

Wandering Golfer Surveys the Pro's Business Ways

By HARVEY KENDRICKS

HERE is an article written by a traveling salesman for a carpet mill. He is a golfer of only medium ability, but that doesn't cramp his ambition to play at least 1,000 different courses before he gets too old to wield a putter. At last report he had shot 476 different layouts.

Having visited so many clubs, Kendrick has had plenty of opportunity to observe the ways in which the various departments of a golf organization are run, and while this is his first attempt to pose as an authority, his analysis of what a professional should be carries considerable information for the pro interested in checking up on his own rating as an A-1 operator.—Editor.

I was about six years ago I started collecting golf courses. By that I don't mean I buy them, or anything like that—simply, the nature of my work takes me to a great many cities each year and I have made a hobby of seeing how many different courses I can play over before I get too old to trudge 18 holes.

I have played courses that were manicured and polished and groomed like the hands of a violinist, and courses that were nothing much more than nine tin cans spotted around a stubble field; courses with clubhouses more ornate than Roxy's movie hut in New York City, and courses without a building anywhere on the property; layouts where you had to be a millionaire to belong, and clubs where the mere possession of a cracked-shafted niblick was the open sesame to full course privileges.

Naturally, these wanderings of mine have given me a well-rounded education in the principles of running a golf club successfully, since the member who is my

host in each of my various games invariably outlines in considerable detail the features that make *his* club the best in that part of the country, and leads me on a personally conducted tour of the clubhouse, the locker-room, the pro-shop, and what have you.

In the pro-shop we generally chat for five minutes or so with the golf professional, and after we leave him, the proud member tells me all about his good points, and sometimes his weak ones. So I've gotten to know just about all there is on the *surface* of a pro job from the members' standpoint and I think, if my golf game was only better, I could give up peddling carpets tomorrow, turn pro, and do a pretty good job of it. At least I could fool the members for quite a while into thinking I was the genuine article.

Of course, I wouldn't be a real pro since I wouldn't know how to teach or make clubs or even what sort of a brassie is most suitable for a portly member with a pot belly and a rusty-gate swing. But, believe me, I could manage the details of *acting* like a 100% pro—and here's what I'd do.

First of all comes personal appearance. I'd make it a point always to be just a little better dressed than 90% of my members. I'd wear good-looking knickers, sweater and stockings, with polished sport shoes and a clean, unwrinkled shirt. To complete the ensemble I'd be clean shaven and let the sun get at me until I was well tanned up. And I'd try to keep my hands from looking like a ditch-digger's.

In the matter of behavior, I'd be mighty careful to stick close to the shop when not giving lessons so as not to miss any member who wanders around to buy something from me. I'd take an occasional Monday off and maybe one other morning a week, but the rest of the time I'd be on the job.

And I'd keep out of the clubhouse, especially the locker room, except when on business. I've seen plenty of pros who seemed to get a big kick out of loafing on

the benches in the locker-room, but I never yet have heard a member commend a pro for his bench-parking abilities. I don't think it pays for a pro to get too intimate with his members, for after all a sort of employer-employee barrier exists, a barrier the pros should welcome because it makes the job of impartial service to each and every member just so much easier. It seems hardly necessary to mention that I would never accept a drink on the club property; that's common-sense policy.

I'd build up good-will in a number of ways. I'd learn to recognize every member and call him by name, and I'd always do it this way: "Good-morning, Mr. Smith," never "What's on your chest, Bill?"—in other words, last names always. If the opportunity offered, I'd ask him how his game was, because many times the apparent or real interest of a pro in a member's progress "sells" the pro to the member like nothing else can do, and leads to sales.

Whenever a player complained that he was having trouble with certain shots, I'd pass him out a *minor* playing tip that might fix him up, at the same time telling him that if that didn't work I'd be glad to give him a lesson and get at the root of the trouble.

Occasionally, when business was light around the shop, I'd cut myself in on a game with some of the members; never in advance, however, but always as a two-some or threesome was starting out. And I would refuse to gamble with them for obvious reasons.

Local exhibition matches for charity, district and sectional open tournaments would always find me among those present; such matches are written up in the newspapers and the publicity is worth a lot more than the time sacrificed.

In the matter of lessons, my first rule would be promptness. Nothing can ruin the temper of a member quicker than to come out for lesson and find the pro has overlooked the appointment or has been called away and will not be back for fifteen minutes.

My second rule would be to be generous with my time. Lessons are not very interesting to the teacher, whether it's reading, writing, arithmetic or midiron shots, and many pros tend to shorten a half-hour lesson to 25 minutes and an hour's session to 55 minutes through sheer boredom and a hope the member will not notice he has

been short-timed. Too long a lesson is better than too short.

Thirdly, whether I felt so or not, I would appear on the surface to be extra-special interested in solving the pupil's golf miseries. Not for a moment during the lesson would I let down in pace. And this business of keeping the session business-like would apply *with double force* when instructing women members; one unfortunate familiarity and many a pro's reputation has sunk below par.

