

Better Teachers in Pro Jobs Will Bring Golf Revival

By N. N. R.

IT'S THE DEPRESSION! It is very easy these days, and quite the proper attitude to blame all our troubles on the universally maligned "Old Man Depression." In fact, one feels hesitant now about suggesting that any other condition or combination of circumstances could possibly be responsible for the decline or failure of anything, for fear of being thought "queer," to say the least.

However, a few contrary views on the subject may not be amiss.

The golf profession, and golf business in general, having suffered a set-back these past few years, in company with practically all other professions, businesses and the arts, the simplest expedient has been to blame it on the depression and let it go at that.

Being interested chiefly in the teaching end of the game I have lately given much thought to the decline in patronage experienced by most teaching professionals throughout the country and while I am willing to concede that the depression has been the cause of many golfers cutting expenses and declining to take lessons until such time as their incomes somewhat approximate former proportions, still I am convinced that only a portion of the blame for our "retarded" condition can be attributed to this depression.

The customary explanation apart from the depression excuse would be for the professionals to blame the golfing public and the golfers, in turn, to blame the professionals. I think they would both be justified, to a certain extent only, as neither faction can be held blameless.

To get at the beginning of our difficulties let us start at the height of our "up-swing" right after the war, and "follow through" to the present day.

Whether or not it was a reaction from the war hysteria, I am not prepared to say, but the fact remains that the three or four years following that conflict constituted a period of unalloyed happiness and prosperity from a golfing standpoint.

This suggestion for bringing a revival to golf should interest every club official as it must every professional.

One has only to consider the remarkable growth of women's golf during the depression and the relation of this growth to the fact that almost 70% of lessons are given to women and you see that this author probably isn't far wrong in suggesting much stronger emphasis on golf instruction.

This writer, by the way, is out of a job. If his hunch on competent instruction as an enlivening factor in golf club progress appeals to an official whose club's pro job now is vacant, we'll furnish his name and address.—H. G.

The game had taken on a sudden glamor and interest. The outstanding topic of conversation on the street and in the offices centered about stances, slices, new clubs, putting form, etc., etc. Bankers, milkmen, stenographers, doctors, tradesmen—everybody seemed to find the necessary time and money to take a fling at golf.

The new country clubs and public links rapidly sprang into existence to care for the ever-increasing number of golf addicts. The winter seasons in California and Florida showed an unusual amount of activity, due to their winter golfing climate.

This unprecedented interest in the game created a situation whereby the limited number of experienced and qualified golf professionals were literally swept off their feet in an endeavor to satisfy the demands for their services. I recall vividly seeing, upon certain occasions, at a popular country club in Pasadena, approximately a dozen professionals, mostly new ones, all teaching there at the same time, and they were busy from early morning till darkness set in each day, too.

I had just arrived from Scotland and was not only astounded at this display of interest in the game, but was heartbroken that my war disability did not then permit me to share in the golden harvest that the teachers were reaping.

It was inevitable that there should develop from the swarm of young fellows playing the game regularly a number of high class players. Scores of these young fellows, many from the caddie ranks, did develop very rapidly and in an incredibly short time were able to match strokes with most of the more experienced professionals.

Golf's Students Succeed

True, most of them could not have told you how or why they attained their results, but the fact remains that they burned up the courses with low scores and soon were besieged by enthusiastic admirers to give them lessons. Sensing the big money to be made they readily consented and for a time this group constituted the larger number of the professionals.

Among these, and included in those mentioned as having been seen in Pasadena, were Leo Diegel and Eddie Loos, then just starting upon careers which have since brought them into national prominence. These are only two of several who have risen from the caddie ranks to high places, amongst others being Gene Sarazen, Olin Dutra, Lewis Scott, Fred Morrison and several others of lesser renown.

But here is the point: These comparatively few who have risen to the top and stayed there were, at the outset, or soon became, students of the game. They delved into the fundamentals; found out the whys and the wherefores of it; read and practiced what the old masters had to say about the game, and in every way displayed a serious and conscientious attitude toward their newly chosen profession.

Unfortunately, a great many others, influenced as well by the unusual enthusiasm of the public, turned professional with no more thought than to take in as much money as possible, as quickly as possible.

That they didn't know their business did not bother them. The pupils generally knew less and they "got by." Their certificate from the professional association (which, by the way, is obtainable without examination even yet) was the magic key which opened the door to sudden affluence.

