

Golf Lesson Revival Is Hope for Better Pro Jobs

By NEIL RUSSELL

NEIL RUSSELL, Pacific Coast pro, considers the pro golf situation from an angle that will make many of the pros check up on their own qualifications and activities.

No reason why there shouldn't be more golf lessons, if more pros identify themselves as teachers whose pupils get more fun out of the game.

The pro qualifications that Russell presents will help officials who have the job of selecting a new man from scores of applicants this year. Rate the applicants according to the points Russell mentions and you can't go far wrong in picking a man who is worth a lot of money to your club.

IN GOLF, as in every other profession or business, the goal of those who have chosen this game as their life work is the same fame and fortune, and the attainment of these is just as difficult in golf as in anything else—even more so—if you listen to the wails of many of these connected with pro golf.

Of course there are varying degrees of success, and its attainment depends entirely on the measure of ability and ambition possessed by each individual, coupled with the amount of effort each is willing to expend.

To many golf pros, success in their chosen line means winning big tournaments, following the so-called "money trail" with the world-wide publicity attendant upon these events.

Many others derive their measure of success and satisfaction from sticking to their club jobs, giving their best efforts to the club members, patiently ironing out their faults and rejoicing in seeing them gradually cut stroke after stroke off their "previous bests."

There is no discounting the thrill that must come to the winners of national or

foreign tournaments. These heights have only been reached after many years of hard work, long hours on the practice tee and nerve wracking concentration. And certainly no one begrudges the winner the flow of gold that courses into his lap in the wake of such a successful effort.

Yet, granting the thrill to the big tournament winner, it must be admitted that the big thrills probably don't come so often in this highly competitive game, or business, after all, and that they are generously tempered with disappointments. It is so easy for the laymen to remember the one big successful effort of any given star and forget the multitude of unsuccessful ones.

Real Fame Lies in Teaching

But the pros themselves remember these—make no mistake about that—and many of the far-seeing brethren have come to a realization that over a period of years the one who devotes the most of his time to teaching and obtains a reputation in that phase of the business comes nearer to reaching his "fame and fortune" goal than his brother professionals who like to play the game all the time; can't be bothered with the hum-drum of regular club duties and who are ever seeking a quick fortune by "knocking off" one of the big tournaments.

Like Movie Stars

Most of the latter who eventually realize their fondest dreams may be compared to the majority of motion picture stars. They glitter and become a sensation for a few short years; are highly publicized and bask in the spotlight—then for some unknown reason lose their lustre and fade into oblivion.

And what is the attitude of the many clubs throughout the country on this question? I have talked with many members of committees of various clubs, in Southern California particularly, and the feeling seems general that they want their pros to be on the job rather than cavorting around the country taking in

this and that tournament. I do not doubt that the same attitude is prevalent throughout the whole country, for it is becoming increasingly difficult for the wandering playing pro to get a good berth.

Pro Who Sticks Cashes In

This does not mean that the hard-working teaching pro must forever give up competitive play. A certain amount of it is essential to his welfare; stimulates him; keeps his game on edge so that he may better demonstrate his ideas, and keeps him out of the rut. But in the main he should be "on the job," the clubs say. Several of the old guard who have had their share of the spot-light in the big tournaments — MacDonald Smith, Bobby Cruickshank, Johnny Farrell, Billy Burke and others—have stated that the real and lasting success for the golf pro lies in the teaching end of the game. More money can be made day in and day out, sticking to a good club, than can be acquired "on the road," where traveling and living expenses are high and the cuts from tournaments are generally infrequent and even not so big. You will notice that the above mentioned gentlemen bear out what has been said by sticking pretty closely to home these days.

In addition to the financial consideration it must not be overlooked that the good teaching pro is not compelled to forego "fame" in reaping his "fortune." Almost as much publicity and renown comes to the famous teacher as to his brother who wins big tournaments. Who among those at all in touch with golf doings does not know of Lewis Scott, Al Lesperance, George Sargent, Jack Mackie, Ernest Jones, Doc Treacy, Harold Sampson, Charles Hall, Jock Hutchison, Stewart Maiden, Jack Gordon, Bob MacDonald and others too numerous to mention. Indeed, they are not wanting for honor and glory in their chosen field.

