

PROLOG TO THE SEASON

Being a Check-List of Details the Wise Pro Considers Each Spring

IT'S pleasant and promising to be able to report that during February and March up to press date GOLFDOM has received many letters from pros in northern and central clubs in which the fellows say they are planning their 1935 season's work and want all the suggestions we have to offer.

This type of inquiry indicates that the smart fellows are definitely planning their work with foresight and thoroughness instead of letting things develop by chance.

To stir up some of the boys who haven't thought much about planning and to save ourselves answering a flock of letters from fellows who have, we will set forth planning high-spots that we have picked up from successful pros.

First: planning the season's work falls into these departments—relations with members, officials and other department heads; buying, accounting and merchandising; teaching and playing. The latter two departments in most cases are closely connected except with the tournament pros, most of whom are experienced enough to make definite arrangements in advance covering tournament absences from their clubs and who have assistants qualified to handle the jobs temporarily. By the way, assistant's training and supervision is one of the most important and most frequently neglected phases of pro department operation. Don't trust to luck for the development of your boy. Pick him carefully, study him and talk to him about

his work. Have the kid fully acquainted with the policies and methods you want carried out.

Plan With Your Officials

One of the things to do early is to consult with your officials regarding the tournament program for the year. Remember that both men's and women's golf interest and activity depends a lot on the tournament schedule. Get the list of events shown in March GOLFDOM and the events shown in the PGA tournament book and go over them with your people. Consult with the house manager about arrangement of events that will boost house business and which require close tie-ups with house operations.

Visit with your greenkeeper and discuss what the two of you can do to make the course more attractive. Remember that the placement of tee markers far back when the wind is against the player lengthens the course, hikes the scores and reduces golf playing interest until the player forgets his bad scores. Tee and hole placement have a lot to do with scoring that promotes business so the greenkeeper is a big factor in your business.

Discuss with your officials and other department heads how you can make your shop more attractive. Be sure and see that the women are brought in on this part of your planning.

Sit in and worry on the handicapping. Officials, both men and women, will be glad, usually, to have you take control here

and it brings you into close contact with a lot of possible customers.

Find out definitely what responsibility you are to have on the matter of caddies. If the caddies come under you, see that the kids are properly trained and supervised. If you have a caddie-master, discuss and plan caddie operations with him so you may be fairly sure that caddie performance will make friends for you among members and kids.

Check Up on Your Shop

Unfortunately your shop may be such that it seems to defy improvement. Maybe a complete change in layout—putting the club racks on another wall and relocating the ball case—will be a profitable and enlivening experiment. Paint it up. Bright colors will put new life in it. See that it becomes known as the place where the best is shown, quickly and neatly. Make it plain to your assistants that keeping the stock bright, neat and reaching out for buyers is the first job of every day.

When you send out the usual season's opening letters give the folks something more definite than the usual "I am glad to serve" line. Tell them briefly about new features in your shop stocks. Give them the dope on your club conditioning and what the club service charge gives them in the way of care and workmanship and minor repairs. Fix up the whippings with some of those cellulose preparations. Give them facts on any new grips you may have for them. If your club has a magazine, see to it that a spring review of new merchandise is given in concise detail, including prices, to the editor.

When the bags start coming in, make an inventory of their contents. Do more than just list the stuff; study and see what people need—who has been buying elsewhere and needs some tactful attention from you, or who should be reminded of your stocks of merchandise within competitive price ranges.

Don't neglect the bag business. Note how many badly worn bags you have in your shop and put on a sale of bags in various price classes right at the start of the season. You might make a special mailing covering this sale, to your members.

On the instruction end it's a good idea, according to some pros, to spend time in giving free pointers at the lesson tee Saturday noons, Sunday mornings and the mornings of ladies' day. The point to consider here is to give tips that will build up lesson business but still not let it ap-

pear like your supervision of the events is being neglected.

Group Lessons Build Business

Free group lessons as an attraction for women's and children's business have become almost an established fixture at most clubs. Only in the case of fee and municipal courses where the pro is up against the problem of developing business among men is it ever worth while considering free group lessons for men. In the case of the women's group lessons at private clubs the individual lesson business follows quickly. Women don't want to be outclassed by others of their sex. With the children's business you have to count on the present good will of parents and the future business of the kids for your pay-off. However, in cases where down-town competition is tough, the kid class lessons generally work out so the parents give the pros plenty of an edge in purchasing. Some pros even devote one afternoon every two or three weeks to taking their star junior pupils to play other courses. The pro who has good youngsters come up out of his instruction is getting the best advertising possible.

In connection with these group lessons, it is wise to consult with the house manager so he may have special menu features to catch the lesson groups for luncheon or dinner business.

Pro As Member-Getter

Instead of playing with the same bunch year in and year out the pro is smart who makes it a policy to try and play with every member of his club during the year. Devote an afternoon a week to different threesomes of men and one morning a week to different threesomes of women. Have these affairs booked so you won't get into any jam with members who might suspect you of showing favoritism. Pay special attention to making the new members feel at home. Generally you can arrange a game with the new member and the two members who sponsored the new fellow into the club.

Make up your mind to use the display and other advertising material manufacturers send you to help you sell. You don't have to have the shop crammed with it all at once. Change your displays. Keep the place looking fresh and new instead of having its only change a gradually disappearance of stock from your displays.

There's plenty more than you can plan and do, but with these points as starters you can get headed for a thoughtful and active season.