

## PROS MUST FOLLOW - THRU

By HERB GRAFFIS

**H**IS club isn't one of the largest and most famous in the country but it has a high proportion of active golfing members. He isn't widely known as a pro, although about every pro and member in his section knows and respects him. He won't let his name be used in this story because he is afraid someone may get the idea he thinks he is a smart guy and bragging; whereas his own conviction is that he is so dumb he can think of only a few simple things, but after he thinks of them, he does them.

This pro I'm talking about is a fellow with whom I went over a bunch of figures trying to learn something about the pro cost of doing business, which is a matter that too many pros don't consider and that many members seem to believe amounts to nothing.

The fellow dragged out his 1935 income tax statement and the figure would make some of the prominent tournament players break out into tears, it was so juicy.

I asked: "Aren't you afraid you're making too much money and that a few club members will get jealous and want you canned because you're a success?"

"I don't think so," he answered. "The accounts are all handled by the club. I've had offers from half a dozen big shot members to go to work for them, and sometimes I think my members are prouder about the way they took me in as a punk young pro and saw me work up this job than I am myself.

"Besides, look at the club's own state-

ments and see how they run right along with mine in money-making. The club makes money out of me because I am dumb enough to know that unless there's a lot of golf played by people who are interested and enjoy the game, I won't make any dough or will the club. So I started and have kept at the idea of seeing to it that a lot of people come out here to have more fun at golf than they could have at any other recreation.

"It takes ten hours a day, six days a week during the season, keeping the members steamed up; but when the winter comes I don't have to worry how the wife, the kids and I are going to get by until spring golf begins."

### Telephone Follow-Thru Keeps Members Playing Often

This important and difficult affair of keeping members interested is something I've heard many pros discuss. The smart boys are paying more and more attention to that. On this subject our modest friend says:

"The telephone is worth at least two grand a year net to me. The club pays for it and the club gets a nice profit out of the business the telephone brings in when I use it, so there's no kick from the

club when I lift that receiver off the hook.

"When I note that a certain member hasn't been out at the club for a while, I get him on the phone and ask if he can't sneak away and join me and two other members. Asking him to sneak away from big business makes the fellow feel pretty good. I tell him I can sneak away for nine holes myself but the rest of the foursome will go the whole route. That tips him off that I am staying on the job so close for the club that I can only play hookey for nine holes just because he is a grand guy, needs the exercise and I have missed him. I do miss these guys when they don't come out, and not because they are customers. They're friends and sportsmen and make this a great place to work.

"Well, I line up that fellow and two others who have been absent for a week or so, get them together and the chances are they enjoy it so much they make another date to play right soon again.

"If it's a fellow whose wife plays, I ask him to bring her for nine holes of twilight golf. Funny thing I've noticed about this. After a husband has played golf with his wife and myself, the chances are the fellow sees himself that his wife needs some new clubs. I help that idea along, but very, very gently. I don't want to embarrass anyone, anymore than I'd want someone to put a slug on me to buy something for my wife while my wife was right there."

### Short Season Idea Costs Golf Millions

Looking over this pro's books I was astonished by the amount of business he does during August in his shop. It's the second biggest sales month of his year. I commented on his showing for August over a period of several years.

"Glad you caught that," the pro remarked, "because that's the one thing that I believe only about a dozen other pros in the country have caught onto, and I doubt if any golf club manufacturer is wise to it yet.

"Pros and manufacturers usually are complaining that it's hard to make a profit in the golf business because the season is so short.

"Sure it's short. Twenty weeks used to be about the extent of the season. Now it's about a 24 week active season in the greater part of the country. That four week increase during the depression years ought to mean more than it apparently does to a lot of people in the golf busi-

ness, because it shows that the season can be extended.

"But still many of the pros think that the club selling months are April, May and June, and by July things are pretty well finished. By August some of the manufacturers must think there isn't much chance to sell clubs because their advertising almost stops.

"That idea of giving up selling work before it gets too cold to play golf is poor thinking, as I look at it, because with the season short enough as it is, there's all the more reason for using every minute of every month you possibly have for making money.

"Without realizing it, apparently, pros have proved that golf clubs can be sold all through the season. Think of the clubs fellows have sold at the end of the season to liquidate their stocks and get enough money to carry them through the winter. Now, I maintain that if a fellow can sell clubs at reduced prices in September when he is pushed by desperate thoughts about the winter, he can sell those same buyers earlier by simply using his head and some energy. That short selling season handicap has been made worse than it really is because pros have been thinking along the same lines that they have been following ever since the matched set idea took command and there wasn't the chance to sell fill-in bench-made clubs that there used to be during the old days.

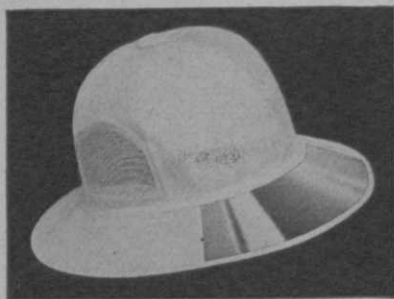
"The manufacturers are as much to blame in this respect as are the pros. I'm sure that if the manufacturers would get it into their heads that August, September and at least the early half of October are great months for golf and work on that basis to get the pros stirred up, the next three years would bring a solution to part of the expensive short season problem in the business."

Further comment along the seasonal line by this highly successful professional brought out that the majority of pros he knew considered themselves very lucky if they sold sets of woods or irons to 20% of their members each year. That meant 80% of the members didn't buy clubs but were still there to work on for sales during the entire season. He figured that each new set of clubs sold meant an increase in the rounds played by the purchaser, consequently an increase in the number of balls bought.

The August increase in club sales he explained by saying he watched to learn

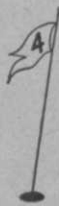
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# Shootin' Par in Sales!



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interfere with shots. We also planted shrubs around a rock garden adjoining our attractive swimming pool and children's playground.

The members get an extra added enjoyment from their club when the greenkeeper is keenly conscious of opportunities and responsibilities as a nature artist. There are pictures in golf courses that are groomed with expert and feeling care, even though the artist may be a fellow with sweat showing through a soiled blue shirt and, at times have on his lips words that strictly union poets would rhyme with lamb and dell and rich.

### Pros Must Follow Thru

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when members were going away on vacations. Then he'd sell them new sets of clubs and a bag and balls for their vacation use so they'd proudly carry the new equipment wherever they happened to go on vacation journeys as identification of an up-to-the-minute golfer.

"I've been reading what pros have had to say about Horton Smith's idea in GOLFDOM of increasing pro income by setting a quota of play by months 10% higher than last year," remarked this prosperous professional, "and I think it's a cinch for the boys to do that by having a par of last year's figures to shoot against. I do know from my own experience the pros will increase their sales a lot more than 10% if they will get it into their heads that they have to sell all during the season and not slow up after a brisk display of pep during the season's earlier months.

"One little thing that has meant millions of dollars to the pros and to golf clubs is the way that greenkeepers have adopted the practice of keeping the fall leaves pretty promptly cleaned up so players won't be discouraged by lost balls. However, if the pro is going to depend on the greenkeeper instead of himself for keeping pro-shop business active until frost, the pro will be out of luck."

### GOLF'S MARKET PLACE

George Herrmann, treasurer of L. A. Young Golf Co., well known and mighty well liked by pros, is recovering nicely from the illness which has confined him to his bed for the past six months. George figures just because a fellow's in bed is no reason he shouldn't do a little work, so each day he handles a certain