

small, it would be a step in the right direction. While at first such a school might be able to graduate only a few, gradually the golf clubs of the country would have enough confidence in the work, that men sent them from this college would be preferred as competent teachers. The prestige of the PGA would rise beyond all present hope, and take its rightful place in the golf development in this country. Clubs would be protected against unqualified pro performance.

Only until then can the PGA do much to better itself. At present, if you serve an apprenticeship for so many years in a golf shop under a recognized professional, you can become a member of the PGA, and qualified as an instructor. Not enough. You might spend forty years in a golf shop and never be a competent instructor.

I hope this starts a constructive argument, and I am willing to help any movement in the right direction. I am a member of the PGA; I am a college graduate; I was also an "Ezra Applesauce." But I am also egotistical enough to believe that I am a good teacher and duly qualified to enter this argument.

## DOCTORS and QUACKS

### A Test for Golf Instructors

By N. B. LAIKELEY

(In "Golfing", London)

**T**HERE are too many quack doctors about,' said J. H. Taylor a year or two ago, in discussing the defects of present-day golf teaching, and he put forward a proposal that a board of examiners should be set up, preferably under the auspices of the PGA, to issue diplomas only to those who could satisfy the examiners that they knew the job thoroughly. It still seems to me an excellent suggestion, because at the present time professional golf teaching is nothing like as good as it ought to be.

The problem is stated from the American viewpoint in a recent issue of *GOLFDOM* by Johnny Takach, the professional at the Blackheath Country Club. 'Ezra Applesauce's paw's farm is on the main highway at the edge of town. Ezra's done a little caddying. Farming doesn't make enough money for Ezra. So he mows a spot in the front 40, sets up distance markers, builds some tees, and has himself a practice range.

'Ezra puts up a sign: "Ezra Apple-

sauce, Golf Pro.'" Why shouldn't the suckers believe it? Ezra does. Golfers and fishermen are much alike. They'll try any kind of bait and if it catches a fish now and then they don't stop to think that they might be doing a lot better.

'Most golfers will accept playing advice from practically anyone, and if he's lucky enough to hit one straight long ball right after getting the advice he stays "sold"—for a time. That's what sets Ezra Applesauce up in business as a pro. Ezra may meet a golf club member or official who's strong in a club political situation and before long Ez is a pro at a golf club with widened opportunity for fooling ignorantly with the games of hopeful golfers.'

### Few Pros Will Guarantee Results

Hundreds of golfers would be willing to pay handsomely for instruction in the game if they could find a teacher who would guarantee results. But how many golf professionals would care to allow their remuneration for lessons to be based on the extent to which they brought their pupils' handicaps down? In China, I am told, physicians are paid on the logical plan of receiving a stipend from each patient so long as he remains in good health, but as soon as he falls ill they are docked of their fees until they make him well again. The golf doctor, however, would fare rather badly under a similar arrangement, for most of his patients would be in the chronic condition of being 'off' what they are pleased to call their game!

There is no doubt that golf professionals both in America and the Continent make far more money from teaching than they do here, and I am afraid the reason is simply that in America and the Continent the pros make a more careful study of teaching. On this side of the Atlantic a tremendous amount of harm has been done by the universal acceptance of the idea that if a professional was a good player he must as a matter of course also be a good teacher. Such a claim contains an obvious fallacy, since it is clear that a man may know everything about the golf swing and yet know nothing about teaching, even as some caddies, of whom we have all had experience, seem to know everything about golf and nothing whatever about caddying. If the Professional Golfers' Association would embark upon some

scheme for training young pros in the art of imparting their skill to others, they would benefit both the professionals and their pupils. The idea that the man who could turn in the lowest score in big tournaments was the best teacher had perhaps a certain substratum of truth in the old days, when most people were content to learn by imitation, for the best golfer was fairly likely to be the best model to copy. But in these scientific days, when we are all trying to be golfing machines, we want an instructor who can explain to us, at least in a rough and ready sort of way, how the machine works.

In the States where before the depression hundreds of pros were so successful as teachers that they were kept busy throughout the summer giving lessons from morn to night and did not get a chance to play in a tournament from one year's end to another, the tournament player and the teacher are entirely separate. You used to hear it put forward as an excuse for the failure of the British pros against the Americans that they were competing against men who were playing big golf from January to December, while the British players are too busy giving lessons to be able to get as much practice as they need. It is at least possible that the converse is equally true, and that the British pro often fails as an instructor because he has been so busy chasing the will-o-the-wisp of tournament success that he has never had sufficient time to study the art of teaching. Yet a young pro who could train himself to be a really first-class teacher would probably make more money in the long run than all but the most successful of the gladiators.

#### Are Pros Doctors or Instructors?

The chief defect of golf teaching at the present time, as it seems to me, is that it is critical rather than constructive. Even the pros who really do know their job, are golf doctors rather than golf instructors, better at spotting faults in a swing that is already formed, and helping us to 'iron out the kinks' than at telling an absolute beginner how he is to start. Indeed, you will find that the pro who has to teach a would-be golfer who has never had a driver in his hand before, is often completely at sea until he has actually got the pupil swinging the club. Then he can begin to point out where the pupil is going wrong. But as a rule he lacks any sort of language in which to explain

to the pupil how he is to swing the club correctly. I should be very glad indeed to see the Professional Golfer's Association issuing an official 'manual of instruction for golf instructors' that would help the average professional over this and other hurdles.

#### Tips Enough for English Golfer

The average Englishman, and still more the average English golfer, has no patience for the scientific analysis which is such a passion with his opposite number in the States. The Englishman is content to receive his golf instruction in the form of 'tips,' unsupported by any reasoning, and even with regard to these he displays an amazing faculty for seizing upon some picturesque detail to the complete neglect of the essential idea. If you want an example of this, you have only to ask any golfer on this side of the Atlantic to describe to you the overlapping, or, as it is commonly called, the Vardon, grip. It is a hundred to one that he will tell you that the chief point about it is that the little finger of the right hand is allowed to overlap the forefinger of the left. And he will usually be quite content to leave it at that.

The picturesque detail about the right little finger riding in the hollow between the fore and middle fingers of the left, is the point that has taken his fancy. It simply does not occur to him that it can matter very little what you do with the right little finger once you have decided to loosen the grip of the right hand by taking that particular finger off the club. Still less does he stop to consider that the position of the fingers that are to be employed in gripping the club is likely to be of more vital importance than the position of the one finger that is not to be used. And the basic idea behind it all, the idea of adopting a grip that will ensure the left hand being in control for the first three-fourths of the swing, means absolutely nothing to him.

It may not be literally true that the American cracks all swing alike, while the British champions swing in all sorts of different ways, but it is the case that British golfers are more interested in studying the differences between individual players, while Americans are concentrating on the factors that are common to the majority. And I feel sure that the latter is the plan that will produce the sounder theory of play and in the long run the better golfers.