What Ruined Teaching Income

Many of them are still with us, and many more of the same type have joined the ranks throughout the country each year since. The attitude of this class of professional has undoubtedly soured a large number of golfers on golf teachers in general, to the detriment of the game as a whole.

"Class will tell" is an old saying and it is equally true that lack of class will tell—even more quickly. It was just a matter of time till our earlier enthusiasts, after spending much time and money on several of these self-styled teachers, came to realize that they had received nothing in return. And they still feel that way about all instructors.

This, of course, is most unfortunate and presents a serious, unfair handicap to the more experienced and studious element in the professional ranks. There are many excellent teachers, the problem being merely one of exercising the same care in making the selection as one would in choosing a doctor, a dentist, a lawyer or a music teacher.

In allowing their ranks to become cluttered up with any number of incompetents the pros themselves must bear responsibility for a portion at least of the decline of interest in what they have to offer.

But, please note, I said a "portion" of the responsibility. From remarks I hear now and again it is evident that many golfers are of the opinion that all golfing woes, including their own private ones, are traceable to the professionals; which, I rise to remark, is very far from true. In fact, a generous slice of the blame properly rests on the golfing public itself and should be borne by it.

Here is an angle which bears me out:

The larger majority of those who decide to take golf lessons have been playing the game for some little time; they have arrived at the point where they play fairly well, what knowledge they have acquired being gathered from various sources—experience in play and self-analysis; discussions with friends; printed articles on the game, etc. Their ideas on what constitutes proper form are pretty definite. In due course, however, they run into trouble with certain type or shots or certain clubs and decide to take a few lessons. Then the real trouble for the pro at least, commences.

Dubs Know It All

Instead of coming to the pro with the innocence of a new-born babe and leaving the matter of finding the fault and correcting it entirely in his hands, a large majority will proceed to instruct the pro as to what they are doing incorrectly. They will talk so much and so positively that the poor pro hasn't a chance to put

his own system of determining and correcting the trouble into operation.

This is a major fault with innumerable golfers who go for lessons and is one of the most difficult that the teacher has to contend with. It destroys his effectiveness and naturally minimizes the results obtained by the pupils. The latter can obviously learn little if he comes to instruct the teacher, rather than to be taught.

Can you imagine what would happen were you to get up in class at school or college and attempt to give the teacher your opinions on the subject under discussion without being asked for them?

Naturally you would be put in your place very promptly; yet this is virtually what is taking place in the conduct of many a golf lesson, as any of my brother professionals can verify, except for this difference; the golf teacher is at a tremendous disadvantage as compared to the school teacher, in view of the fact that the golf pupil cannot be disciplined as promptly and effectively. Pupils are scarce and the dollars represented by those lessons are greatly needed. Hence the pro pockets his pride and struggles through the lessons as best he can by becoming a "yes" man.

But he has not given full value for his money and he knows it and regrets it. He has not been permitted to; yet he will unquestionably get the full blame for any failure on his part to improve the game of his well-meaning but hampering pupil.

Need Confidence in Teacher

I have tried to analyze just why some people should approach a teacher with this attitude. I am satisfied that in every case it is done quite unconsciously; for surely no one with confidence enough in a teacher to spend money for lessons from him would purposely hinder or embarrass the instructor to his own loss.

It may possibly be due to the fact that many of those who take lessons are members of prominent clubs. They are, usually, well-to-do business men, or have been, as such, by virtue of training and experience are more used to giving orders than to receiving them. They just naturally take the offensive and because they are paying for something assume the right to dictate what they shall receive for it.

At any rate this remains a serious problem for the instructor to combat and constitutes an excellent reason why some pupils do not obtain the best results from the lessons

So, it seems to me that what the present situation requires, more than anything else, is a restoration of confidence on the part of the golfing public that worthwhile results may be obtained from the prevailing teaching element. And to all you golfers who have become disgusted, or even luke-warm in your attitude toward the game, I say to take a more tolerant view of the situation and maintain your interest.

Golf is not an easy game to play well—that is why it is so worthwhile. There is no challenge to your mettle in anything that is simple and I can assure you that the better you play the more keenly will you enjoy the thrill of it.

Learn to play the game properly by selecting a teacher of experience and known ability—one who has a reputation for producing results. When you go to him do so in complete confidence, after first having looked up the meaning of the word "pupil" in the dictionary. Let him conduct the lessons in his own manner, without interruption, and if you will practice faithfully and follow his instructions you are absolutely assured of obtaining surprisingly good results. In fact, in no other way can you expect good results.

