

PICKED UP IN THE ROUGH

By HERB GRAFFIS

LIVEST new thing in golf merchandising is the whippy steel shaft. Just how far and how long these shafts will go depends a lot on the advertising help given the pros to take these shafts out from under suspicion as a "nut" idea.

Pros are very much inclined to welcome these new shafts warmly as they are causing a lot of decrepit golf clubs to be replaced, especially those of old men who have used the same old bats for years and firmly resisted any innovations.

The whippy shafts, with the slow, stiff swings of the oldsters, give enough youthful distance to have the patriarchs quit the game at the ninth hole, call up some chorus jane and ask her if she wants to step out with a snappy young guy.

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TO MANY women golfers the whippy shaft seems to supply just what is needed in the irons as well as in the woods. You also can add to that market a rather large number of young and middle aged fellows, either the real slow swingers or the fast swingers. The fast swingers are slowed down to a safe and sane speed by the consciousness that if the backswing is too speedy with a very flexible shaft, the shot not only will be ruined but the clubhead on the backswing will beat the player's sunny south black and blue.

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PROS already are doing very well with whippy shaft sales. The demonstration does the work and the pro is the gent who can give the demonstration. If he doesn't do it, he has no license to belly-ache about his business being putrid.

Dave Patullo, earnest young pro business man at the Wilmette (Ill.) G. C., sizes up the whippy shaft golf situation about this way:

"If the manufacturers don't let this thing die down to strictly a word-of-mouth sales proposition, the whippy shaft certainly is going to help the pros give a big push to golf club sales and get back into complete command of the golf market.

"There are certain players who need stiff shafts, some semi-flex and others quite flexible. A pro who knows his stuff has to watch them swing and play and

then make recommendations. A store can't do that.

"Wonder if the pros with these whippy shafts again will make a big market and then have the stores make a holler for the position as teachers' pets with the manufacturers?"

"Anyway I'm demonstrating and selling plenty of them and know that the whippy shafts have put new life into my club business.

"I expect the club sales to keep up well into September this year on account of the whippy shafted clubs. At my own club the members are allowed to pay cash and it has helped sales plenty. People are afraid to charge now but are not scared of paying cash."

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DAVE'S prophecy that club sales will keep up until late this year should remind some of the boys how they woke up too late last season on the amount of ball business they could do in September and October.

The boys who let their stocks run down and didn't make attractive ball displays were encouraging their members to patronize the ball washer instead of buying balls. Many a fellow actually ran out of balls on several Sunday mornings last September and October and saw from 100 to 200 people play when his stocks were flat.

There is such a thing as being too afraid about this overstocking business. Most of the smart fellows have close inventory control and are able to take advantage of the glorious golf weather of the fall.

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ANY pro or club official who is still slumbering to the fact that September and early October are two of the most pleasant golf months of the year deserves the criticism of his club members.

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PLENTY of letters have come to GOLF-DOM cheering about the action of the Pacific Coast section of the PGA in uniting with the leading manufacturers to eliminate the "buy it wholesale" and free ball deals.

Pros in one state where there should be

a good, legitimate profit on ball retailing say the business is practically ruined by the vast amount of balls secured through institutional connections. In some cases the employees of big companies and their friends brag they can buy good balls for the same price the pros and stores pay.

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THE pros and the stores have a common cause in fighting this illegitimate competition. When that "buy it wholesale" racket is utterly eliminated things will be a whole lot better for the sales of the leading manufacturers. The racket has to be eliminated all at once, though, or no one manufacturer can be blamed by the pros for getting in on this racketeering volume.

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LETTERS received by GOLFDOM ask why the PGA doesn't go after this "buy it wholesale" evil nationally.

Inquiring pros point out that it was the stay-at-home pros who sold the discontinued PGA brands of balls to finance the Ryder Cup team's trip, after which four of the Ryder Cup team hung out the "Do Not Disturb" sign when they were asked to compete for the PGA title.

Then there was much to-do involving the PGA, the missing stars and the Milwaukee men who guaranteed the nine grand for the tournament. But of the rank and file of the PGA and their far more serious troubles with the "buy it wholesale" misery, there has been no word.

As Lincoln might have said, had he been a pro: "God must love the ordinary pros; He lets them live—somehow."

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THIS PGA tournament muddle has been "just one of those things."

Sitting in our cosy little padded cell, we will give you the box-score on this mess in such a plain fashion you'll wonder what ingenuity could have been employed to bawl up things so generally.

In the first place some of the lads yelled because the date was set so late. Well, maybe it could have been set earlier and almighty Allah knows the big shots have been moaning for an early date long enough. They wanted the PGA championship earlier in the season so the champion could cash in on his title.

But, with the American and British Open and Ryder Cup dates switched around, and the impossibility of changing

the Canadian Open and Western dates, the Milwaukee date couldn't be swung later into the uncertain weather of a Wisconsin September or a Labor Day date when many of the possible customers would be out of town.

Another thing is that in these days \$8,000 has something to say. Any of the gents who doubt that are at liberty to go out and get someone to put up \$8,000 for a PGA championship.

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IT WAS unfortunate that the date was set at a time which didn't allow sufficient notice to change exhibition schedules.

The exhibition business needs all the help it can get, for none of the boys in that end of the game is having to worry about income surtaxes. You can't hold it against a guy when he wants to make a living.

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HOWEVER, those on the other end of the argument say, "If exhibitions are more important to you than championships, why not eliminate the championships?"

It puts the exhibition golfers in an awkward and illogical position, to which in some cases the charge of ingratitude might be added because of the Ryder Cup expense money.

