

# FEE-COURSE PRO IS MORE THAN PRO

By JACK MORRIS

**T**HE golf professional at a public course can no longer get by on sheer playing ability and a marvelous capacity for Scotch. That is, if he ever did. In past years, a country club job was something to strive for and public courses were somewhat of a bad dish.

The pro's job has changed considerably in the past ten years and it is a long par five (against the wind) from the old established country club to the modern public links. The golfers are different, the attitude is different, and, most important, the business is different. In fact a new name should be invented for the "pro" at a public golf course.

He is not a "pro" in the accepted sense of the word. The professional at a country club can sit and wait for his members to come out to the club. His business is there and his sole job is to cultivate it. The public course demands new business! New faces every day! The turnover is as fast as a dub's back-swing.

## They're All Customers

A certain few play regularly and might be classed as "members," but every golfer must be treated as a department store treats its customers. The best of service in as short a time as possible. The professional has a golf shop and is a combination floor manager, salesman and country-storekeeper. The traffic is terrific but the money is there. It is high pressure merchandising, with the devil buying wholesale.

High pressure at a Country Club? Horrors! Old man Ertwhistle walks into the shop, selects a club from the rack, waggles it a few times and then asks: "How much?" The pro tells him, watches Mr. Ertwhistle shake his head once or twice at the idea of spending that amount for a golf club, but the new stick is soon in Mr. Ertwhistle's bag and the old one is to be sold "for what you can get, or give it to a caddie."

There are practically no Mr. Ertwhistles at a public course. Everyone can either "buy it wholesale" or wants a generous allowance on a few treasured sticks given to them by dear old Aunt Emma. But that is where the country-storekeeper

comes in. There's the 30-day credit for used clubs to be sold at the pro's discretion on a 25 % commission. At the end of that period the clubs will either be purchased outright and credit given or returned to the owner. As far as the old clubs are concerned, a nice profit is to be had in a "beginner's used set" with the golf shop guarantee of the full purchase price allowance on a new set within a 90-day period.

## Chance to Give Service

In addition, the pro has a personal service to offer that can hardly be equaled by any department store or given at a private club—some free coaching or a lesson or two with each new set of clubs. Every pro gives free advice but seldom makes a point of it. In this case the so-called allowance is not a discount because the shop gets the full retail price from the new set; a beginner has had his first lesson and the shop has the "beginner's set" to sell once more.

Organizations of any kind are fertile fields for new business but the private club pro cannot go after them. He must wait until they come, if ever. A handful of nickels and the telephone directory will more than repay the public course pro. Almost all large firms and companies have groups of golfers who play regularly but do not belong to a club of any kind. They arrange their own little tournaments of about eight, twelve or sixteen, get starting times at the favorite public course, and away they go. But the personal touch is lacking.

They seldom see the pro and don't care if they do. However, 10 firms at 8 golfers apiece amounts to 80 potential customers, and why let them skip around the golf course unnoticed? After all the divots are dug and replaced, the professional is the man who knows more golf than the amateur, and it is the rare amateur who does



ELMER will be looking forward  
to seeing "YOU"

How about dropping around at the shop and seeing some 1938 woods and irons that I think will just suit you. \*\*\* Don't think about the financial risk of a visit.\*\*\* With these new clubs, 6 lessons and your usual wagers with Mr. Gardner I can make you a rich man in a year. You will have fun, too.

Here's  
*Elmer Biggs*

Elmer Biggs, Peoria (Ill.) CC pro, and pres. of the Illinois PGA, sends his members business promotion postcards. Humorous references to incidents involving the member addressed appear on each individually-written card. Biggs makes an advertising asset of the Legionnaire's call, "Where's Elmer?" Bright use of these post cards helps to explain why there is no recession at the Peoria CC pro-shop.

not respect the pro's opinion and welcome his attention. It is easy to arrange their tournaments and lend a helping hand. A merchandise order on the golf shop is a very fine brand of advertising and a group of 80 potential buyers who like to call you by your first name is a very nice thing indeed. Give merchandise orders to low-scorers, the high-flying birds, and lesson courses for the ducks who poddle along behind. Ducks mature quickly and it doesn't take long for them to develop a sturdy bill.

Then, of course, there are the women, bless their hearts. They are the real backbone of public golf and without their support a surprising number of husbands would have to stay away from golf on Sunday and take the family to something that the whole family could enjoy. But that's just pork chops and gravy to the pro at a public course. Almost all women belong to a club of some kind. If they are business women, it is a recreation club; housewives join a health club or go in for bridge. Whatever the club may be, their organizations are usually very intense, and if the moving spirit becomes interested in anything it is a small matter to swing the group to any activity. The public course professional has an opportunity to reach all the women golfers by talking to the "moving spirit" on an economy basis. Class lessons at a small fee per person, say four in a group, will not cost very much per person and all gals are interested in not costing so much per person. But if a public course pro does get a class, the "used beginner's set" comes into its own with a jingle of niblicks and the cash register rings merrily—just because women are always looking for bargains.

When you sell a man clubs and lessons,

you must also aim good talking points for his wife or his golf will be neglected for long drives to the beach, potato chips with a sandwich, or puttering around the house and garden.

The professional at the country club can sit and wait for something to happen, but the man at the public course must be there first. He is a shopkeeper in a highly competitive branch of what once was purely a luxury business. People come to a public course but they come only for exercise, and money is a much more important item than to the country club golfer.

Business men and salesmen comprise the bulk of public links golfers these days. The business man is shut in an office during his working hours and even an outside salesman is closeted with a customer the greater part of the day. A low financial period taught these men the value of exercise and relaxation. But they are hard boiled. They would rather play golf than mow a lawn, if there was a lawn, but they've been watching percentages for a long time and price means everything.

It was about twenty-five years ago that golf took its first uncertain step away from the stronghold of wealth and was given a vigorous push by a young man named Ouimet. Its rocky toddle suddenly developed into a smooth-flowing stride. From that period public golf was on the upgrade. Truck drivers and stevedores soon stopped whistling at staid golfers in short pants and were giving that "sissy game" a try.

A large field to draw from and the pro's best bet is knowledge and service—if he doesn't give good service his knowledge is nil,