

Finds Fee Course Profit Answer— It's Not Cut-Price

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DAILY FEE COURSES have been complaining about the absence of profits.

They have tried a lot of things, but almost everything they have tried is price-cutting in one guise or another.

Now I am going to suggest something that may help fee courses to pay dividends. Here it is:

Hire pro golf business men; let them consult with you about management policies, but most of all have them in active and competent contact with your players and prospective players in a way that adds to the service of your course. Cutting prices hasn't helped you to get business, but even in the darkest days of the depression service brought players.

I am primarily a pro. I know what a good pro can do and I also know, from bitter experience, what a fee course owner is up against. Checking both phases of my training and observation, I have come to the firm conclusion that most of the answer to today's problems of the daily fee course owners lies in hiring the right kind of a pro, paying him enough of a salary so he is encouraged to take a vigorous, alert interest in the development of the business, and then putting him on his responsibility.

There are pros and pros, just as there are differences among the real estate men, lawyers, surgeons, doctors, butchers, bakers and candle-stick makers who are owners of majority interests in daily fee courses. But after all, golf is a pro's business and it should be just as far-fetched to expect a pro to operate for a bad gall-bladder as it would be to expect a surgeon to run a daily fee course properly, as one of his several duties.

One of the first things that more business men pros would bring to the daily fee golf business is an absolute insistence on giving the fee-player what he is paying for and trying to get, rather than cutting the price in an attempt to beat out some competitor, and while cutting the price

necessarily reducing the attractions and services of the course.

I'll tell you what the pro golf business man would do to build and keep business at a fee course, and I can tell you because I have done it.

What the Golfer Wants

First, let me remind you that the average golfer always hopes something will happen to improve his or her game. This rarely happens unless the swing is corrected. The right pro would do that tactfully and expertly and see that every possible opportunity to provide this personal touch was seized. The golfer who has had such advice naturally wants to come back and see how the instruction works. It results, frequently, in the player taking lessons and that always means more play.

Many times discussions concerning rules arise. If the course has a pro the players respect, he will be consulted. His diplomatic and correct decision will prevent unpleasant discussions that have done much to reduce play at some courses.

There are a number of male patrons of fee courses who would like to start their wives and daughters playing golf. A professional in whose ability and character these men had complete confidence would be entrusted with the tuition of these other members of the families. More fee income would be forthcoming from the families.

Expert, interested and pleasant service in the handling of trade and association tournaments is something that is "right down the alley" for the competent pro. His service in conducting such tournaments, starting from the time the event was being planned and ending when the prizes had been awarded and the players were leaving the club, would be an invaluable asset for the fee course that needs business. The right sort of trade tournament handling often induces the group to hold two or more, instead of one, tournaments a year.

Daily Fee Plants Lack "Spirit"

A competent professional will see to it that a pleasant competitive program is put on at a fee course. He will encourage the posting of handicaps. He will play, when time permits, with influential men and women when they are needful of a playing companion. He won't play with the same men or women so much that he arouses any criticism of favoritism. He has learned to guard against that by his private club experience.

The pro will see to it that his patrons are introduced; that part of the patron's value out of the course is in pleasant companionship of other socially acceptable golfers as well as in the use of the grounds.

The right sort of a pro at the daily fee course will see to it that the caddie situation is properly handled and that the caddies are well-trained and supervised.

I have outlined in preceding paragraphs some of the things that ought to be done—and are done—by the professional who is properly selected and paid for a job at a daily fee course. Each of these details means more business for the club.

Fee Course Unknowns

Rarely is the name of any of our leading private clubs mentioned that you do not hear the question, "Who is the professional?" The reason is plain. The professional is an important wheel in the machinery of a well-run private club and regarded as such. In the case of the daily fee club that is supposed to be operated to make money for someone, there seems to be the idea that the operation can get along without much—if any—attention being paid to the pro department.

I am confident that if more of the daily fee courses had, during the past three years, properly qualified professionals and had permitted these men to follow their judgment in constructive effort for holding play, the golfing public would have responded to this service far more than the free beer, free lunches and cut rates of all descriptions. These rate-butcherings stunts simply forced the course owners deeper into the red, and in no instance can it be said that such moves retained or increased business.

Deficient as Business-Builders

It must be admitted that the daily fee courses have done practically nothing to promote the growth of the game, other

than just being constructed to take out of the game whatever profit might come from the game's spontaneous growth. Now it is time for the fee course owners to appreciate that they must put something into the game if they are to get their business back into earning condition. Competent pro service is the very basis of the value the players have a right to expect from us as fee course owners. How are our patrons to play and enjoy our courses to the happiest degree unless they have been developed as golfers? How can they be developed as golfers unless they are given the benefit of conscientious, able professional efforts?

The Chicago *Tribune*-Chicago Daily Fee Golf School last year was an astonishing eye-opener to those of us in the Chicago district who had not been aware of the public's eagerness to take advantage of pro service. It was so tremendously successful that it is going to be repeated in Chicago this year and will be adopted in several other districts.

The school was the bright spot in a year of headaches that were brought on by a woefully ignorant belief that the lower the price for golf could be cut, the more business. Price-cutting most completely exhibited its futility and foolishness while the appeal of pro service was demonstrating its value as a business-builder for daily fee courses.

It probably cost the fee courses in the Chicago district around \$100,000 to learn that price-cutting was not the answer to the fee course business problem, and it cost the courses practically nothing, net, to learn that pro service was the right answer.

Now that you know the answer as convincingly set forth by experience in the Chicago district where there is the keenest, crowded, fee course competition in the country, what are you going to do?

Go ahead. Cut prices. It's your money. You can shoot it as long as it holds out, and when the sheriff transfers the course to other hands there will be another sucker who may not learn either. I just wrote this for practice; not to help anybody.

THE most logical means of weed control is through the development of a turf so vigorous that it leaves no room for weed invasion.