

Pros Should Look to Lessons For Income Improvement

By B. R. LEACH

THERE ARE occasions when the course of events lead me to the conclusion that race horses and golf professionals have one attribute in common—they are both apt to be a bit high strung and not by nature adapted to the pulling of huckster's wagons.

This thought is simply the by-product of continued reading of articles in the golf magazines written with the object of impressing upon the pro the importance of a proper sense of merchandising in the management of his shop.

Not that I take exception to such articles or to the purpose intended. A well stocked and properly conducted shop is an important part of the pro's existence and an important source of his revenue. He cannot afford to neglect his shop.

Oddly enough, however, it isn't once in a blue moon that one sees an article about the teaching end of the pro's business, and this is all the more strange because the average pro makes—or should make—a good part of his jack in the teaching end of the racket.

Why the capable and observant Mr. Herb Graffis, Editor of GOLFDOM, has so signally failed to weave a few of his wise cracks around this theme of pro and teaching is entirely beyond me. It looks to me like a topic that could be thoroughly aired with profit to all concerned. Not that I know a single damned thing about teaching a dub how to play golf, nor that my ignorance on the subject is going to prevent me from writing about it.

Pains the Pro.

At any rate, it is not long since I was walking over the course with one of the high-class pros in the New York area. Suddenly he stopped dead in his tracks and fastened his eagle eye on a bozo up ahead. This bird had a niblic in his paws and at that moment took a crack at the ball with the idea in his mind of lifting the white pill onto the green. The lad slipped somewhere because the ball did not land on the green.

LEACH, Riverton's rootin', tootin', one-man revolution, slices out of bounds from his customary province of writing on greenkeeping matters for GOLFDOM. He unloads from the Jersey apple-jack belt some advice based on his observation of pros' work and profit possibilities, picked up while he was visiting courses as a turf consultant.

After seeing how the crowds go for the free lessons of Tom Armour and Gene Sarazen on their exhibition tour, we are very much inclined to think that Leach is handing the pro lads a banquet of thought in his tip that they put on more heat in the development of their lesson business.

"Look at that blankety-blank sod-buster mess up that shot," said the pro *sotto-voce* to me. "Every time I see him with an iron in his hand he makes me sick at my stomach."

"That member," continued the pro, "has been playing golf for the past ten years to my knowledge. He is good with the wood clubs, he is darned good on the green, but he certainly is lousy with the irons.

"I could take that member in hand, give him half a dozen lessons on the use of the irons, and fix him up so he could go out and back and clip off 5 strokes in the process."

"Why don't you go up right now and tell him," said I. "Maybe he will date you up for half a dozen lessons beginning Monday next."

"Yeah, why don't I!" he answered, "why don't I go and sink my teeth in a mules hind leg?"

"Wouldn't the pro business be a great racket if I could go up to a mugg like that and say—'For cripes sake, when are you going to wake up to the fact that you are simply no good at all with an iron. When are you going to wake up to the fact



That old gag about teaching interfering with playing is strictly the hooie as an alibi. Here's John Golden, uncomplaining journeyman star, who will turn in a thrifty score on any man's course, but is never too proud to spend hour after hour in the chilling early spring or simmering summer to tutor the muscle-bound matrons or the hard-headed male dubs who want to cut scores 10 strokes per lesson. The pupil John is unkinning is Lanny Ross, concert tenor

that you're only 66 per cent as good as you might be at this golf business? When are you going to give me the chance to polish up your play so that you can get all that you are naturally capable of getting out of the game? When are you going to begin getting full value for all the jack you spend as a member of this club?

Yes—IF.

"If I could only do that, in moderation," said the pro, "I'd make a lot more jack in a year's time and the members of this club would be better players and get the utmost out of the game."

All of which causes me again to repeat that I don't know a damned thing about the teaching of golf. All I know is what I see as I walk around the course. I watch the players day after day and have come to the private conclusion that half of them are all-round poor players, three-quarters of them are poor in 2 out of 3 branches of play while at least 90 per cent of them are weak in some one phase of the game.

