

# New England Pros Buck Storm to Attend Business School

By WILLIE OGG

**A**TTENDANCE, spirit and definite value of the initial business conference of the New England Professional Golfers' Organization held at Worcester, March 7 and 8, proved so thoroughly satisfactory that the New England men are confident they have worked out something well worthy of adoption by other PGA sections.

About two years ago the writer proposed a national business conference for the pros. At that time the idea met with only lukewarm reception, but change in conditions revived interest in the suggestion to the extent that members of our section decided to hold a test session and see to what degree the idea was practical and helpful. We all were aware that pro business is going through a critical time, just the same as other businesses, and privately had decided that the moment was opportune to see just how deeply our men were interested in a concerted consideration of our problems.

We contemplated the conference with much trepidation, and when I got up the morning of the 7th and looked out the window, lo and behold, a blizzard was raging. Naturally breakfast was not pleasant and when I reached the conference room at the appointed time the only pros on hand were a few who had come by train during the night, and the local boys. We hung around for a while and kept getting reports that some of the roads were blocked. But the men kept coming along and it suddenly dawned on me when about 40 arrived that these same boys had braved a blizzard and blocked roads just to attend some "crazy conference" that we had had the nerve to arrange.

Faith in these boys was vindicated again, for during the 2 days more than 70 different pros attended when road traveling was at its worst. We felt buoyed up by the thought that the pros after all, if given the chance, would assemble together to discuss ways and means to be of more use to their clubs, and to work for the advancement of their chosen profession.

After the usual words of welcome the

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About two years ago Willie Ogg, president of the New England Professional Golfers' organization, proposed a business school for pros. The idea was given favorable consideration by the national pro body and its adoption on an active basis is scheduled for this year.

In the meanwhile the New England pros, plowing through a typical down east blizzard, inaugurated a highly successful school as an experiment.

The New England men are to be congratulated on their effort to work out the pros' problems by pro study. It should prove a great thing for the pros, the clubs these men serve and every other phase of the game.

It is a distinct and deep pleasure for GOLFDOM to felicitate Ogg and his team-mates on this pro business enterprise. Reasoning at the business conferences, instead of the assistants' riveting of steel shafts and heads, is the solid assurance for pro progress and prosperity.

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conference got under way. "Chick" Connolly, our local business manager or whatever the title should be, who has consented to serve us in that capacity just for the love of the game, addressed the assembly on what the pro should do for his club. It was agreed to by all that "Chick's" idea that the pro should give his advice and help in the work of all the outside departments and to qualify himself accordingly, was right.

## Pro Brings Members

Connolly also pointed out that during these times if a pro was employed at a club that needed new members it was the duty of the pro to get his club new members or help out in that respect. It was brought out during this talk that most of the boys present were already at work on

this idea and that results had been obtained in many cases, one pro having secured for his club 4 new members already.

Our next speaker was E. C. Conlin of the U. S. Rubber Co. I asked Eddie to come and talk to us, knowing full well that he had been around the country, knew our problems intimately, and that he could give us first hand information on business conditions. I warned Eddie that this conference idea was just a try out and that he might come to Worcester and find I was the only one to talk to, but he volunteered, come what may, for which I am devoutly thankful. Eddie's talk was most interesting and dealt mostly on the golf ball situation.

We got first hand information on the business outlook, prices on various golf balls on the market, margin of profit, and how the various grades of balls are constructed. Conlin offered us the opportunity to visit the U. S. Rubber plant to see golf balls made and I hope to arrange a date in the near future to take advantage of this offer, so that our boys will know what they are talking about when selling golf balls.

In closing his talk Conlin touched on the relations between manufacturer and pro and stressed the need of understanding between the two. To this we all say "amen." Speed the day when both will be working harmoniously together. Personally I believe this can be obtained much quicker through some easier method of approach between the two than has heretofore been provided.

### Cost of Doing Business

Bob Lowe, chairman of the Costs and Buying committee, followed. His committee has been working for some time trying to arrive at an average of the pros' costs of doing business. This committee found it rather difficult at first owing to the fact that very few pros had the same hook-up with their clubs; some clubs pay the assistant's wages, some pay part of the wages, and some not at all. However, this committee enumerated the items that enter into the cost of doing business and will provide printed forms to the pros to keep their monthly costs. The boys who have kept their costs and who pay all the assistants' wages averaged around 40%, including teaching and club cleaning, on their gross sales.

This tremendous cost for the New England section may be due to our short sea-

son, but whatever the reason, it certainly will have to be remedied. Eddie Conlin stated that his investigation showed that the pro made his salary plus his club-cleaning revenue.

This cost of doing business will be gone into further before anything positive is said about it. This much is sure, if the clubs knew how little the pros are getting out of their jobs I am sure they would not be picking on them now. I do not know who is to blame for allowing the idea to prevail that pros make \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year. Perhaps it is our vanity, but anyway we are setting out to knock this on the head and to present the true situation to the clubs. This can be done in several ways. The best method to my way of thinking is for the pro to send in to his club a yearly statement showing his profit or loss for the year. I am sure most clubs, if they knew the true picture of the pro shop, would either pitch in and help or raise the pro's salary. No club would dream of taking the shop over if they knew what was what.

