

REPLIES RE:

## EZRA APPLESAUCE

NUMEROUS letters have been received by GOLFDOM commenting on an article by Johnny Takach in a recent GOLFDOM. From the bunch we take two representative and interesting comments. From C. V. Anderson, well-known pro of Waterloo, Ia.:

Johnny Takach wrote about a fellow by the name of Ezra Applesauce, whose father had a farm at the edge of town. As Ez had done some caddying and farming was not as profitable as he wished it to be, he got busy, mowed a spot on the front forty, set out distance markers, stuck in some clay tees and erected a sign with his name and the word pro in big bright letters. He was now ready to give golf lessons to those who would patronize him. The writer did not say whether Ez could hit a golf ball with some degree of skill, but we presume he could.

Takach asked why is it that people will invest money in golf lessons without investigating the teacher's qualifications and ability first. There are, no doubt, hundreds of other people interested in golf who would like to have the answer.

#### Game Good; He's Made Pro

The Ezras have been with us for a long time. I can remember some 20 years ago a young fellow from one of the first public courses went to the final in one of our state amateur tournaments. He also qualified low, one of his rounds being a 70 which was extremely good those days. The fact he was from a public course, not a common thing in those days, the newspapers told of his achievements in lengthy columns, large type and numerous pictures. This advertising brought him a telephone call offering a position at a country club teaching its members, at a salary double what he was then making. He accepted. Not *one word* was asked him about his teaching experience.

In a couple days he was on the job, a respected pro at a well established club in a town of 50,000 people.

This fellow gets a great kick telling this story about himself. He is a pro now. His first lesson was with a doctor. He proceeded to the practice fairway, (few practice fields in those days) threw some practice balls down and said, "All right, doc, let's see you hit some." ("I didn't have

enough brains to call him doctor," he says as he is telling the story.) "All right, doc, hit some more," he said. As the doctor was hitting them as fast as he could, the new teacher stopped him, saying, "No, no, no, don't hit 'em like that, hit them like this."

The lesson went on; practically all the new teacher said was "Do it like this, like this."

After about twenty-five minutes the doctor spoke up and said, "Pro, do you think I am *tense*?" "Oh no, you're O K, just do it like this," he replied. In a few minutes the time was up. Just before leaving the doctor, the new pro said, "Do you know what's the matter with you, doc? Well, I am going to tell you; you're too damn stiff!"

"This pro today is considered a very fine teacher and enjoys a splendid reputation as such, is a fine player and has a good job. He has often said that he has been in the golf business over 20 years, made plenty of mistakes and learned as he went. He was an Ezra once.

#### 25 Years Ago It Was Easy to Land Job

A quarter of a century ago, or possibly a little less, if your name was Sandy Mc-Tavish, and you could hit a tee shot, it was not difficult to get a pro connection. I have heard about fellows who were hack drivers and boilermakers on the 'other side' who came to this country and secured positions teaching the game, without any previous teaching experience. No doubt they all are considered good teachers today.

"Takach believes there should be some way to protect the golfing public from the inexperienced fellow who calls himself a teacher. That can only be done, I believe, by some method of letting the public know who the qualified instructors are. This could be done by some kind of an

examination. If you could pass the test you would be a registered or certified teacher.

"The PGA is trying to protect the golfing public against the inexperienced teacher by requiring at least five years' teaching experience before being eligible to join their organization. So the best protection the golfing public has today from being experimented with is to look for the PGA sign in the shop.

An older professional, a veteran Scot who has been in this country 25 years, and who was in pro golf for 15 years prior in Scotland and England, says:

"The Ezra Applesauce article was the truth about several cases that I know. Some of the Applesauce boys didn't even know much about playing golf, let alone about instruction. One of the fellows I knew of that type got careless one day and went out to play with some members. He went nine holes at a quarter a hole, and was six down.

"The pro (?) said he didn't have any change with him but if the player would come back during the week, the pro would give him a couple of lessons to settle the gambling debt!

"The foundation of a pro's existence is instruction; not only the instruction income and the sales of playing equipment that follow, but the acquaintanceship and confidence established. You have to know what's what about all types of golf swings; you have to be able to explain clearly to all kinds of students; you have to be patient and you have to have experienced judgment. You can't get those things overnight. Every once in a while you have to make the pupil some special proposition—like no charge for the lesson if the pupil doesn't feel satisfied, or double the price if the lessons works out OK. That's a touchy enough sort of a proposition, but it's only one of the many spots requiring the keen judgment a fellow needs if he is going to do an expert and satisfactory job of golf instruction."

### Suggests Questionnaire Method to Learn Why Golfers Avoid Lessons

By ROBERT N. PRYOR

**I**F INDUSTRY and big business, always on the lookout for new ideas, use questionnaires to get customer reactions, why can't the golf pros?" says Percy Platt, veteran pro at the Forsgate Country Club, Jamesburg, N. J.

Platt has been puzzled by the army of

golfers with expensive equipment who can hardly hit a ball off the first tee, and he has suggested to the PGA of New Jersey that it conduct a campaign in the form of a questionnaire to find out why golfers are so averse to taking lessons.

Platt would label this questionnaire "Why Don't You Take Golf Lessons?" or "Why Do Golfers Object To Taking Golf Lessons?" He is of the opinion that if the lay golfer was confronted with a series of intelligent questions that he wouldn't hesitate to answer them and return them to the pro who sent them to him.

And Platt is quite adamant on his proposal to stimulate instruction. He says "What puzzles me more than anything else is continually seeing golfers with expensive outfits, such as a \$65 bag and a \$75 set of clubs, hardly able to hit a ball off the first tee. What is wrong? Is the cost of lessons too high? Haven't they time to take lessons? Haven't they the confidence that the pros can properly teach them?"

One reason, and a good one, for his questionnaire plan is that he is a firm believer in any movement to find out what the public wants. "This simple questionnaire" he says "may be the means of giving us some new ideas on instructions but more than that it will show the golfers throughout New Jersey that we are interested in their game and in this way some benefits might result."

Platt would incorporate in this questionnaire two simple but rather intimate questions. One is: "Are you embarrassed?" and the other, "Is instruction too expensive." He is of the opinion that these two questions are the underlying reasons why golfers don't take more lessons and if they are properly answered it will give the pro a good idea on how to line up a prospect for instruction.

He would also include a section for a golfer to answer the following questions: "Would you be interested in a five minute period of instruction? "Would you consider taking a series of lessons in the evenings during the daylight saving period? Would you be interested in a warm-up session on Saturday mornings before you start your regular week-end of golf?"

At a quick glance, Platt's plan may not be fool proof and it may need some revising here and there. But on the whole it does seem like the first organized effort anyone has made to get at the root of the lesson problem.