Teacher's Qualifications

Granting then, that there is a real field in the teaching end of golf and that it is a pleasant, honorable and lucrative profession, can anyone who plays the game reasonably well jump into it and make a success of it? Decidedly not. The art of teaching golf as of teaching any subject comes natural to but few; ordinarily the ability to do so successfully is only attained through gradual development. Even those who might be termed "born

teachers" must follow basic formulas to obtain the best results.

Before making a decision to follow the teaching end of golf there are many things to be considered by the prospective mentor. (1) He should thoroughly analyze himself both as to his mental and physical capabilities for the job. Would he have a strong sense of responsibility to his club and to his pupil? Would he have the necessary patience? Enthusiasm? Has he a sufficient knowledge of psychology to cope adequately with the varied reactions of different pupils? Has he "color" or personal magnetism? Is he careful as to his appearance, his habits and speech, so that he may cause no offense?

(2) Is his game sound as to fundamentals? Does he have it under control, so that he may demonstrate what he teaches? Is he acquainted with the experiences and teachings of the several admitted masters of the game?

(3) Is he sufficiently versed in the tools of his trade, the various makes of clubs, particularly so he may advise what is best for his pupils and club members? What does he know of golf architecture, of the various soils, grasses, chemicals, golf course machinery and appurtenances?

(4) Is he fully versed in the administrative end of a pro's job? Does he know thoroughly all the rules of golf? The ethics? The various kinds of competitive and tournament play, so that he may advise or take charge of any club event.

This sounds like a large order for anyone, and it unquestionably is. It covers more ground than just straight teaching. Yet there is not one requirement mentioned that can be omitted as unnecessary or irrelevant, and possibly others should be added. A small club, even more so than a large one, demands a more comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of the game, for the reason that one pro generally has everything to do where a large club has one or more assistants, each assuming responsibility for different phases of the work.

Art in Teaching

Assuming that the above requirements have all been met and that our ambitious friend has decided to stick to a club and specialize on teaching, what further thought need he give to the matter? Well, this particular party has noticed that there are thousands of golf teachers, here, there,

and everywhere, but very few are really outstanding and have anything more than a local reputation. He wonders about this. Why is it that the big majority of teachers do not seem to get anywhere in particular and so few go on to reach national or even district recognition?

As was stated before teaching is an art, which in most cases has to be developed along fairly definite lines. Let us then set down a few of the things that would appear to be absolute essentials and you will probably find that those who have achieved the greatest success have done so by following lines and principles somewhat similar to these details:

First, there must be a very definite understanding of *what* one desires to accomplish, and secondly, the knowledge of *how* to accomplish it.

What to Teach

At first glance one might say that the teaching pro needs but one objective—to develop the ability of his pupils to play better golf, at a stated sum per lesson. But is that sum total of what a teacher should desire to accomplish? Should he not look beyond golf swing and realize that he is in a position to develop many other attributes along with the ability to swing a club more effectively? Among other aims might be mentioned these:

- (1) To create a desire for knowledge.
- (2) To stir ambition.
- (3) To develop concentration.
- (4) To bring home to the pupil the value of regular practice and develop the will power to carry it out.
- (5) To develop the instinct of sportsmanship so that his pupil may win or lose with equal grace.
- (6) To create, through his teaching, lasting physical benefits—stronger, more active bodies and more alert minds and more efficient co-ordination of both.

It will seem therefore, that great opportunity, as well as responsibility, awaits the teacher who conscientiously sets out to make a success of his job.

Many thousands of dollars are spent by the golfing public throughout the country each week. There is a widespread desire to learn the game, but yet I venture to say that in no other trade or profession do the pupils wander around as much from teacher to teacher as they do in golf.

For some reason they must feel that they are not receiving value for their money—not getting the desired results.

There is a strong suspicion that the teaching fraternity is not altogether blameless in the matter. In all probability too many of the boys are taking the conventional way of telling the pupils certain things, showing them their faults and illustrating the case in point by doing it correctly themselves; all the time hoping that they will remember as much as possible of what they have seen and heard.

Teach Them the "Why"

These are necessarily a part of the teacher's job, but only a part; the successful teacher goes further than that. He teaches his pupils to *think for themselves*. He imparts his knowledge and skill in such a way that he stimulates a mental reaction; a thirst for more knowledge. With more knowledge comes increasing confidence. The pupil becomes able to make comparisons between the problems that confront him in golf and those he meets in his other daily contacts, or in his own business. He sees the fundamental similarities in so many of them and applies the principles to his golf. He sees causes and effects; in short, learns not only *what* the correct way is, but *why* it is the correct way.

