

# HOW'S YOUR ASSISTANT?

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**A**T MANY pro-shops as much as 75 per cent of the merchandise is sold by the assistant pro. When you get that amount figured in dollars and cents, you begin to realize the importance of the assistance and appreciate the wisdom of careful selection, training and encouragement of the young men in the shops.

Assistants usually hope to become first class professionals and are eager to master all details of the professional job. When the assistant gets in with a good pro who takes an interest in the boy's development, that boy becomes one of the greatest advertisers the pro has. When the youngster gets a pro job of his own he wants to handle it so it will reflect credit on the man responsible for him. If club officials knew how this works out they would pay a lot of attention to the training received by any young man being considered for a pro job.

I know that when I get a pro job of my own the man who has taught me and been my model is going to be satisfied with the way I handle my own job, and I am sure that every conscientious assistant feels the same way about his future.

## Assistant Does

### Bulk of Shop Selling

A good assistant is the pro's right-hand man. While the pro is out teaching, or supervising some course work, the assistant may come in touch with from ten to fifty members. Are those members going to be given the sort of treatment the pro would give them himself if he were able to be in two places at once? It depends on the training the assistant has received, and the common-sense he had when the pro picked him as assistant.

For seven years I have been assistant to Bill Adams at Elmwood. I have attended greenkeeping short courses, read the golf magazines, and been around at PGA tournaments and meetings but only a few times during these seven years have I heard or read anything about the importance of selecting and training assistants. Nor have I bumped into anything except talks with Bill Adams, that shows attention is being given to showing the ambitious assistants that they will be re-

warded for their efforts to serve and advance in their field.

It is difficult for the assistants to understand this neglect. It certainly should be one of the prominent activities of the PGA, for I have heard older pros say that a main reason for the disturbed situation in pro golf during the past fifteen years is that the game grew faster than the supply of trained pro personnel.

## Today's Helper Is Tomorrow's Pro

Golf is going to continue to grow and it is up to PGA to plan for further growth so that the requirements of first class pros will be supplied by properly trained young men. If the assistant of today isn't trained to be one of the pros or pro-superintendents of tomorrow, the whole standard of pro personnel will suffer, and master pros of today who have neglected assistant training will be unable to escape part of the penalty that may have to be paid in lowered pro income.

There may be, in some places, a fear of paying attention to the training of the assistant. The pro may be afraid that when the assistant gets good he will displace his old boss. Bill Adams, my boss, has the correct view on that. Bill says that if a pro isn't good enough to hold his job it is only a matter of time until someone catches up with him, whether it's his present assistant or some outside pro. The situation is no different in pro golf than it is in any other business. The fittest survives. Bill points out that when a pro pays attention to the training of his assistant, it is a sign the pro is handling his job so well he couldn't very well be displaced by an inexperienced man. However, the young man thus trained, becomes a desirable prospect for a pro job at some smaller club and with the background of training by a first class man,

## A REAL SIXSOME



You must have heard Jack Burke and his wife brag of their six youngsters. It is hard for you to horn in with a few brags about your own progeny when the River Oaks' pro and his spouse get into their broadcast.

Well, here are the Burke kids. They look like they fully warrant all the parental press-agentry. In top row, left to right: Mary, Eddie, Jack and Billy. Left to right, bottom: Jimmy and Beverly.

Neither Jack nor Mrs. Burke look of an age

to have a brood like this but when you figure Jack was second in the 1913 Canadian Open and tied for second in the 1920 U. S. National Open, you have a hunch he is grown-up. He won the Texas Open and PGA at 49, so you won't get flip about his age.

Grocery bills for this husky mob are met by Jack's service to Houston's elect who belong to River Oaks and from the business on Jack's all-weather grip, which many manufacturers, pros and amateurs have adopted.

can handle his own job so that it actually puts his developer in stronger because of his broadened reputation. The old pro has a reputation not only at his own club, but at the club where his protege goes.

"Look at some of the best of the old-time pros today," advises Bill, "and you will see that they are entrenched in their jobs just about in proportion to the number and character of good assistants that they have developed and sent on as pros to other jobs."

### Let Helper

#### Sit in on Plans

The pro plans the policies of shop operation. The assistant then has the job of actually performing a considerable part of the work. My employer and I go over all the plans for the season together, well before the season starts. Then I know how Bill wants things handled. He asks for my ideas and passes judgment on them from his practical and successful experience. We think that we do a good job at Elmwood, and what is more important, the officials and members of our club enthusiastically approve the work done by the pro department.

