

# Pro Leaders Experience Shows Teaching Is Profit Basis

By HERB GRAFFIS

**I** KNOW OF a case where a competent conscientious pro narrowly escaped being fired this year. He is not able to click in the tournaments. He is a quiet fellow, but dependable and has about 15 years of master pro service at good clubs to his credit.

Because he wasn't doing anything especially notable some of the members of his clubs were all for canning him and getting a livelier man. Heading the group in favor of a pro change is a fellow I know fairly well. This bird had been playing badly and complained to me about his game.

I suggested that he take a few lessons. "O. K., but from whom?" he countered. "Why not try your own pro. You've been beefing about him but so far as I know never have given him a chance as a teacher."

The complainant took the first of his lessons. He won his match in his class championship and \$2.25 with it. I saw him the next day and he opened up.

"Say, I've changed my mind about our pro. He knows his stuff. He straightened me out after a few shots. I'm all for him. I tipped him off to get acquainted and make boosters by giving more lessons."

Therein lies one of the biggest of pro opportunities. Lesson business to men has dwindled sadly and with this slump has vanished the opportunity to form the close acquaintanceship with members that the elder pros enjoyed to their profit.

Lesson business isn't something that just comes in. It must be solicited energetically according to a definite plan. If there's one outstanding thing taught by 1933 pro business it is the necessity of starting well in advance to increase 1934 instruction.

Let's see how some of the most successful professionals go about building up golf interest and instruction income at their clubs.

Consider first the case of the veteran Dave Ogilvie at the Oakwood Club (Cleve-

land district). Dave's assistants have graduated into some of the best-handled pro jobs in the country and seeing how he has gone about developing women and child golfers at Oakwood gives you a good idea of the logic and success of the Ogilvie methods.

Dave says:

"We have quite a number of women players at Oakwood and quite a number of young girls between 12 and 18. Every Tuesday morning we hold a tournament of some kind and a lot of interest is taken in these tournaments. Then we have monthly flights. I have always taken as much interest in my women players as possible and it is a pleasure to work with them as they are all very keen.

"I am lucky to have my practice tee, which I run as a driving range, close to my shop and I encourage them to practice as much as possible. Many mornings in the middle of summer there will be as high as ten practicing at one time. I sometimes go out and give them some points just to help them a little. Dave, Jr. and I have been giving class lessons for women last summer, once each week and they have been very popular. We would have as many as ten to twelve in each class. For two months we had to have the class twice each week. We pass along from one to another giving points. Each woman has 80 balls and it takes just about an hour to drive them off. We are going to continue these classes next summer, and also intend to have a class for children under 12.

## In Pro-Shop Atmosphere

"Children under 12 are not allowed to play on our course, but I get the parents to let them come and practice. I encourage the young players to come around the shop, as in that way they get a lot of golfing knowledge which helps them later. They also see whatever club-making is done and soon understand what a good club means. When they want clubs they come to us for advice.

"A lot of interest is taken in women's golf throughout the Cleveland District. There is a well run women's golf association which schedules team matches during the season, two divisions of 8 teams each from 16 clubs. Each team consists of the 4 low handicap players from each club. The team matches take place every two weeks and the team with the most points at the end of the season is the winner. I was lucky enough to have my team from Oakwood come home the winner this year. A lot of interest is taken in these matches and there is a keen fight in each club to get on the team. The teams being composed of the 4 low handicap players keeps them all trying to get their handicaps down. The Association also has a one day tournament once each month at different clubs and usually there is a very big entry.

"The pro can do a lot to encourage women at his club. He has to take a personal interest in each one. A free lesson now and again lets them see that you are really interested. Even a few minutes will help. Asking them, when they finish a round, how they have been playing and then a suggestion or two may make them keen to try it again. Encourage them to come around the shop, talk to them about the crack women players and how these stars play. Explain the different swings they use. Keep their interest and let them know you are anxious to see them improve their golf.

"The pro can't go wrong in doing these things as it helps the women players and helps the club, for it keeps the club busy. It also helps the pro as he has more golf played, has more sales, gives more lessons and has the satisfaction that his club is flourishing and that he is helping to keep it that way.

