland that winter to see how they operated some of the courses.

### Revise the Picnic Grounds

When I returned I became acquainted with a Dick Salter who managed the concessions at the old Harlem race track which was used for picnic grounds at that time. I suggested to him to build nine holes in the middle of the track which was well sodded. All he had to do was get some flags and hole rims and cut the grass. He did this and it was a success. He charged 50 cents at that time. Today it is a full 18, operating on the same basis. It was the first pay-as-you-play course in Chicago, to my knowledge.

I completed another nine holes at Grand Beach the same year and opened it on the same plan. This brought people from South Bend, Gary and Chicago. I had to use three different tees to start them off during the week-ends and a starter to start them off. I was there until 1914 and built another nine before leaving. At that time Mr. Perkins was planning to build a hotel.

In 1916 I had a plan in mind to go to some of the smaller towns and get them to lay out nine-hole courses in good pasture grounds. I happened to be wintering in Lake Geneva with Dave that winter. There I met a young fellow from Woodstock, Ill., who was golf crazy. I gave him my set-up and talked to several business men connected with the Oliver Type-

writer Co. They became interested. A course was laid out by me and I spent several days a week there. Then I planned a course just a few miles from there at Harvard, Ill. I made arrangements with some of the local men to carry my line of golf clubs and to book lessons on the days I would be in the city. I paid them a percentage on the clubs I sold or he sold, which I say was a healthy business for me. I also opened a course the same season in Dwight, Ill., and Pontiac, a few miles away. Frank L. Smith, who ran for Senator for Illinois a few years ago, and a Dr. Oughton started to play golf in the school I had in Chicago during the winter.

### Snake Charmers Get Course

Dr. Oughton was the originator of the Keeley cure for drunkards in Dwight. He and Frank Smith became interested in the idea of laying out a course on the fee plan. I laid out nine holes and spent many days in the fall of the year teaching the new golfers. The plan gave Dr. Oughton an idea to have his patients who were taking the cure play golf with the attendants. The attendants watched that the alcoholics would not go on a spree.

I spent the winter in a hospital at Joliet, Ill., with blood poisoning caused by a thorn bush sliver which I had picked up when staking out traps.

This year gave me the idea of operating several clubs instead of one which earned me a good income.

Tom Bendelow had laid out a nine-hole course in Green Bay, Wis., and he sent me to open it. I spent two months there and enlisted in the army. After being discharged I returned to Green Bay, Wis., for another season in 1918. Bendelow had started another nine-hole course in Mason City, Iowa, which had to be constructed. I took my brother Bruce along with me as assistant and started the same plan in operating courses, one at Charles City, Iowa, Osage, Iowa, and Austin, Minn. The latter was built on property owned by the Geo. Hormel Packing Co. of that city.

I used a new plan there. I would lay out a course at a nominal fee with the agreement that all players who started the game would buy their golf outfits and instructions from me. This helped many to get the right start in golf. I never was idle and kept going all the time.

### Makes Real Estate Tie-Up.

I came to Cleveland in 1920 to sell automobiles with my brother Bruce who had the Locomobile agency. At this time I

was trying to sell a car to H. A. Stahl and during my conversation we talked golf. I happened to mention the Grand Beach plan which interested him very much. I talked the pay-as-you-play courses for Cleveland and he mentioned Ridgewood. I tried to sell the idea to Bert Way and several pros. I tried to arrange for us to lease this land and start a course. I looked over the land, but I could not get them to see the proposition. In the meantime the depression came and I received a wire from Mr. Perkins that they had completed the hotel and he would like me to come back and operate the course. This I did during the seasons 1922 to 1924. I then completed another 18 holes for play.

At Grand Beach during the seasons I employed two instructors and two club makers. I then went to Michigan City, 10 miles from Grand Beach, where a small nine-hole course was in play. They could not afford a professional so I had one of my instructors come for two days a week to teach. I kept a stock of clubs and balls with the caretaker so players could get the same service as other clubs. I also went to another club, 16 miles up the lake. My wife would drive the instructors to the courses and keep track of the stock. The repairs kept Jean Duncan, one of the oldest men in the game, busy. I found this plan of merchandising a money maker.

I came to Cleveland that winter and laid out a small course for a Mr. Emery who was promoting the Cedarhurst course on the Corrigan estate. Mr. Stahl in the meantime engaged Grange Alves to lay out a course at Ridgewood which was about completed in 1924. He hired me to open it up on the pay-as-you-play plan which gave me a chance to use my ideas on operation. The starting system and private club regulations seemed to put it over. I spent five years at Ridgewood and when it went back to the public play it was better than ever. When Willowick members were to move to the new course I talked Mr. Stahl into the plan of operating on the chain idea.

Having had many inquiries from different cities on leasing or operating courses I decided to resign from the Willowick Co. and proceeded to act as consultant to several courses. Having looked over Lost Nation in the fall of 1928 I knew it would make a nice golf course for public play on the Privilege idea. It opened Aug. 15th of last year, and has been well patronized, although several miles from the city.