

# URGES PRO-PLAYER CONTRACTS

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... as told to James L. Mahoney

ONE of the hardest assignments that can be given to any person who derives a living from golf is that of working out an annual budget. And of all those who could estimate a budget, the club professional is the chap who would have the hardest job. His income and his expenses are too indefinite from the day a club opens until the day it closes for him to determine even an approximate profit for his efforts.

It has always been easy for others to tell pros that a budget system should be adopted—that so much money should be allotted for this, so much for that. For the most part, suggestions how this may be done have been merely theoretical. Seldom are they coldly practical when applied to the pro's problem. The trouble is that the pro seldom knows what his income will be, so that when he attempts to budget figures on paper he is resorting to mere guesswork, and the result is too indefinite to be reliable.

If a professional is given some indication of a flat sum he is sure of earning during a season, then he may go ahead and form some estimate of how much he could spend for equipment, assistants, home life, etc.

There is a simple method by which he can do this. And, best of all, it is a method that will be welcomed by every golfer.

The plan is: pro-player contracts.

An immediate explanation of the plan will help further discussion. The player agrees to pay the professional a stipulated sum for lessons during the year, and for the care of his clubs. Any time during the season, if the player feels he is off his game, he may call on the pro for a 15-minute lesson to correct the fault. He may call at any time during the year, and the pro is under obligation to give him lessons under terms of the contract—or agreement. Some will ask for more lessons than others. There will be no rebate at the end of the summer.

In addition to giving lessons, the pro is obliged to care for the golf equipment of his special "pupil."

At first glance this plan might appear to make the pro too much of a servant, and at the beck and call of many members. Second thought, though, should show that the more the pro is at the beck and call of members, the greater is his income. If he is overworked, then all the better—his income should console him.

A live-wire pro who is ambitious to increase his revenue will see the advantage of the plan if he signs enough contracts at the start of the season. Let us assume the contract price to be \$20, though the sum should vary according to the ability of members to pay. If a pro were to sign 100 members early in the year, he knows then—and the season is not yet underway—that his minimum income will be \$2,000!

By having this preliminary summer-long estimate of his minimum income, the pro's first benefit is that much-needed budget. With this lump sum to count on, he has a decided advantage over another pro who goes along haphazardly, counting his success by the day's receipts.

This plan should be especially beneficial to pros who live in the northern states and have but six or seven months in which to earn an income sufficient to carry them through the 12 months. The pro-player contract plan could be that very important step toward planning that nest egg of a bank account on which to live during the lean months, unless the pro is fortunate enough to have a spare time position while the snow flies.

There may be foundation for the argument that a pro would lose prestige and money by offering cheap lessons. But the day of pride has long since gone, and as mass production and mass selling is common in other business lines, the golf pro need not be embarrassed by offering the same inducement.

There is no defense for the contention

that the lessons would be cheap. But in how many clubs do more than a few members pay more than \$10, or \$25, or \$35 for lessons (depending on the contract price which could be adopted). Very few.

What the pro does is forsake a small number of lessons for a small revenue for a greater number of lessons for a greater revenue. In the end the answer is—more money. He merely opens up a new source of income.

In the present, as in the past, a pro knows before his season starts that most of his lessons will be given to newcomers, and not to veterans of the links. At best, a member will call for three or four lessons, and then only because he is exasperated over a slice, or hook or another fault.

Under the pro-player contract, members of the club become the pro's biggest asset for lesson money, and the newcomers to the game take second place. I estimate the pro at the average club should double his lessons income.

#### It's More Work But It Will Pay Well

True, it will mean a great deal more work for the pro, but no one should complain of work if he is getting adequate compensation. It should take up practically all his leisure time, if he is successful in "selling" the idea when the season starts. Not only should it give him more to do when play is heavy, but on rainy days he could occupy his time.

Much depends on how the pro "sells" this idea. He could present the plan as a special favor to members of his club, or he could be frank and explain the mutual advantages to both parties. He must judge for himself, too, the financial condition of the prospects in setting the contract price.

Many golfers are short of money upon joining the club at the start of the year, a condition which proves that the sport is becoming more and more a source of recreation for the working man as well as for the rich man. In such cases, if the player is reliable, the pro should adopt the partial payment plan—for convenience in paying is an added attraction in the selling of any article. If the contract price is set at \$20, it might be well to divide it into two payments of \$10 each, the first to be paid a month from the date of signing. This sales inducement should win over many who could not possibly sign

if immediate payment were demanded.

There are certain "tactics" for the pro, with profitable remuneration the following year. The live-wire fellow will himself discover faults in his pupil's game, and inform the player he is in need of a lesson. It is a good business proposition for him to do this. It takes up only 15 minutes of his spare time, and it pleases the player to such an extent that he praises the pro and the plan and resolves to sign again the following season, and in addition urges his friends to follow suit.

#### Pupils Make Fine Customers

The financial benefits do not stop at the initial contract price. There are other advantages which naturally follow. If the pro is a shrewd salesman, and approaches his pupils in a deft and friendly way, his income can be increased. The pro might invite the pupil to use a new club from the shop shelf. Invariably, a player gets good shots with a new club, and then he wants it in his bag. It's a matter of using simple psychology for the pro to make the sale.

When a new club is actually needed by a player, however, the pro must be careful not to inform the member too bluntly that his game is handicapped by the lack of a certain club. He should do it as a matter of suggestion, or by letting him use a new one. It should turn the sale, and in a gentle and polite manner.

Players, too, will otherwise benefit because of this step forward in pro-player fellowship. Besides becoming better acquainted with his teacher, his game should improve, and his golf equipment is always kept in tip-top shape. If the pro is on the job—and there is no use attempting this plan unless he intends to uphold his own end of the contract—the member need never bring a club to him for winding or other repairs. That work is done by the pro on quiet days.

There is often a wide bridge in fellowship between professionals and players. And it need not be so. Without slighting my brothers in the golf world, much of this indifference lies with pros who feel a superiority complex in their own shop. But if they are to adopt the pro-player contract plan a democratic, chummy attitude is necessary. Imagine shopping in any store where a sour-faced proprietor greets you at the door with a grunt for a welcome.