"If a pro loses interest in his members the club suffers and will soon go dead. In my opinion it is up to the pro to keep things humming around his club by his personal interest in the players."

Nothing sells like sincerity. You always have seen sincerity sticking out of Ogilvie's efforts and growth in women and children's golf is attributable to this earnestness rather than to any commercial motive.

Roland Wingate, pro at The Country Club, Brookline, Mass., is another who believes that the women's and children's development in golf gives the conscientious pro a delight that transcends any mone-

tary consideration. He has given special attention to this department at The Country Club and with such success that he is hoping to be able to get his sister, Miss Poppy Wingate, over from England to help him with his women and children pupils. Miss Wingate is the foremost woman pro in England. She has been a prominent and effective teacher of golf for as long as her brother. She also is a very capable player, having been a competitor in the British Open and acquitted herself creditably.

Wingate himself has been teaching golf for 21 years. He confesses that he has been quite astounded by the interest taken in golf by the women and children in the Boston district during the past three or four years, despite the depression.

Of his own observations at Brookline he says:

"I have a class of boys and girls who seem to get good fun out of their lessons and at the same time absorb all the fundamentals of the game. This class instruction in my opinion is a necessary part of a pro's job, as it cannot fail to bring added business to his shop. In a way I found that this has worked out a little different from what I first expected. After I had taught the children, I found that without exception, the mothers of those children would sooner or later be around for lessons, with the idea in mind that to play with the family foursome, and make a showing she had to keep up with the youngsters.

"We now have at the club a much better tournament program for the ladies. I feel in my own mind that there is nothing quite as good as to have one of your women pupils win a tournament, however small. This is as good as front page news for the pro."

### The Teacher Taught.

There used to be a fair amount of belief in the idea that teaching ruined the teacher's playing. It was not difficult to accept this notion as teaching is hard work and any alibi was welcome. However that idea long since has lost any validity. Quite the contrary is true, judging from many of the tournament stars.

Horton Smith, the exemplary and prominent young professional at the Oak Park (Ill.) C. C., is much sought after as an instructor. His tutoring is resultful because he has a genuine interest in teaching and gets great satisfaction out of studying the

mechanics of the game. He studies with the pupil as well as teaches the pupil and in that way keeps his own game up.

On the point of a good game being the teacher's great asset, Smith comments: "I feel that my game helps me in teaching and I know that it gives the pupil confidence in me."

Smith remarks:

"The advertisement I seek is a satisfied pupil who has definitely improved his game through my instruction. He will be a great booster and will spread the gospel for me. This is the best method of stimulating lesson interest.

"I watch all players when possible and am always glad for a discussion in regard to any particular swing or any feature of the golf stroke. I take an interest in all members, as much as possible. Whether they take lessons from me or not I endeavor to answer carefully any inquiry regarding the swing. Always I am anxious to try and get the reaction to my lessons and I try to check over the pupils' games with them as much as possible. Playing with as many members as possible affords a great opportunity for stimulating interest and enthusiasm regarding instruction especially if you work in a few helpful suggestions during the round.

"Free class instruction especially for children seems a good method of developing instructional interest. A professional must have a certain amount of enthusiasm for teaching if he is to be successful. Motion pictures should be a great stimulation and I am surprised that this method has not been used more generally.

"Exhibitions are useful to aid in arousing lesson interest. The greater the education of the players regarding proper playing methods the greater lesson possibilities. The more you find out the more you want to find out."

### Endorses Movie Instruction.

Mortie Dutra, pro at Red Run G. C. (Detroit district) is another of the progressive, successful younger pros who endorses motion picture instruction. Dutra, like Smith, heartily believes that unless a pro has a genuine, personal interest in all the club members' games and is alert to tactfully volunteer helpful suggestions, the pro will be a flop as an instructor.

It is Mortie's experience that the class lessons for children and women have been highly beneficial not only to the pupils but to the pro in arousing more golf interest. He is inclined to think that advantage

could be taken of the daylight saving next season by having free group lessons for men.

Dutra's comment on this matter follows:

"Most of us have seen an amazing growth in women's and children's golf play brought about, in no small measure by the free group lessons given by professionals.

"We also have done our best, without much success, to boost the number of men's lessons. We excuse our failure in this direction by saying men haven't the time for instruction, even if they had the inclination.

