

CADDIE NEGLECT?

Have We Been Paying Enough Attention to Boys' Welfare These Past Few Years?

By WALTER KELLER

TODAY A MAN can start a game of golf clothed in adequate, good-looking and above all, comfortable clothing, equipped with mechanically up-to-the-minute clubs, to a course laid out and maintained with modern equipment.

Is the picture perfect? No! There has been one angle grossly neglected! Not deliberately—but unaccountably.

Our caddies!

After many years of golf progress we still play a round of golf with (nine times out of ten) dirty, ill-kept, bad-mannered, uneducated (in golf, we mean) youngsters to carry our clubs.

A change in the personnel of our caddies is not what I advocate and I do not mean that caddies should be professional golfers; above all, I do not mean that these youngsters are at fault. On the contrary, we are at fault—we have neglected them.

Co-operation of the professional, the caddie master and the golfer will turn the average caddie we now have into a bright, clean, well-mannered youngster, with at least a working knowledge of the fundamentals of the game, with a knowledge of golf etiquette and the rules, whom it will be a pleasure to have accompany you around the course.

When you finish your game you can't wait to get into a shower and clean clothes, but what about the caddie? Nobody pays any attention to him, no one reminds the youngster to wash his hands and face, at least—no one seems to care and very often he starts out on another round with someone "as is"—dirty, sweaty, smelly and unrefreshed. We wouldn't do it ourselves—but we think nothing at all of the caddie doing the same thing.

Before telling you this, I made an actual, personal experiment. A number of dirty, loud youngsters appeared at my driving range one night recently and were a nuisance to everyone but themselves. Questioning brought to light that they were caddies. They did not have money to buy balls, so balls were provided for them and I gave each a few minutes of my time, watching his swing and giving a few words of instruction and encouragement. The

boys immediately stopped being loud. Before they went home, they were told that if they returned dirty they would not be allowed on the premises, but if they returned with clean shirts, clean faces and hands and with hair combed, they would be given balls and more instruction. Did they return? Oh boy and how! Clean shirts, faces scrubbed until they shined and grins from ear to ear. A few minutes time and a little interest has turned boys bordering on the rowdy into proud, well-mannered, clean young fellows whom it is a pleasure to have near you.

Those caddies and I firmly believe practically all caddies are starving for a little attention and encouragement. They "eat it up" and the grown-up who gives it will be repaid a hundred-fold. In most cases, the caddie is a caddie because he has an intense interest in the game. These boys are our future golfers and for obvious reasons we should give them a solid foundation upon which to build.

The player should treat his caddie as he would his son—demanding cleanliness, good manners and alertness. We all hesitate to report a caddie unfavorably—but remember, when you neglect to do so, you are doing both that caddie and the caddie who is striving for praise, a terrible injustice. Also, you are not doing your part to aid the complete advancement of golf. Likewise, be sure to turn in a good report for the lad who deserves it.

The pro has much to gain materially by devoting a little time to instructing these boys. A grateful, ardently admiring youngster can be turned into a live-wire little salesman. He will work hard selling clubs, balls, etc. for a small percentage, as well as to show his appreciation.

Uniforms are not expensive, but if entirely out of the question, at least insist upon a clean, mended shirt, clean trousers, a clean body and hair, and scrubbed hands and nails.

Books can be provided for a few pennies on the rules and etiquette of golf and a little, regular class instruction will produce caddies who will be able to produce the proper club at the proper moment, show a beginner the correct grip, and be real aids instead of distractions from our pleasure.

And the gratitude and admiration of these boys, at least, will warm hard old hearts! Our experiment is not going to be abandoned, but we need help in our work—won't you join us? Let's make the "Advancement of Golf" complete in all details.