So much for my own personal efforts. How about my shop?

Most important of all, it would be clean, spotlessly so, at all times. I'd stand for no dust anywhere and be generous with the paint brush. I'd have my stock of merchandise pleasingly arranged, easy to reach and handle, and every single item plainly price-marked.

There would be a good representative stock of all leading brands of golf goods, but I would not attempt to stock every possible want of my members, especially if another brand was just as good or superior.

No need to stop when the shop has been made spotlessly clean. My shop will be decorated with pictures of well-known golfers, famous golf holes and important tournaments of the past. The more I can make it look like a golfers' art gallery, the better I'll like it, because my shop will then be one of the sights of the club, members will bring their guests around to show them the exhibit, and this will react indirectly by boosting my shop sales.

Of course I will not overlook full use of manufacturers' display signs and posters. This freely-offered publicity material has cost them a lot of money to prepare, and properly scattered around the shop will add color and appeal to my salesroom.

In addition to a representative line of golf goods, my shop will carry a limited line of men's haberdashery. No sense trying to compete against the local menswear merchants by carrying everything a member can possibly ask for, but some good quality golf hose, sport shirts, sport belts, garters, caps, rain jackets, sweaters, windbreakers, and ties will sell readily and add considerably to my yearly income.

In the matter of shop selling policy, I would firmly hold to one major premise: "*The customer is always right.*" From the beginning, I think, it can be assumed that my members will be a pretty good bunch of sportsmen; therefore an open policy of

satisfaction will pay out in the long run, even though occasionally it may be abused. Better to lose ten dollars on one transaction than to turn loose in the locker-room a member disgruntled over a dealing with me, whether justified or not. Such a man can give birth to a lot of misery for the unsuspecting pro.

"*One Price to All*" is the second plan I would fix firmly in my selling platform. The prices marked on the merchandise would be the selling price to the president of the club, my best customer among my members, and everyone else. At the end of the season, I might have a clearance sale to reduce the winter stock carry-over, but such a sale if I held it would be heralded several weeks in advance to all the members by means of a sign in my shop and maybe a letter to their homes.

My members would never be charged for nominal service such as wrapping grips, refacing woods, binding-up cracked shafts and the like. Nor would I accept tips for these little jobs. They take up very little time and the fact that I am eager to extend the helping hand in these minor and purely "service" matters cannot help but boost my standing among my members.

I'd let any member try out a club before buying it; in fact, I'd almost insist he take it out for a round or two. Of course I'd expect him to take good care of the club and either buy it or return it in good condition within a reasonable period, but I am sure more sales would result from this policy than a less liberal one.

The women golfers at the club would come in for plenty of attention from me, because I believe the greatest addition to the ranks of golfers at my club must necessarily come from the wives and daughters of members, and any interest I can arouse in the game of golf among the women will be bound to result in sales of golf equipment from my shop. There's no real added expense involved in cultivating women's trade, but the profits are there—why not go after them?

The same thing, although somewhat less important, applies to the juniors around the club. I'd go after the sons and daughters of members with all the interest I could muster. I'd organize classes, arrange one-day junior tournaments, appeal to the natural competitive spirit of youngsters. Golf is comparatively static as a sport to persons under 18—they like a game with more action. Nevertheless, they are going to grow into my customers

later on, so I'll not neglect them just because they don't represent an immediate profit.

If the caddies were under my jurisdiction, I'd "sell" the club on uniforming them if I had to put up part of the cost myself. I cannot help noticing that clubs where the bag-toters are uniformed have the best trained boys. I suppose this is because more discipline is possible under such circumstances. And, of course, I'd hold a caddie school once a week to educate the boys in the finer points of their job.

There are plenty of other things a good pro must do it if he is to appear 100% to his members, such as handling club publicity, running club events, collecting green fees and settling disputes over the rules of golf. But why waste space describing perfectly obvious chances for service? The good pro does them as a matter of course.

I suppose the various points I have dwelt on in this article will seem pretty trite to the old timers among the pros. And even a lot of the younger members of the profession will smile at the obvious elementary points I have brought up. Yet I venture to say that not one pro out of a hundred, young or old, established or beginner, gives his job all the attention to detail it can stand, no matter how ambitious he is to boost his income. And a pro's job is a *detail job*—let no one tell you different.

Instead, if pros will use this article as a sort of self-analysis guide, will "rate" their activity in respect to each of the points brought up and pick out the ones on which they *know* they are weakest, and will then concentrate on remedying these faults, I am sure a great deal of reformation can take place and added profits result.

JACK DILLON DIES AT CHICAGO

Chicago, Ill.—J. H. Dillon, for a number of years a popular figure in pro golf activities in the central west, died early in May at Chicago, after a prolonged illness. Jack was a grand little fellow and a host of friends lament his passing. Prior to engaging in the golf manufacturers' business in Chicago, Dillon was Chicago manager for the Burke Golf Co.

The business of the J. H. Dillon Co. is being continued by Mrs. Dillon together with the boys who were operating the place during Jack's long illness.