

I Survived the Panic by Studying My Club

By SAMMY BELFORE

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I HAVE completed my fourth year as pro at Ridgeview and as I review the work and results I am confident the job has been well handled. That is one of the things I figure every pro ought to do; look back over his work for the season and see where he has missed. The tendency is to blame the members or the club if the job isn't paying, but that's only a human failing, not confined to pros, instead of being the right answer to the pro problem of "how can I make a good living?"

It looks to me like the most important of all pro jobs is to build up his club, and while he can't usually do this by going right out and getting members to sign application blanks he can do the work just as effectively by making the club and its playing program so lively and attractive that people want to join.

One of the places where a lot of us fall down is by not taking a more active part in the preparation of tournament schedules for men and women at our clubs. If we can add to the zest of these events we are bound to have more people coming out to the clubs. Only in the cases of the ultra-exclusive clubs have I heard of situations where the helpful interest of the pros in preparing a playing schedule might be resented.

The pro who doesn't get busy with his committee on this schedule work early in the season and maintain an active interest in the success of the tournaments is losing one of his best basic bets for business. This means plenty of work. He may have to telephone a lot of people, or when he is busy, see that his assistant calls up people to make sure that they are reminded of the events.

Check Up Your Plans

Every fellow is better off when he takes some time out during the winter and sits down with a pencil and some paper to figure out just what he is going to do at his club next year. Too many of us are liable to take our work simply as a matter of



Sammy Belfore, whose follow-thru ends at the cash register.

fact and never plan ahead like successful business establishments have to do. Even if we are very smart, we can't know it all in this golf business; it's growing and changing too rapidly.

Who, for instance, would have thought eight to 10 years ago that we were going to see the day when the women's interest in golf was to be the keen and constructive force that it has been for the last couple of years—right in the worst of the depression—and which it is certain to be next season? Next we may see the golf clubs' interest extend to the point where every youngster from 10 years old on up, who is one of a member's family, will have to be taken into consideration in the pro department's operations.

In the pro business we haven't suffered any worse than most other businesses during the depression. In fact, we probably have been better off than most businesses.

The one thing that we always can depend on is the truth that while most of the country has been suffering from over-selling during boom times, at no time has golf ever over-sold itself. We still have a big market right at our doorsteps and we can't alibi ourselves by throwing the entire blame for our poor business onto general business conditions.

The set-up at Ridgeview is ideal—a good course, not too long, but plenty sporty—and a low rambling clubhouse built for golf players. The porches and flagstone terrace give a view of that justly celebrated Lake Superior, while the background is wooded hills.

The golf shop is the heart of the club and a rendezvous for the 19th holers. I feel that I owe it to my club to keep good, dependable merchandise. At one time, sales of golf merchandise were few and far between, due to cut-prices in downtown stores. To eliminate this I had to gain the confidence of the members and show them the difference between a store-club and one made to suit their individual requirements, so I carry a complete line of clubs at all prices and talk and concentrate on one well known line.

I ran up against a funny situation. The men wanted to buy new clubs but their wives couldn't understand such extravagance. Most of the members were young married couples without too much of this world's goods. I realized the situation—but I had a swell line of clubs and had to live, by which I do not mean that I believe in using high-pressure methods.

Women's Interest Keynote

My first step was to create interest among the women golfers. The men urged their wives to play golf; even gave them their old clubs and bought new ones for themselves (generous souls). By the middle of the summer, every Wednesday brought about 40 women out for the weekly woman's tournament and luncheon. They also arranged inter-club matches—and we instituted a woman's city tournament, which drew over 100 entries the first year. The brand of golf was pretty poor but the girls had fun and each was determined to be the champ the following year—consequently I had lessons from dawn till dark.

Women are thrifty souls. After a lesson, they would practice. Every morning saw them out early, working at their game. They also tried to interest their husbands into taking lessons. When the men who had scoffed at lessons saw the progress their wives were making, they decided to give the pro a chance to help their game.

The men's tournament became more of a success. The men entered with a keener spirit and a large feminine gallery. As the men progressed the girls decided that new clubs would help. I believe that over half the Christmas gifts the husbands and

wives of Ridgeview give each other are sportswear or clubs from my shop.

I instituted mixed two-ball foursomes on Sunday afternoons—sometimes with a draw for partners and sometimes a Mr. and Mrs. affair. I sponsor an annual Jiggs and Maggie tournament of this type for which I offer prizes.

Young married couples with a good, wholesome interest in golf are a delight in their congenial enjoyment of the game. Many a husband dashes out to the club from the office during the City tournament to be there when his wife tees off (and if her clubs and bag aren't as good as that "Jones" woman's, he'll take care of that).

The season here is short, so in the fall I move my shop to an indoor golf school in the heart of the business district where men and women can drop in for practice and lessons. "Reduce your waistline and your score" is the slogan.

NET \$ IS MINUS Government Sports Goods Tax Proves Itself the Bunk—Repeal Drive Grows

THE 10 PER CENT tax on sporting goods put on in 1932 while gum, candy and slot machines were getting by with a 2 per cent rap, has been on long enough to have demonstrated its grave faults. So active factors in the sporting goods industry, consumers as well as manufacturers and distributors, are pleading to their congressmen for repeal of this tax.

Demerits of the tax are mainly that it yielded only \$2,701,680 during the first fiscal year it was in effect and this figure is overbalanced by accounting, collecting, legal and other costs involved; and that the tax hits the kids instead of the people who can afford to pay taxes.

It was one of the dizzy guesses at taxing, now due for abandonment with the government liquor revenue coming in.

If the sporting goods industry had been making any dough or if the tax would be selective and make the sportsmen and sportswomen with a little surplus money stand the gaff, it would have some excuse. As it is, its real slug lands on the youngsters. Of course the kids can't vote, so the pros, players and other individuals in the sporting goods business can write their congressmen as mouthpieces for the youngsters without being in the position of simply squawking against a tax.