

SMILE, DAMN YOU, SMILE!

By ROLAND WINGATE
THE COUNTRY CLUB, BROOKLINE

Sage Advice to Pros on the Importance of Glad-Handing Guests

THE other afternoon one of my members burst in on me with one of those questions that bring you up all-standing.

"What is the matter with golf pros anyway?" he demanded.

"Well, Mr. Jarvis," I answered, sparring to get my wind, "of course they're all crazy—or they would never have entered the profession; what—or rather who in particular has prompted you to ask such a question."

"Oh, take George McSwizzle; do you know George—over at Sparkling Pond?" (That's not his real name, but it will do for purposes of this discussion.)

"Yes," I defended, "I know George and he stands well with all the other pros . . . Good sound golfer and teacher."

"Oh that's not what I mean," my visitor answered "George is all right in his way, but why is he—and for that matter why do so many pros at clubs like Sparkling Pond act so everlastingly glum when you go there to play golf?"

At this point it dawned on me that a member of the golfing public was standing in front of me offering a suggestion that many a golf pro needs to take seriously to heart.

If you are fortunate enough to be attached to a club that is open to members only, it may not apply to you, but if you are connected with a club, like Sparkling Pond, that needs more members and more green-fees, it may pay you to hearken to the plaint of golfers like Mr. Jarvis.

A Saga of Sadness

Let's see why he thinks there is something the matter with golf pros. Let's follow him on a Summer afternoon as he drives his car through the pleasant country side. All of a sudden he sees a sign "Burdock Brae Golf Course 1 Mile. Guest Fees \$1.00." Our hero thereupon decides that he has sold enough cantilever bridges or chewing gum or lumber for one hot day and that a round of golf is just the thing he needs the most.

So he drives into the golf course, steps into the shop and pulls out a dollar bill.

Does anyone act glad to see him? Does

anyone offer to help him find a locker or procure a partner? Does anyone even smile and pass the time of day?

Alas, I'm afraid not. Whatever the reasons may be, the fact remains that most of us golf pros are pretty surly hosts.

Are those harsh words my friends and fellow craftsmen? Well, harsh as they are, I am forced to stand by them just the same.

Whether we realize it or not, the pro who holds down a berth at a club that invites patronage is the only reception committee that most guests ever meet. If he fails to make them feel at home, and all too often he does fail, the golfing public will go elsewhere to spend their money. They may even cease to be the golfing public and become the dog racing public or the tennis public or the horseback public.

Now nobody who goes to a strange course to play wants the pro to come out and kiss him on both cheeks or stage an oriental ceremony of welcome. On the other hand, many a pro does not realize that his usual manner toward guests is reserved to the point of austerity. To most visitors such a chilly air gives a wholly false idea of the club, the course, and the pro himself.

"Why," you can hear them grumble, "this pro is too good even to smile at me or tell me he's glad to have me come here. I guess he's afraid I'll use a niblick on the greens or insult one of the regular members. Or else perhaps he thinks that because he's a pro he's just enough better than people who make their money in other ways so that he doesn't have to bother to speak to me. I was going to buy some new balls, but as long as he doesn't want to bother with me, I'll just use the old ones in my bag."

Is this an exaggeration? By no means! Of late I have had a number of heart to heart talks with my amateur friends, and its a shock to find out how many of them voice sentiments as strong if not stronger than those above.

Now professionals all, let us remember that the amateur and particularly the high handicap man and woman are the very best

customers we have. They may not play golf as well as we, but they can do other things well enough to earn the money that pays us. Therefore let us make them feel that we value their patronage and friendship.

Not long ago I had the pleasure of taking a trip as golf professional in charge of a Cunard-White Star Golf Cruise to various winter playground courses in Caribbean ports. At each port where I took a party ashore it was interesting to observe the manner in which we were welcomed by the local pro and the manner in which our passengers warmed to such a welcome.

One course in particular and one pro in particular stand out in the memory of all of us. The pro was glad to see us. He was well dressed, smiling and courteous. He came into the locker room to see that the attendant was taking proper care of the party. He told us one or two interesting things about the course that proved helpful when we played it. When we came in he was busy—but not too busy to say that he hoped we'd have a good round and that we'd come back soon for another.

What was the result? Why, that course and that day stand out in the memory of all of us as the best in the trip. And why? Because one of the elect of golf had seasoned the occasion with a kind greeting and an affable pleasant human touch of man-to-man friendliness.

These last few years have been hard for many clubs, but I venture to predict a brighter day ahead—especially for the club whose pro and unofficial host has learned to practice the noble art of hospitality.

Fellow craftsmen let me adjure you: Look pleasant, PLEASE!

Cincinnati Golf Promotion Idea Pays Well

C. O. BROWN and R. C. Marshall of the Athletic Institute are putting details of the very successful golf development work in Cincinnati before PGA officials now, tipping the fellows off that the idea worked by Robert "Red" Strauss of the Cincy muni course is something for other pros to adopt.

The first year Red introduced the idea of teaching winter group lessons at factories and offices he had about a thousand beginners take advantage of this extension of the city's recreational work. The work later was extended to take in high school students. This past winter there

were almost 2,000 group students took the courses given by Strauss and his staff.

Season memberships for Cincy muni courses increased from 373 in 1933 to 756 in 1934, showing definite results of the winter development work. Average of fee play doubled. Although playing fees per round were decreased the total income in 1934 was almost double over 1933. Club rentals jumped in a year from 120 to 756.

This year special rates up to 4 P.M. are being made to high school students. Strauss and Brown and Marshall, the latter two having been with the Cincinnati Recreation commission prior to joining the Athletic Institute, have made extensive study of muni course promotion work and in passing on their findings to pros also point out some of the errors they discovered in working out a successful plan.

Baltusrol Will Celebrate Fortieth Anniversary Next Month

CONGRATULATIONS to Baltusrol on its fortieth anniversary. The club was started in May, 1895 by Louis Keller and 29 of his friends. Original capital of the club was \$300. Baltusrol's 528 acres is one of the very few tracts of land in the U.S. on which golf has been played continuously for 40 years.

The club always has had a sound financial policy. It never has assessed a member. It came through the depression safely. In a most interesting report to the club's members president J. Stewart Baker, referring to the economies that kept the club in good shape despite sharp drop in revenues, comments:

"For this excellent showing the Club is indebted to Major Jones, (the club's general manager), for it was through his determination, skill and constant effort that overhead was brought down without impairing the condition of our courses or the service of our clubhouse. I venture to state that there is no club in the Metropolitan district, regardless of the size of its initiation fees and dues, which offers better golfing facilities and clubhouse service than Baltusrol."

THE diary and small reference booklet put out by the Greenkeepers club of New England in association with the New England Service bureau is one of the handiest little things carried by greenkeepers of that section.