

She's Made a Success of Her Chicago Indoor School

By RAY REYNOLDS

THROUGH good housekeeping and a business-school atmosphere, Helen Macdonald has made a success in one of the most hazardous of professional golf phases of commerce, the indoor school.

On the southern fringe of Chicago's loop district—a location that is by no means ideal for a golf school—Helen has been conducting a school with steady profits, winter and summer, for almost three years. She went into the enterprise with a good working knowledge of instruction fundamentals acquired from Bob Macdonald, very little dough and no widely acknowledged reputation as a teacher, but with a deep conviction that an indoor golf school could be made a commercial success. She's made money and acquired a steadily increasing clientele for herself and for her co-instructors, of whom she has two in the winter, Gene Aldrich and Bill Hartshorn. Aldrich continues on the job at the school the year around.

When you go into the place you notice, first of all, that it is neat. There are nine windows to the place, and each is well washed. The three nets are always in good condition. Mats are first class and replaced when they show signs of wear. Floors are kept clean and the patrons have ash trays handy so cigarettes, cigars and ashes are in the trays instead of on the floor. Balls are kept white and are in porcelain containers instead of the usual untidy boxes. There are plants around the place and the notices, instead of being tacked up at random, are on an attractive bulletin board. Clubs are kept shellacked and in good repair.

Gassers

Get the Gate

One handicap that has embarrassed pros with indoor schools didn't bother Helen Macdonald very long. There is often a class of golf loafers who hang around a golf school and give the place more the appearance of a haven for orphans of the economic storm than of a high class place for recreation and instruction. Such "bums," who drift into the Macdonald school to sit around and gas, are promptly given the familiar rush. The absence of distraction by loafers helps to get instruction results, Helen and her associates testify. Pupils are in the right atmosphere for instruction. There are curtains around the nets so each lesson is given in privacy.

There is no loudness or horse-play.

Instead of having clothes spread around the place, dressing room and hangers are provided for men and women. There also is shoe and club storage space provided.

Patronage at the Helen Macdonald school is about 50-50 men and women. Helen says that it was difficult at first to establish confidence of the men pupils, but now is able to present testimony from many of her men pupils to the effect that her instruction has been resultful. With women and children pupils she made good right from the start. The fellows who teach at the Macdonald school say there's a great deal of difference between teaching in a neat, airy school and in the general type of haphazard installation of nets, whether pupils are men, women or children.

For ventilation, Helen's school is especially well designed. In summer electric fans promote air from the windows and the place is so comfortable that she averages 10 lessons a day in the hottest weather. During the winter, the three instructors are busy from the hour the school opens until it closes at 10 P.M. Patronage from loop hotels accounts for much of the evening business.

The furniture, the rugs, the putting carpet, the autographed pictures and the neatly stacked magazines and books all give the place an attractive, business-like air. Helen even has the splash area back of the washbasin painted green so it would continue to look neat. Her business stationery, business cards and other advertising material are in excellent taste and representative of a place where golf instruction and practice facilities are designed to please discriminating people.

She carries small stocks of golf equipment, but has a complete set of catalogs for reference by those interested in purchasing. This part of the layout, too, is kept immaculate and in orderly array.

Helen confesses she had plenty of misgivings when she started on her bold adventure with this school, and certainly her pro friends who sincerely wished her luck thought she was taking a long chance. But the way the enterprise has made good is conclusive evidence that she had the right idea—an idea that is worthy of serious thought by any pro who conducts an indoor school during any part of the year. Her idea simply was that a golf schoolroom should be as bright, as attractive and as orderly as any other kind of a first class schoolroom.