

NEED MORE A1 AMATEURS

By MEL SMITH

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OF THE many problems the golf business must solve the most important is that of developing players. All other business problems are of lesser importance to pros. If better amateurs are developed, more amateurs are developed. Such outstanding amateurs as Ouimet, Evans, Jones and Little were responsible for wider interest in playing the game. None of us, whether tournament players or home club pros, can depend entirely on the outcropping of amateur genius for the future of our business. We must make more good players!

Why haven't we more good amateurs now? Why aren't there at least a half-dozen really able amateurs at almost every metropolitan club, instead of the existing situation which usually shows only two or three—or sometimes none—amateur stars at a club.

Swing Must Sound Simple

I'll venture the diagnosis that pros generally have scared many good amateur prospects away from development by making too strong a play on the mystery of the golf swing.

Think of the cases of pros who are widely known for their instruction results. They are men who stress the simplicity of golf. Ernest Jones with his "swing" method and Tommy Armour with his "four fundamentals" are the successful type of instructors who have progressed and whose pupils have developed because of removal of the "mystery" emphasis from instruction.

Are there such secrets about this game that only a few should know, or do know? Surely golf is not that difficult that the American public cannot master it. They have mastered everything else.

We all know only too well that an effort is being made in all directions to encourage new players into the game, but what happens to them after they are formally introduced? We do not hear very much of them or their progress toward becoming champions. They are just dropped into the vast army to shift for themselves after a very short time.

One does not have to start playing this game from the junior ranks to become

a champion. Goodness knows there are armies of good material roaming the fairways today who would like to become champions, average players who would give most anything to improve their games. They give every indication in that direction, the way they support their clubs, back open championships, follow exhibition matches, read every article written on golf, always with the thought in mind that some day they will run onto the mystery that makes this game so difficult to master. This surely should not be the case with such loyal supporters of the game. Every effort should be made to educate these average players and new players to the extent that when they do follow an exhibition match or gallery at a tournament they will derive some definite benefit and knowledge toward the improvement of their own games.

Teach Them What to Watch

Just what does the average player get out of following performances of master shotmakers? Just what have they accomplished other than to say they watched this player and that player, or they talked with so-and-so—he is a wonderful player? Maybe this individual is satisfied just to get in a good hard day's work tramping after these tournament players up hill and down dale ending up with nothing more than two tired feet. That is all fine and dandy, but what have they actually derived toward the betterment of their own games? I say, nothing at all.

If we are to step up the caliber of our present amateurs to what it should be, their handicaps indicate that these mysteries of golf shotmaking must be removed by the professionals.

I appreciate the fact that the average player can not devote as much time to his game as the playing professionals do. But I do maintain that a better understanding could and should be put before

our players of today so that when they read articles and follow exhibition matches it will be an education to them and their own games. If a few definite fundamentals were instilled in their minds and these so-called mysteries reduced, our golfers of today and those to come would all be working in the right direction and champions would be made.

What then is the remedy for all this? Nothing more than good competent instruction. This calls for a lot of hard work by both the pupil and the instructor. If a professional will talk the workings of an orthodox swing over with his pupil, give him a definite mental picture of what is expected of him and his part in the issue, a thorough understanding would be had on both sides—then progress is sure to follow in all directions.

The professional first of all must brush

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up on his own ability to instill his golfing knowledge into the minds of the pupils so as not to make it such a mystery. The execution of an orthodox golf stroke is not so complicated. The workings are very simple indeed. It is a process of eliminating a lot of unnecessary thinking on the part of the pupil. After the first rough stages are over with it is a matter of one or two definite thoughts.

There are many fine professionals today who really know golf and the sound fundamentals that must be had before a player is to develop. But they are either afraid of themselves or have not the ability to impart their knowledge in a simplified way, hence the mysteries. I have had this said to me many times; "Why is it that one pro will tell you one thing and another will tell you just the opposite", or, "All you pros are alike." This is not fair to the pros in general. It is a very bad situation from every angle. The average player's first thought is that he is being misled. We do not have to systematize instructions. There is only one basic way to execute anything; there is no other way. The sooner the pros get this thought over to their pupils the better understanding will prevail between the pros and the amateurs of today.

The amateur, on the other hand, should be fair with his instructor. Give him an opportunity to produce and he will with pro cooperation. He is responsible now if he is to continue in the pro business. Just because a home pro is not an outstanding star tournament player, amateurs do not think he is not a fine instructor. Resident professionals who have a membership to look after and club duties to perform can not be running around the country playing in tournaments. Members come first with him, therefore he gives up what opportunity and publicity he might have had if he had taken the time to roam the country playing. Resident pros can not often be playing pros and take care of their jobs too. The mystery lessens when these things are considered.

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