"Why not, instead of giving up this men's lesson increase as an unbeatable job, see if we can't stir it up by free group lessons next year? Maybe the embarrassment of men, their unwillingness to admit that they already don't know all about golf, and their eagerness to hurry out on the course in their available time, will doom our experiment to failure, but it's worth a trial.

"I think that the opening will be given us if the PGA gets somewhere with its talk about formulating expert instruction. If something is done in establishing a pattern for first-class instruction, we can give our men a free sample of it in class lessons. After all the publicity that this idea has been getting, I believe that keen public interest can be brought to a focus in group lessons. It means that a brisk publicity campaign must go right along with the work of the PGA in systematizing golf instruction to a sound model. This publicity should make the men members curious about seeing the uniform instruction plan in action. If we can get them out for group lessons, then we will be certain to pick up a lot more individual business.

"Tied up with this uniform instruction should be motion pictures in which full use should be made of the grand motion picture instruction idea the PGA had some time ago, but which was not given sufficiently persistent or organized push.

"The one thing that every pro should remember in planning through the winter to put more emphasis on his instruction is that the better a member plays the more he plays.

"I also believe that the publicity attendant on the winter tournaments should bring out more the fact that this schedule is a big factor in golf instruction. I don't know of a pro who has played in the win-

ter tournaments who hasn't picked up some very valuable pointers for use in instructing his club members."

### Offers Prize to Pupils

George Arnold, pro at Kildeer C. C. (Chicago district) is a quiet, hard-working, fire-side pro who has a lesson business that many widely-known pros would envy. George was one of the first fellows to push the free group lesson business strong.

He has pushed another idea that the fellows would do well to adopt and feature. Here's what he has to say about a highly successful stunt:

"You know without me telling you that on the average fully 75 per cent of lessons are to ladies. My idea has worked out very well at Kildeer, in offering a yearly prize to the lady reducing her handicap the most on a percentage basis; that gives every one an even chance, e. g., a 10 handicap reduced to 5, equals .500, a 36 to 18 the same thing. I usually give a set of matched irons as a prize, and usually there are 4 or 5 in each class in the running. Nearly always they are taking lessons, the winner in the last 6 years has been a pupil of mine, which promotes the idea of lessons to the others. This year is no exception; a reduction of from 36 to 19 handicap won the prize.

"From my own experience group lessons to the kids pay big dividends in lessons to their parents and in private lessons to children when they can take on mother and father and beat them.

"Give a little free tip now and then to a fellow on the course with whom you may be playing, or see. If the tip works, (and it usually does because it's free), he becomes interested, and comes back with the roll untied and gets to work.

"These three lesson-getters have worked well for me, and in addition bring people from outside to take lessons, because the

pro interest is there. Here is the key-note of all this: The pro's interest in the pupil, not the pupil's in the pro's ability to play the game under par."

Some of the methods work at some clubs and are complete failures at others. The reason does not seem to be in the club as much as in the pro who applies the methods. Selling instruction is as much an art as is instruction itself, so if a pro cannot employ the lesson-selling method that strongly appeals to him, he had better pass it up in favor of some stunt that he can enthuse about.

My observation causes me to agree with Jerry Glynn, pro at Olympia Field C. C. (Chicago district) who says that some pros are born to teach a lot of lessons but those who aren't can acquire the knack of attracting pupils and giving them good instruction. Jerry puts it: "If the pro is not interested in instruction, why should the member be?"

At Olympia Fields last year the lesson business was big and the improvement in pupil's games most gratifying. Glynn and his staff held a 7-week course of free class lessons to women. The first lesson was entirely skull practice, with Glynn and his assistants, explaining the principles of a good golf swing and using simple but carefully thought-out parallels in making the lesson clear to the women, many of whom were beginning golf. By starting the pupils to think golf rather than to swing right away, Glynn prepared them to help themselves with their heads.

This past season I have talked to probably a hundred pros about lessons and have noticed keener interest in this subject than during any previous year. The fellows are beginning to think that a good part of the reason why there are so many more women than men taking golf lessons is simply because the pros have given more study and action to the problem of getting women to take lessons.

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