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WHAT further complicated the situation is the advertising of the Milwaukee event which had the line about seeing the stars in action. Someone obviously forgot the qualifying round feature of the PGA championship, so Armour was mentioned and Tommy, like Sarazen last year, failed to qualify. Hagen won't show up, being in England, and for a time it looked like Sarazen wouldn't be in the batting order.

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AUTOMATICALLY qualifying the Ryder Cup team and adding 10 places to those playing during the medal play qualifying rounds at Milwaukee solved some of the problem of getting gallery attraction, but the PGA championship always has to contend with the match play rounds knocking out the big names before Saturday and Sunday—the big gate days.

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THE Armour-Sarazen newspaper debate gave the Milwaukee championship



Group instruction pays. Here is Jack Malley, pro at the Pasadena (Calif.) Municipal course, holding a free class for boys.

plenty of publicity. Tommy's jesting attitude hit popular fancy. The days of the athletic stars taking themselves too seriously in print seem to be over. With the necessity of qualifying eliminated and a chance to squeeze in some desirable exhibition dates, Gene made up his mind to show at Milwaukee.

Craig Wood probably will have to stay at his club and Shute and Hagen will be in England.

What undoubtedly influenced Sarazen as much as anything else was his consideration of the fairness to other members of the PGA involved in the issue. The Roving Roman is a tough, outspoken boy and could stand some more sweetness and sunshine in his public addresses, but of his fairness and squareness there never could be the slightest criticism.

Armour, whose repartee with Sarazen on the sport pages entertained and instructed the readers, maintains they don't make them any fairer than Gene, despite their difference of opinion on this PGA championship matter.

ONE criticism of the PGA championship is brought out by Ernest Heitkamp, golf writer for the *Chicago American*. He says the event is an anti-climax to the National Open, especially when the Open is won by an amateur.

Heit's suggestion that the PGA put its championship before the National Open is not a bad one. It might help to build up the PGA event. It certainly would help the PGA to collect its dues earlier.

Pros to compete in the PGA qualifying rounds must have their association dues paid up before the entries close. There is nothing that brings a rush of dues money to the pro headquarters like this rule.

Heitkamp believes that unless a star pro can win the National Open every few years he is out of luck with his exhibition match drawing power. The opinion seems to be partially confirmed by the decided slump in pro exhibition golf ever since Jones became the Number One Guy of Golf.

He adds that some of the present crop

of star players may have to make some sacrifices to build up this PGA championship or be held accountable for making the slump in exhibition and sectional Open tournaments permanent.

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ONE of Heitkamp's suggestions is that the winner of the PGA title, should the pro championship be played before the National Open, refuse to play in the National Open, but play the winner of the Open in a special match.

Maybe the winner of the PGA title would use the plea of exhibition dates in playing hooky from the National Open. Yeah?

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ALL of the Milwaukee ring-around-a-rosie points again to the PGA promotion of tournaments being a delicate, long-time job for an expert.

The most successful PGA championship ever run was that at Providence. It was carefully and ably planned well in advance. The winter tournament season repeatedly has proved that its promotion work must be well in advance. The reminder that you can't guarantee to the Open a field including a majority of the recognized stars was made plain enough by the Milwaukee jam. That is bound to chill some of the prospective winter tournament promoters. But inability to assure entry of the headliners is something for which the headliners can't be condemned. Their play is a gamble, for very rarely are they given any guarantees.

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MAYBE because the latest Los Angeles and St. Paul Opens had highly successful financial showing despite the absence of many of the stars means, as Armour's newspaper statement inferred, that the present ranking stars are stepping into the twilight so far as their necessity for tournament gate success is concerned.

If such is the case, these stars are going to pay more attention to cultivating their publics.

That will relieve the PGA tournament bureau of one of its problems.

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TO HANDLE the tournament promotion job should be a simple matter—for a guy who combines the hold on confidence exhibited by Franklin Roosevelt, the strong arm of Mussolini, the blatant ballyhoo of Huey Long, the patience of the Japanese ambassador, the money-raising abilities of

Sam Insull and Al Capone, the tact of a head-waiter working on a rich playboy and the talent of Clyde Beatty, the wild animal trainer.

Add to that the foresight of a seventh sister of a seventh sister of a Hindoo holy man, and you have the gent who has a 50-50 chance of keeping the tournament players, the promoters, the PGA and the galleries happy.

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STILL another reference to that Chicago *Tribune*-Chicago Daily Fee Golf association tie-up that resulted in more than 17,000 pupils taking a series of 7 free golf lessons at the daily fee courses—

The *Tribune* also originated the baseball Game of Century in which all star teams of the American and National leagues played. Readers of 55 newspapers voted in selecting the players. There were 500,000 votes cast by all these readers. Now, if 55 newspapers could be prevailed on to conduct some golf promotion like those free lessons, what a tremendous boost would be given the game that already has more players than any other American sport.

This alliance with newspapers in golf promotion is something that PGA sections as well as fee and private clubs should get started early next year.

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YOU think very well of pro business ability when you reflect on the performance of the pros who are in charge of daily fee courses.

These pros are really golf business men. Observe their operations in the perilous job of making a go of a fee course; you will see that they rate right high as executives and as workers.

One of the best business-like jobs done by a pro this year was that done by Tom Walsh of Westgate Valley acting as chairman of the arrangements committee for the Chicago Daily Fee Golf Association-*Tribune* free golf school.

It was expected that this free golf school with more than 17,000 pupils taking 7 lessons on 27 different courses would result in a wild tangle, but it went off without a hitch.

If you want to see how ably a competent pro handles a job and get some ideas on running a free golf school in association with a newspaper in your territory, Tom Walsh's outline prepared for the guidance of the Chicago fee course pros will be invaluable to you.