

# Tank-Town Pro-ology

Don Young, of Clewiston, Fla., in this issue concludes his comments on the ups and downs of a small-town pro

By Don Young

A SMALL-CLUB pro's success depends greatly on his teaching ability. Good teaching results inspire confidence, and that confidence is, as a matter of course, transferred into the selection of proper equipment and all matters dealing with the game.

I've found that selling lessons in series is by far the best policy. As mentioned herein previously, the small-club golfer is inclined to expect entirely too much from a single application. And it is the pro's job to overcome this fallacy.

In selling series lessons to beginners, convince them before they start that if they are able at the end of six lessons to understand and demonstrate the proper grip, stance, pivot, wrist positions and swing, they really will have accomplished something. Don't make the mistake of giving the lessons too close together unless absolutely necessary. Insist on plenty of practice between sessions, and make sure the pupil knows each step thoroughly before going further.

There's just one trouble with this "series of lessons" idea. If a pro has twenty or thirty of these subjects under way, he is very liable to forget just how far he may have advanced with each one individually. And nothing seems to ruin a pupil's confidence in his or her golf teacher any quicker than to meet that teacher for a lesson and have the latter confusedly inquire:

"Let's see now—what were we working on the last time you were here?"

## Keep Record of Lesson Progress

To overcome this bugaboo I use a ledger small enough to carry to the teaching field. I assign each pupil about ten pages in this book, and following each lesson enter exactly what took place, including the pupil's and my own reactions to certain points. It takes two minutes after each lesson to make such an entry, and at the same time you can be refreshing your memory by referring to the record of the pupil waiting. And it makes an excellent permanent record. Quite a bit of work? Certainly! But damned if I've ever dis-

covered how to make money in this game without working.

That first "six lesson" series is mighty important to you. Bring it to a successful conclusion and you've sold six more without half trying. And the next six are gravy compared to the first.

Group lessons to youngsters are probably not so imperative to the small club as in the larger. By the time the small town youngster attains a productive age, so far as the pro is concerned, he is generally seeking his fortune in foreign fields. But some other youngster is probably locating in your community, so the scales are balanced. The free training, however, is a fine professional gesture and one sure means of expanding the scope of golf. Make golfers out of 'em when they are young and they'll generally stay golfers. Which benefits the entire industry. And provides fine training for the kids.

## Consider High School Team

I have always tried to extend my free classes to include the possible formation of a high school golf team. If this can be engineered successfully the pro has really done himself some good. Reports to the contrary notwithstanding, gratis golf instruction, freely and pleasantly given, is not a loss. It always kicks back to you in some form or other.

Small golf clubs as a rule are notoriously under-financed. And the defect is worse in but one other department—administration of the club's business affairs.

And often the small town golfer has the erroneous idea that all is required to grow good greens is the planting of the right type of grass and a generous supply of water. And they operate on the basis of such an idea. When it does become apparent that a mistake in judgment has been made, the lesson seems to have no lasting effect. The blame will be shifted to some abstract fault and the same thing done over again.

Money spent on a golf layout that does not produce as near as possible 100% results, had just as well be tossed in the first water hazard. It is a complete waste because generally the entire job has to be done over completely.

An alert pro had one of his members give a series of golf lessons as a birthday present to the member's son.

The pro picked up the idea and pushed it to other members. He sold \$320 in lessons last year on this idea alone, and has developed some great boosters among the kids; boosters who keep telling their parents what a grand fellow the pro is.

One of the angles of small-club operation that still has me puzzled is the average club's Board of Directors. A man may be an outstanding success in the business or professional world, but the moment he is elected to the Board of Directors of a small golf club, his business judgment sometimes immediately assumes the status of a prep school freshman. That is, so far as the administration of the club's business affairs are concerned.

So far as I know there's nothing much the pro can do about such a situation but grit his teeth and make the best of it. A greenkeeping friend of mine advises shooting as a possible cure. But perhaps some day the PGA and GSA will be able to convince club officials that members of the two organizations know what makes a golf layout tick, and matters pertaining to equipment, upkeep, budgets, and administrative policies had better be left to their judgment.

