

# TODAY'S JOB

By ALVAH H. PIERCE

**New Plans—New Life—  
to Stir Golf Revival**

**I**F YOUR soil is acid, if your greens are infested with ants or worms, or clover or brown-patch, you have certain specific means of overcoming the difficulties because you are dealing with tangible facts. With golf shop and tournament activity, or rather lack of activity, we are also dealing with facts, but there are no means of prescribing a cure, except the application of new selling efforts, creating new channels of interest, and the application of psychology to a man's inner feeling of satisfaction. If you are happy in doing something, you want to do it again and will make an effort and sacrifice in order to do it. This is our problem today with the membership of most golf clubs. This is the same problem, looked at from a somewhat different angle, that the motor industry today has tackled so intelligently that we can almost say it has been solved. It has been hard to sell automobiles to people who felt that they had no money to spare for cars, but today the motor industry as a whole, is selling cars. Just how have they done it?—By convincing you that you cannot be happy and satisfied without a car, which in money value and performance is cheaper than at any time in history.

Six years ago there was a long waiting list in every well-known golf club in the country and new clubs were springing up. Men who never played golf, but had the time and money to spend, were buying expensive golf equipment, and paying four to ten dollars an hour for lessons. Golf professionals were booked so far in advance that new members had to be satisfied to take lessons from the assistant pros. Oh, it was fine while it lasted, but in 1931 and 1932 the picture was completely reversed. People had no money to pay for irons at eight to ten dollars, or woods at fifteen to twenty-five dollars, or golf balls at \$1 apiece.

## Woe Is Me; I'm Chairman

In September of 1932 the job of chairman of the golf committee at the Duxbury Yacht club was given to me. There was an example of the old saying "Children and fools go bravely where angels fear

to trend!" I wasn't a child, but to say the least, I was very inexperienced. I didn't know what a gang mower was, or that seed and fertilizers are one of the greatest mysteries of the age. But I found out about this all too quickly when the responsibility became mine of buying seed, fertilizer, machinery, equipment, trying to keep the greenkeeper satisfied with lower wages for his help, trying to keep the pro from quitting the job because of lack of income.

I never dreamed how much devilry could be injected into one little job. I might say here that the set-up of the Duxbury Yacht club provides for a Chairman of the race committee and a Chairman of the golf committee, both responsible to the Commodore. The chairman of the golf committee has complete supervision of all expenditures for the golf course and clubhouse. He is responsible for the expenditure of all money given to him under the budget system for the upkeep of the course, the activities of the professional, tournaments, equipment, etc.

## Association Membership Pays

Fortunately, we belonged to the Massachusetts Golf Assn, and first I got in touch with my old friend, Rogers Dow, to whom I laid the cards on the table. "Well," he said, "you certainly are in a hell of a hole, but if anybody can help you out, it's Frank Wilson. Go and see him." So Mr. Wilson came down to Duxbury, and started me on the right track. I wish to say here that this action on my part was taken without any reflection whatsoever on our present greenkeeper, who has been most careful and conscientious in his work. It was simply an effort on my part to grasp an understanding of some of the problems which now confronted me and to obtain an opinion from the MGA Service Section as to how to apply to the best advantage results of their research on such matters.

At that time, our membership had begun to fall off, and the members who did remain began to show less and less interest in the game. (I'm not referring to the

Duxbury, in "conservative New England", gets down to hard-pan and builds for the new day of greater golf, by revising its operations to 1935 conditions. This story was told at the recent Massachusetts Golf Assn. meeting of club officials and department heads.

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younger members, but to the older men upon whom any golf club must rely mainly for family membership.) If they did play, it was automatic play. They were worried and showed it. They didn't buy clubs, balls or equipment. They took no more lessons. We could hardly get a dozen entries in the Saturday tournaments. If a member did need some new balls, did he go to the pro? He did not! He bought golf balls at 3 for a dollar offered by dealers in distress lots of golf equipment. I had a talk with our pro, John Lucey, that fall. He was discouraged and ready to quit and take any job that offered a living wage. I told him if he would reduce the price for his lessons from \$3 per hour, and give a series of 6 lessons for \$10—if he would put in golf balls at 3 for \$1.00 (as well as his regular brands), if he would put in a line of medium-priced clubs, and above all, if he would quit waiting for *business to come to him*, I would write to every member of the club and ask them to show their loyalty and club spirit, and buy their supplies during the summer months from Duxbury.

### Renew Tournament Interest

Then we tackled the tournament problem, and instead of the regulation 50c sweepstakes which were usually scheduled each week, we cut the price to 25c, had father and son tournaments, and mixed foursome tournaments. We brought down four of the best amateurs in the state, my good friends Francis Ouimet, Bill Blaney, Ray Gorton and Johnnie Nies, and played a four-ball exhibition match, at which we took in \$125 in admissions. With this money, we bought three large silver bowls. One was for the championship and another was for the handicap summer tournaments, into which we pulled all the older members, whose games had been slipping and whose interest was lagging. By raising their handicaps we tried to give them as good chance to win as the younger and steadier player. The third bowl we put up for the ladies' summer handicap. All these had to be won three times for permanent possession.