As we have established our own clinic on clubmaking and repairing we met there during the afternoon for instruction on staining and finishing woods, assembling of woods and irons, and repairing. Our lab is part of a machine shop belonging to the Fleming Machine Co. here in Worcester, and we have been doing development work all winter. We have brought out a set of tools applicable to our work and it is our intention to use this lab to analyze goods offered us by manufacturers. We have had the help of a Mr. Ellingham on our tools, he being an expert mechanic. We have an expert on dyes and stains and varnishes, Mr. Van Wert, and a Mr. Adams, a math expert of General Electric, on matching clubs.

This lab and the use of the experts were at the boys' service and they took to it like ducks to water. They were at it all Monday afternoon and Tuesday forenoon. The lab can be used now at any time and any P. G. A. pro can go there to learn or to develop new ideas of his own.

### Study Instruction

Monday evening was utilized for teaching the golf swing, and I approached this event with fear and trembling. Alex Ellis handled this feature like a born diplomat. The P. G. A. ultra-slow motion pictures were used as a basis for discussion. What I feared would be a free for all

turned out exactly the opposite, for after the pictures were shown the discussion was of a very friendly nature. Needless to say the pictures were shown several times, for when a point could not be decided, on the picture would go again. They were shown backwards and forward time after time and the meeting adjourned with everybody happy and much wiser at 12:30 A. M. to resume the discussion, I am told, in their rooms till the wee sma' hours.

### To Examine Applicants

Tuesday afternoon was used for an open forum. There it was decided to form an Examination Board to pass on new applicants, the form of examination to be determined by the Examination Board and the Board of Directors. Other matters that came up were more or less of the usual nature except that of whether we should accept an offer of a scheme to guarantee our own member's accounts with the particular manufacturers who put the plan before us. It is curious to note that all the manufacturers approached on this scheme, which did not originate with us, did not seem to agree that we needed to do this, claiming that any manufacturers who lost money on bad accounts were themselves to blame.

Naturally being told this was pleasing news indeed, more especially when it is considered how often the argument of poor pro credit was used against us to excuse higher prices charged us. This matter is at present in abeyance until we find out just what the manufacturers want us to do.

Jack Mackie of the Metropolitan section visited us on the Monday and he kindly gave us a little talk. Jack, as we all know, has done as much for the pro as any man alive, and we naturally appreciated his visit. Jack mentioned in his talk that New England is setting a pace that the other sections would likely follow. If this should happen, New England will gladly offer to do anything to help out in this respect.

President Hall's letter to the conference was read and you may be sure was loudly applauded. Even though our efforts are confined locally to New England, it pleased the boys a lot to know that our president was thinking of us.

### Plan Greenkeeping Session

We did not have time during the two days to discuss greenkeeping and a whole

day has been set apart for this purpose. This will be held on April 4th. We did not think many of the boys would be interested in this phase of the business but they pleaded for a day on this alone and a day it shall be. Some thought these conferences should be held monthly but I am of the opinion this would be a mistake. It is my belief that conferences should be held from time to time, but not so often that they become a bore. Much more could be accomplished I am sure through visiting plants that make steel shafts, wood heads, forge shops, golf balls and so on, at least this will be tried out in the very near future.

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*Later information from Ogg states plans are maturing for New England PGO greenkeeping conference at Worcester, April 14. Special attention will be given cost-keeping systems. Ogg mentions opening up of so many retail outlets for golf goods as making profits precarious for all concerned. Pro name reduction of pro shop overhead, new work and more sales as activities necessitated by prevailing conditions.—Editor.*

## Midwest Handicap Annual at French Lick April 8

**M**IDWEST MEDAL play tournament with three flights will be inaugurated at French Lick, Ind., April 8. Tourney will run April 8, 9 and 10, with the championship flight determining "midwest champion." Flights are in 1 to 10, 11 to 20, and 21 to 30 handicaps. Eighteen holes will be played each day. Joe Davis, sec. of Chicago District Golf assn., will be in charge of handicapping. There is a fine prize list for the tournament.

A women's event will be played on the lower course and a women's bridge tournament also will be held during the week-end of the Midwest championship.

Early reservations indicate a field of more than 200 players. Arrangements made with French Lick Springs hotel and Monon railroad provide for an "all expense" rate of \$39.50. This rate includes round trip railroad fare from Chicago, round trip Pullman lower berth, room with bath and meals at French Lick Springs hotel. Railroad tickets are good for 2 weeks returning. Special train will leave Chicago Thursday night, April 7, at 9 P. M.

Further details or reservations may be had from Tom Heneage, 120 S. LaSalle st., Chicago; telephone, Franklin 0400.