If you complain that you have previously taken lessons from this teacher and that one and have never seemed to get anywhere with them, an impartial analysis will reveal that either one, or both, of these essential factors was missing: you did not select a good teacher, or you did not give him 100 per cent co-operation. In both of which cases you would, yourself, be at fault.

Then, having gone about it in the right way and having received satisfactory results, boost the worthy instructor to your friends. Tell them how you accomplished what you have, so that they, too, may obtain the maximum benefit. It is surprising what a little boosting and enthusiasm will do in your club.

The healthy interest thus created will also have a salutary effect on the teacher. His enthusiasm will increase accordingly and he will do better work. Your club will soon gain a reputation for supporting its instructor and the position will become so attractive that the very best of the teachers will be clamoring for it. That is inevitable.

To sum it up, the game can be lifted out of the doldrums, depression or no depression; but only by the combined efforts of

the professionals themselves and the golfing public. They both have equal responsibility in the matter.

The professionals can do much through their organization by weeding out the undesirables. Those whose lack of the essential qualifications for teaching are giving the profession a black eye. This can be done by formulating a strict examination for new members before granting them a certificate of membership in the association. There are indications that both of these points are receiving consideration.

The golfers at large can do their share by renewing their interest in the game and in its teachers by patronizing only those of experience and proven ability and, in so doing, giving these their unqualified cooperation.

Atlanta PGA Wants Your Tips for Its Reference Book

HARRY R. STEPHENS, for 11 years pro at Druid Hills G. C. (Atlanta, Ga.), and president of the Atlanta PGA, tips off club officials to what the master pros are doing to uplift their profession in advising GOLFDOM of the Atlanta pros' plan for compiling a reference book and manual on the pro golf business.

The Atlanta activity reflects the spirit of the pros who are looking ahead to a better, brighter day for pro golf. To hasten that day as well as to see that its dawn finds competent men available, the Atlanta men are getting up a comprehensive manual. Much interest in such a work was aroused by publication of the U. S. Rubber Co.'s *Pros' Handbook of Business*. To carry this educational work into detail is the task to which the Atlanta men have pledged themselves. They want all the suggestions they can get from other pros, so any of the fellows who are genuinely interested in contributing to the educational work through which pro golf will be put on a stronger basis are invited to write Stephens their ideas.

In giving details of the plan Stephens tells GOLFDOM:

"We of the Atlanta PGA are endeavoring to compile a reference book which will include all subjects pertaining to golf. We realize that we have set ourselves a big task and will need a lot of help. At this time we are building this book in loose-leaf form with the hope that some day we

may be able to get it printed and bound in regular form.

"We are seeking authoritative articles on all golf subjects. All approved articles are placed in the book with the author's name and business connection. Advertising matter or competitive claims of any article or method cannot be accepted for inclusion in the book.

"We have taken this work on ourselves with our object being solely one of uplift and enlightenment. Our desire is to get it away from the "caddie" background. Do not misunderstand me; in no way are we trying to depreciate any man who was a caddie or any boy who now is. Our object is to help the pro of today and tomorrow (including ourselves) to be professionals in the complete sense of the word, "a professor of golf."

"We cannot create a college or varsity background, but we can at least prepare and build up books that will ultimately serve a similar purpose. It is purely a matter of education and professional prestige that we are aiming at now."

PGA and TGA Fall in Love at Dinner to Jacobus

FEBRUARY 10, members of the Tournament Golfers' Assn. who were warming up for the Gasparilla Open, had as their guest for a dinner meeting George Jacobus, president of the PGA. As was forecast by GOLFDOM, the PGA and TGA when they sat down and discussed the purpose of the TGA, found no reason for considering the TGA a red riot.

Members of the TGA, all of whom are members of the PGA, gave Jacobus a vote of confidence but vigorously proclaimed that the tournament pros had a right to finance and join any enterprise for the further promotion of tournament golf. Jacobus pledged the fullest co-operation of the PGA in extension and protection of tournament golf.

Bob Harlow, manager of the TGA, explained the purpose of the tournament organization. By specific reference to the close attention the TGA gave the southern possibilities Harlow showed that the tournament pros by their own organization efforts had added enough prize money to justify the TGA formation and expense.

The dove of peace cooed all around the dinner.