Are these players aware of the fact that

they possess decided weaknesses as regards their playing of the game?

No doubt a certain percentage of them are sublimely blind or indifferent to the errors in their style. On the other hand I feel fairly positive that a very large per cent of these players are *fully aware* of their weaknesses in play. If this is the case one must naturally enquire as to why they don't do something about it. Why keep on being a dub or partial dub at the game when some intensive coaching at the hands of the club pro would work wonders in reducing their score for the 18 holes?

When a man becomes ill he has no hesitancy in consulting a doctor. That is the sensible thing to do and convention—that stern old tyrant which makes cowards of us all—endorses such action. But when a man's game of golf begins to ache all over, does he consult the golf doctor in the shape of the pro? Sometimes, but not as a matter of course. I have come to the conclusion that such consultation with the

pro does not as yet entirely carry conventional endorsement in golf club circles.

Globe-trots for Lessons.

Not long ago a friend of mine, who belongs to a local club, told me that at intervals he travels to a pay course 30 miles away. He doesn't go all that distance just to play golf—he goes there to get a bit of coaching from the pro. Furthermore, he told me why he goes to all that trouble.

It seems that in the past he had got this coaching from the pro at his *own* club. This pro was a sound man and my friend had no complaint as regards his services. Unfortunately on those occasions when he took a bit of coaching from the club pro the boys in the locker room sort of subjected my friend to a bit of gentle kidding and inasmuch as my friend is a sensitive sort of cuss and not very clever on the comeback he just naturally quit using the club pro and went 30 miles away for his lessons so his friends wouldn't know anything about it.

All this may sound damned silly but it probably comes pretty close to explaining why the average pro has a lot of time on his hands which could well be spent in teaching golfers how to be better golfers, with a resulting mutual profit.

It looks as though the average golf player still has considerable of the *little boy* encased in his cosmic carcass and that some considerable thought must be given as regards to the best way of shaking it out.

As long as the average golfer continues to entertain this small boy attitude just so long will the golf courses of this country be filled to repletion with poor players while the golf professionals exist on half rations.

The average small boy won't go to dancing school until his Ma grabs him by the left ear and drags him there. It's the same underlying reason which deters the average golfer from making use of the pro.

Under the circumstances the pro is up against an insurmountable stone wall. He cannot make contact with more than one-fourth of his potential customers comprising the club membership. As things now stand he teaches the beginners and a few of the older players who don't give a damn about being kidded but at that the average pro in my opinion seems to be getting about 25 per cent of the warranted teaching business he ought to be getting. I don't think the average pro is getting even a modest portion of the business he should

be getting in coaching the players who have gone sour or who are chronically sour, and unless I miss my guess it is this phase of the teaching racket which the average pro *must get* if he is to make any kind of dough during the course of a year.

Obviously, the individual pro cannot change this state of affairs. It can come about only through study of the problem by the pros as a group and through enlightenment of and co-operation by the clubs.

In fact it is probably time that the clubs gave the pros a break and helped them to help themselves. As matters now stand the club hires a pro and then seems to largely forget him. Consequently the pro is left to cool his heels when he should be out showing the members how to follow through.

Suggests One Free Lesson.

I often wonder what would happen if some enterprising pro, with the consent of the club authorities, offered to give *one free lesson* to each member of the club. Let the pro think this over for a day or two and then give free rein to his imagination. How would the members take it and what would it get the pro?

I am inclined to believe that the average golf player is a pretty good sport with an adequate sense of humor. All of them would instinctively sense the fact that the pro wasn't giving them a free lesson just to find something to do. They would realize the fact that it was a business proposition as far as the pro was concerned but I am certain that the members would instinctively appreciate the fact that the pro was *giving* all he had, namely his skill and time. I do not think the members would resent it.

Of course a certain percentage of the members being chiselers by nature would grab the free lesson and let it go at that. A much larger proportion of the members would not take the initiative in availing themselves of the free lesson and, believe me brother, these are the birds the pro is actually gunning for.