Put a bright young man in an office who is unfamiliar with bookkeeping. You may show him how to recognize certain forms—say invoices. Show him how to enter them in a certain book; also other entries which have to go in certain other books. He may be very quick and accurate and get everything in the right place and know how to post nearly all the entries in the office, but that does not make him an accountant.

He would be lost in another office. Why? Because he does not know the fundamentals of bookkeeping; doesn't know *why* the entries are made, or what use is made of them. So it is plain that something more is required of the teacher than demonstrating how it is done. The successful teacher must know his fundamentals thoroughly and be able to impart them to others. He must use a sound procedure or method, with successive instruction steps in the order which they can best be assimilated.

He must study his pupils, physically, and mentally, adjusting his teaching according to their individual requirements. His plan must therefore be flexible. He teaches with economy of time, eliminating all irrelevant discussions, and without

effort or strain upon either the pupil or himself. He teaches a simple lesson, couched in simple terms. He refrains from being too academic and technical. While some pupils may be awed by a teacher of the latter inclinations, they probably will learn very little, if anything.

Maybe Teacher Is Wrong

He does not get impatient with those pupils who seem slow in responding to his instructions; rather, he checks himself on his method employed in those cases and finds where he himself has erred.

He must be possessed of eternal patience; be calm that he may not create nervousness in his pupils; must have a personality and demeanor that inspire confidence and must be cheerful and optimistic, yet firm enough to command respect and conscientious attention.

He realizes the necessity of study to keep abreast of his subject, as in any other business, and constantly refreshes his mind and gains inspiration through the books of the old masters of the game. Noteworthy among these are the books of Harry Vardon, James Braid, J. H. Taylor, Sandy Herd and George Duncan, all of whom were great fundamentalists and to whom much of the successful development of the game of golf is due. Especially valuable are the four volumes of Harry Vardon on the subject.

As was stated at the beginning, the measure of success one attains is limited only by the measure of what one puts into a thing. The old adage that you reap what you sow still holds good and there is still plenty of room at the top for those who are sincere about getting there. But it cannot be attained by slipshod methods, nor a "getting by" attitude. A full appreciation of all the requisites of successful teaching is required and when these have been put into effect there can only be one result—a call to bigger and better jobs.

Blind Golf Events Keep Play Interest Up

IN ORDER TO increase interest in golf, the tournament committee of the Blue Hills Club, Kansas City, Mo., holds a blind golf contest every Saturday, the nature of which is not announced until after scores are all in. As players come from the 18th green a clerk picks up the card and posts scores just as is done in large tournaments. After the cards are in, the blind contest

is identified by a drawing from the list of events previously prepared by the committee for the entire season. The winner of the day's blind contest is then determined from the score sheet.

According to Blue Hills officials, the advantage of this type of contest is that every player is eligible for the weekly prize and therefore makes a point of handing in his scores. This gives the handicapping committee, after the first few weeks of the season, a very exact idea of the proper handicap for every player in the club, so that future handicapping contests are played on a fair basis.

Committee arrangements at Blue Hills are rather unusual in that the Green committee and the Tournament committee are combined into one body. The plan was first put into operation in 1931 and proved so successful that the scheme is to be continued as a regular club policy. In 1931 the re-organization placed a chairman and a vice-chairman at the head of this rather large Greens-Tournament committee. Prior to this time the club had experienced many complaints from committee men that they were not consulted by their chairmen when important decisions relative to course maintenance were to be made. Accordingly, a meeting of the Greens-Tournament committee is held every Saturday afternoon at 5:30, and every committeeman who has played the course that day can come to the meeting and express his views as to what should be done to improve or better maintain the course.

The plan is working most successfully. Many minor maintenance matters have been called to the attention of the chairmen which would not have been attended to so quickly or as well had the committee not met so often. A broken drain, a gopher hole on a fairway, a damaged green or any unsightly matter is known to the greenkeeper on Sunday morning and is taken care of promptly.

Supervision of the Greens-Tournament committee is a two-man proposition—the chairman and the vice-chairman making no important decisions without consulting one another and each being careful to keep informed on what the other committee boss is doing. Two-man control of this nature gives a chance for discussion and argument about small matters and sometimes about more important ones of the type which must be handled promptly without waiting to call the committee together.