But, as many pros and assistants know, the usual practice when the pro-shop opens in the spring is for the assistant to start in without much more than a "hello" from the pro and a few words about keeping stock clean and seeing that

any sales made are charged or paid for in cash. The assistant can't feel he is part of the system. But when there is preliminary planning and educational conferences with the pro, the assistant feels he is an important cog in the machine instead of just a shop-boy.

### Telling the Members

One part of the assistant training program that never has been mentioned, so far as I know, is the importance such a program has in making members realize that there is a lot to the pro job properly handled. A doctor, lawyer, dentist or almost any other professional or business man cannot start business without having received a rather extensive and specific education. But club members and officials get the idea that all that is needed to qualify a fellow for a pro job is a few years as a caddie, then maybe a little time as a clerk in the pro-shop and giving a few lessons to women or to men who might not break ninety with a hundred lessons. It would have a strong and favorable effect in getting clubs to hire pros more carefully if clubs were conscious of assistant training being a necessary and important part of their own pro's work.

Course maintenance, or at least a very close and intelligent cooperation with the man responsible for course maintenance

is becoming more important in development of assistants. Many smaller clubs hire a greenkeeper-pro rather than a pro-greenkeeper. Maybe that will change again when the public awakens to the value of golf instruction, and I think that awakening will be an outcome of the golf instruction pros are taking into colleges and high schools. But whether an assistant is going to be a pro, a pro-greenkeeper or a greenkeeper-pro, a valuable part of his training must be in course maintenance work. Bill Adams sees to it that I get a certain amount of greenkeeping work. That not only qualifies me to assist him in supervision of details of maintenance but gives him time to get into the shop and get first-hand touch of the shop business situation and see a lot of the members. The short courses in greenkeeping help tremendously in educating assistants in course maintenance.

#### Why Not Pro Short Courses?

When I think of what the short courses in greenkeeping have done for golf, I wonder why there haven't been any short courses in pro department operation for the assistant pros. Certainly the pros, with their assistants handling from 40% to 80% of the volume of shop sales, ought to have a very strong interest in such courses conducted in various sections. Even if many pros had to pay the expenses of their assistants to such educational sessions, it would be a fine investment because the boys would be able to get by easily on a very moderate sum.

I have read that in an ordinary year there is more than \$12,000,000 in retail sales handled by the pro-shops in the United States. It probably would be conservative to estimate that at least half of this volume of sales is handled by assistant pros. My idea of a business isn't that \$6,000,000 be handled by untrained boys, or that the larger sum represented by members' satisfaction with pro-shop service as a partial return on their dues, be mishandled in the slightest way because of lack of assistant's training. It certainly isn't the idea of Bill Adams, my boss, that any part of pro department operation can be handled by a young fellow who is just hired and then told to "go to it."

The salvation of the pros today in the assistant situation is that the assistants in many cases have done a great job of

educating themselves. But with planned training by the pros or the sectional PGAs, there would be more pro-shop business, less pro-shop operating mistakes, and probably an improvement in the class of assistants, although the boys today are grand, smart kids as a general thing, and doing fine jobs considering the general neglect that handicaps them.

#### All These Items Are Part of Pro Business Costs

**I**F all items of the pro's expense of doing business were charged up against him, he would be deep in the red, according to a resume of expenses brought out at an informal session of some pros recently. Fortunately for the pros, they have been compelled to pay expenses which are properly club expenses only in infrequent cases.

- Among the expenses listed:
- Cost of own playing equipment.
- Cost of own sports wardrobe.
- Caddie hire.
- Assistants.
- Assistants' board and room.
- Shop merchandise costs.
- Shipping charges.
- Advertising material.
- Postage.
- Prizes.
- Entertainment.
- Bookkeeping.
- Buffing machines.
- Club-cleaning supplies.
- Repair material and supplies.
- Painting of shop.
- Shop furnishings.
- Cash register.
- Insurance on members' clubs in storage.
- Insurance of shop stock.
- Golf accident insurance.
- Automobile use in club work.
- Tournament expense.
- Collection expense.
- Replacements of clubs and balls (which pro has to make to retain good will, but which manufacturer may properly regard as unfair claims and refuse to allow.)
- Replacement of equipment lost from bags.
- Time devoted to free class lessons.
- District meeting expense.
- Balls stolen or uncharged.
- Telephone tolls.
- Taxes.