I will not bore you with the details of all that Lucey and I did through personal

contact with the members to stimulate their renewed interest in golf during the next two years. But let me say this: At the close of last summer one of the flag officers of the club came to me after the annual meeting in September and said, "You know this is really a yacht club and not a golf club strictly speaking, but we have certainly more interest right now in our golf, and it is bringing us more revenue than our racing." Furthermore, our pro's income has jumped 300% in two years from the profits of his sales of golf supplies and his lessons. Last summer he was giving an average of 6 lessons a day, and many an evening from 7 to 8 o'clock, you could see John Lucey out on the course with a tired business man, straightening out his drives or iron shots. Sometimes it was a man and his wife, and as often as not it was a father watching his hopeful young son or daughter receiving the proper instruction in this wonderful game.

### Pros Must Change With Times

It is my belief that if our golf clubs are to continue to function under the present difficult conditions, definite steps must be taken by those responsible to keep up the interest of the older members whose games may be slipping a bit, because they have less time and less thought of golf, which has been crowded out of their minds by drastic economic changes.

By the same token, present day professionals must change their ideas from those prevalent in 1929. They must go out and sell themselves, their services and their goods. They must meet competition not only in teaching ability and personality, but also in actual selling of their wares. They must keep alive the competitive spirit among their members, and stimulate their interest in keeping up their game. You may well ask how? I can't answer that question specifically, because no two members are alike, no two sets of conditions are alike. It is not a similar case to acid soil or brown-patch. It is a case of applied psychology. And the pro who will not make a study of it, who will not do his best to apply it, who does not make a determined effort to overcome the present sales resistance (if I may use

this term) of the individual member, is not functioning as he should, and as other business men have to, and will ultimately ease himself out of a job.

And let me add this last thought. There are many greenkeepers today who are well grounded in the fundamentals of golf. There are comparatively few golf pros who are familiar with greenkeeping problems. If necessity compels some of the smaller clubs to still further curtail, it is my belief that the two jobs may have to be combined. After all, golf, like the automobile, might be termed a luxury, and if it becomes increasingly difficult to sell luxuries to the people, then your club executives may be faced with the problem of dispensing with the services of those who are of lesser importance in the maintenance of their organization. The club president knows that the greenkeeper, particularly if he is a member of this or a similar association, is giving his best efforts to selling golf, with all its healthful satisfaction, to present and future members of their clubs.

## LIQUOR LAW PUZZLES

### Pitfalls of Liquor Law Explained to Managers by Government Man

**E. H. LOYD**, government attorney connected with liquor law enforcement, and 30 Chicago district club managers talked for several hours after dinner, April 22, in an effort to clarify the club managers' responsibility under the prevailing liquor laws.

Outcome of the meeting was that managers decided they had better study the laws carefully and consult regional liquor authorities in case of doubt. Among trick points that came out was one that indicated cocktails could not be mixed in quantities in advance of service unless the mixer had a rectifier's license, according to the letter of the law.

There was doubt about how far a federal retailer's license allowed a club to go—whether the license was good only for one bar or would apply in case of drink service at various spots around the clubhouse and grounds. Even paste coming off of revenue stamps is liable to get club managers in trouble. If imported liquors come without stamps attached, see that stamps are pasted on when the case is opened, counseled Loyd.

And here is a laugh; if a member brings into his club locker a bottle on which there are phoney revenue stamps, the club may be liable, although Loyd could not say definitely, and it is not the government's policy now to go snooping through lockers.

Sale of five gallons or more of alcoholic beverage requires a wholesaler's license so if some members order a barrel of beer, your retailing license allows you to bill it only in less than five gallon lots.

Loyd was exceedingly patient and helpful in trying to give the managers the score on this liquor revenue game. It made it clear that the purpose of the law was to provide the legitimate producer and vendor with protection against the illegitimate operators, of whom there still are plenty.

The boys were further advised that they were in business with the government when G. Lewis of the Meat Packers Institute showed them some charts explaining a forecast of a sharp hike in meat prices. It all seemed basically rather screwy to the solemn listeners who have to explain things to boards of directors or else. Try to explain to a house chairman that meat prices are going up because there is a chance of the country having too much meat and because people are going hungry in the country, and you would be out of luck.

But, no matter how high meat goes, the politicians will be able to afford it and get it. The managers got that clearly. Even the GOLFDOM reporter who covered the meeting could understand that.

### Builds Membership, Treasury With Youngsters

**PRESIDENT** Joe Watkins of the Humboldt (Tenn.) G&CC. reports fine results from his campaign to fill the club membership. With the old timers dropping out and the depression wolf stalking club entrances, officials began to realize the future of a club depends on its youth. Armed with a proposition featuring a monthly charge for unlimited play, President Watkins has turned the kids' interest to golf. He reports the club entertains each year's crop of high school graduates with a tournament and whole families join up from this promotion.