

# YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE "IT"

By HERB GRAFFIS

*Pro teaching and playing ability not as important as personality, says official*

**T**HIS is what one of the best known golf club and association officials in the eastern part of the United States has to say about the pro job. He has been playing golf for more than 30 years. He has been instrumental in getting jobs for at least 40 pros, according to his recollection. He is a high official of one of the nation's prominent corporations. He doesn't want his name revealed because he says he is getting too old to engage in arguments.

His opening remark on the pro as seen from the veteran club official's viewpoint would let him in for a spirited argument. He began the interview by remarking:

"The successful pro generally uses 75% personality and 25% ability!"

I questioned that rating.

"All right, then, name me some successful professionals who have an even balance of personality and of teaching and playing ability and genuine member interest that makes them worth good salaries and extra patronage from their clubs," commanded the old-timer.

"Fellows like Horton Smith, Billy Burke, Olin Dutra, Paul Runyan, Johnny Farrell, Willie MacFarlane, Henry Picard . . ." I began.

"Go ahead," he encouraged me, "because you are making my argument stronger. Don't you realize you are limited to far less than the playing stars in trying to present a group of pros who are balanced in personality and ability because among the playing stars there are fellows who haven't that unusual personality required to make the most of a club job?"

"O. K. then, you do the rest of the talking," I suggested, and he took me up.

## Ability Not Easily Measured

Pro jobs (so the analysis started) change more on personality than on ability. That's natural because what do club officials and club members know about pro ability? Who has the right, as a member or official, to say that one experienced pro is a good teacher and another one, equally as experienced, isn't? Any average amateur player who makes such a criticism bases it on his own tempera-

ment and not that of a large number of the club members.

A pro may be able to shoot scores under 70, but does that make him valuable to the membership to the extent that he can't be displaced? Look at our course where our old pro is practically the green-keeper because he has had a deep interest in the care of that course for more than 20 years. The grand shape it's in is worth more to us than having a pro who could shoot a 65. Our pro and a first class foreman take care of it. The old man has trouble breaking 80 these days, but he's a better pro for us now than during the first 5 or 6 years he was with us.

## It's Worth Plenty to Any Club

The answer is personality and it still is the best thing about instruction. I see him go around while his two assistants are giving lessons and having trouble. He drops a few pleasant remarks; the pupils and the assistants relax and the lessons go along better. That's personality that is worth far more to the club than his playing ability or the hard work teaching in the hot sun would be to us.

Take the case of So-and-so who got canned as pro over at (naming a club). I was over there last summer as the guest of a man who has just been made chairman of the club's golf committee. The pro was sitting by the first tee apparently harboring a grouch against the world. My friend asked the pro to have clubs brought out. In a surly way the pro yelled for a caddie to get my friend's clubs. The pro was just simply too lazy to be pleasant.

Naturally my friend was offended. When a man belongs to a private golf club he has a right to expect to be regarded as "somebody," especially by the employees of the club. For my own part, the club sunk in my opinion as a guest

because of the lack of pleasant expression of personality by the man who was supposed to be its greeter.

That pro may be a good teacher. I know he is a pretty good player. There must be something to him or he couldn't have been in golf for the 15 or 20 years I have seen him around. But with the grouchy manner he has allowed to grow on him, he will have a hard time getting another job.

See how the jobs have been going the last few years. Older pros have complained to me that kids who aren't more experienced than good caddies are getting fine jobs. The explanation is personality that counts for more than ability when practically every club hires a pro.

What's personality? Well, I've watched a lot of our own good salesmen and every one of the good ones have in common a real interest in caring for the customer. That identifies the salesman as a fellow with personality. A pro who is on the level about giving each member value out

of the club and the pro department, will go out of his way now and then to give members individual tips, free. And, by the way, I have seen several pros ruin their jobs by being afraid that they'll give the member something for nothing. A few free samples of instruction, five minutes or so, will make more of a customer of the average club member than if the pro offered the fellow \$10.

### Pleasant Smile Better Than Par

Another thing about personality is cheerfulness. People come out to golf clubs to enjoy themselves. They don't want the offensive sight of a sour-faced pro marring their enjoyment. The pro doesn't have to be smiling or laughing to the silly point, but he's got to look like he enjoys having the chance to do something for the member.

Then, the pro with personality has to be unselfish. The pro may think himself pretty important, but the member who is paying the bills is convinced that he outranks the pro in importance. If the pro can't take an unbiased viewpoint of that, then let the pro start paying club bills.

And another, but certainly not the least, element of personality that pays a pro is diligence. You can't get by in any other business without work, so the members are bound to resent a pro having the attitude of a guest of the club. Maybe the pro believes laziness or a casual indifference to the members' individual interests builds him up as a superior sort of a person but I've been in on the hiring of golf pros for many years and I can say that no club considers that loafing contributes anything to a personality worth being on the club payroll.

But I can't tell anyone how to develop a personality that is profitable to a golf club and profitable for the pro who has it. A fellow either has to be born with it, or snap into creating a winning personality for himself by an honest examination into his own shortcomings.

But just look over the pro situation carefully when you go around the clubs next year and see if the best jobs aren't held by the men who use about 75% personality and 25% ability on their jobs, even if some of the fellows who are making good money in pro jobs that they can hold as long as they want to, are unusually well qualified men all the way around who could balance personality and ability on a fifty-fifty basis.

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