With the free lesson tacked up on the wall, the pro with a sort of grin on his mug can brace the hang-back member and date him up for the lesson and unless I'm a cockeyed, humpbacked canary bird, the reasonably diplomatic pro by the law of averages will get many a subsequent job of coaching from enough of these birds to more than make up for the free lesson.

It's just a nice, refined sort of come-on

game, just a nice way of contacting with the cash customers who now pass by the pro.

Once a pro succeeds in giving a given member a lesson he is on a different footing and entirely with that member from then on. He has a *sound basis* for taking a friendly interest in that member's game, an interest he could not take prior to the lesson without taking the risk of his actions being misconstrued.

Furthermore, the member who took his free lesson would naturally have to go easy on the kidding during the locker-room seances. It might go a long way toward busting up that small-boy psychology among the membership.

Of course the pro would naturally be under the necessity of exercising considerable diplomacy and self-containment. In fact I often wonder if many pros do not drive away considerable cash-paying teaching business by unintentional gruffness and unfortunate choice of expressions.

In this regard, not long ago I was standing in a pro shop when I noticed a young man about 25 years old standing there with a newish looking bag of clubs in his grasp, prepared for his first lesson with the pro.

At that moment the pro entered, nodded to the young man, said, "Let's go," and in the next breath bluntly inquired of the young man—"How good are you?" All this in front of the club-cleaner, two caddies and myself.

The young man flushed up and conceded that he wasn't so hot.

Now I ask you in all fairness if that ain't a hell of a way to commence a coin-chisel campaign with a cash customer?

If I had been the young man my answer would have been as follows:

"Why, you ape, that comes pretty near to being a damned fool question. If I was good do you think I'd be wasting my time with you?" Then I'd walk out and leave him flat.

A pro doesn't have to kiss the member's foot but it is always good business to keep your trap shut when there is no special necessity for opening it.

ELEVATED TEES require hand mowing, are difficult to drain and ordinarily require more watering than tees built at or only slightly above the level of the surrounding land. For maintenance economy build your tees so that power mowers can be used to cut the grass.

Pro Says Keeping Shop Bright Is Selling Aid

By C. V. ANDERSON, Pro

MY IDEA of creating sales for a golf "pro" is that he should not let his shop turn into a cemetery. When people come out to a golf course they are out for recreation, and recreation is nothing more than a pastime. A smile and a "hello," and "how are you hitting them" and "you'll do better next time," etc., surely is the way to a man's pocketbook as far as buying golf paraphernalia is concerned.

It is impossible to sell merchandise by standing with your hands in your pockets and a crabby look on your face—that feeling is immediately transferred to the prospective customer.

Now, when I say to be cheery and smile, I don't mean you should *fin* the members full of "baloney" or throw the "bull." What I mean is a nice smile, and "how are you" and "how's your game?" If they hand me a club maybe with a little string off it, or something, I just grab it with a "Yes, sir," and if my boy is busy I get the twine or go to the vise and do it myself.

Some reader may get the impression that I favor giving them a lot of "baloney." No—I just give them a pleasant smile and a gentlemanly "hello," to let them know they are welcome and that the golf course is a place where they can forget their misfortunes.

In my experience as a golf professional, I certainly believe that one of the biggest assets a "pro" has is: Don't let his shop turn into a cemetery.

Pros Laugh as Drug Stores Get Cut Price Backfire

RETAIL druggists in some localities are having a groan that is considered poetic justice by pros who were burnt when the drug stores dumped cheap golf balls. "Pine-board" drug stores, which cheap pine lumber fixtures and entire operating expense seldom up to 14% are giving the "legitimate" drug stores a price-cutting session that is plenty painful to the legits.

Wonder what the legits are going to say to the manufacturers who supply the pine-board stores? When it was a case of the legits knifing the pros, it was, in the legits' opinion, "just too bad." Now, of course, under-cutting will be pronounced by them an "unwarranted and fatal economic evil."