Of all the jobs connected with a golf club, the handling of caddies gets my first prize in goat-getting. A group of kids on vacation is a man's-sized problem in any language. But kids as a rule possess a surprising sense of fair play. And if a caddie group is simply not wholly bad, something generally can be accomplished.

#### Free Instruction Pays Dividends

Free caddie instruction, free group lessons, caddie tournaments, and the instilling of club pride in a group of healthy youngsters pay big dividends. Boys are natural imitators and in most cases develop into good caddies and good golfers. And there's nothing a club membership appreciates more than good caddie service.

In the smaller clubs where the pro generally handles the boys, extra attention paid to caddie details is appreciated. Most of the boys come of good, substantial families and their caddie activities, if pleasant, are very often the means of new club members and new business.

I shall never forget a curly-headed, engaging youngster, with a reputation for being light-fingered, who enrolled in one of my caddie groups. I was immediately

advised to get rid of him because of that fault. But something, I know not what, made me hesitate. Before many days various articles around the club were missing including balls out of members' bags.

One day when he was watching me I deliberately walked out of my shop and retired to another part of the club that afforded a good key-hole vision of the layout. Within thirty seconds his fingers were in my ball case.

The young man and I had a private conference regarding the matter. His attitude impressed me as that of expecting a good hiding. But I simply took the balls away from him and gave him a gentle, thirty-minute lecture on the comparative values of honesty, good-citizenship, and legerdemain. The boy tearfully protested that no one had ever talked to him in that manner before, and promised to mend his ways. I had no more trouble from his quarter and he later became caddie champion, and finally club champion. Today he is No. 2 man in the town's biggest bank.

I like to kid myself that I had something to do with that kid growing up straight. But I probably didn't. Anyway, the lecture didn't do him any harm—possibly some good. And he did make me a first-class caddie. Which is, as we all know, a too rare species.

#### Surplus Stocks Cause Headache

Closing up shop at the end of the season with a stock of merchandise on hand is probably the cause of more splitting headaches in the profession than any other one thing—especially at the small layout. Quite often that stock can represent a good share of the season's profits.

Labor Day is a good date to keep in mind in this respect. The club usually has some activity scheduled and play is good over the week end. Put on a couple of week end handicap events, including a mixed two-ball foursome affair, charge reasonable entry fees, and start moving out that stock in the form of prizes. Take advantage of that week end to sell entries in coming tournaments for the next six weeks. Work like a trojan on them and you'll be surprised how much stuff you can turn over.

One of the keenest stock-moving gags I ever used was the Calcutta Pool. Get the date for the club championship set for sometime in September. After the qualifying scores are in and the players matched into flights, throw a pre-championship dinner. Tickets for this affair should be sold

two weeks in advance with the help of a committee. When cigars and coffee are in order, auction off the players. With the help of a couple of bidders in the audience you can really raise some money. Pool the money in each flight and pay off in merchandise prizes as follows: one-half to the buyer of the winner, one-fourth to the buyer of the runner-up, and one-eighth each to the buyers of the other two semifinalists.

At one Calcutta Pool I moved \$230 in merchandise. The event excites no little interest and a world of good-fellowship.

However, there has never been a stock-moving scheme that will even tie the old tried and true method of selling the stuff when it should be sold. And the way to do that is by keeping the tips of your shoes thin by staying on your toes.

The small-club pro who is without the benefit of a financial reserve had better, first of all, thoroughly convince himself of his exact professional status. If he wants to stay in the game, and advance, he might as well resign himself to the fact that hard work and close attention to his business is the only thing that will bring results. And such a program does not include playing dime skins with the club champion every afternoon—including Sunday.

A man goes one of two ways in pro golf. He either sets his goal for that of a money player, or he becomes a club professional. And since very few of the boys have been able to successfully combine the two, a young pro's chances of doing so are remote to say the least.

I found it utterly impossible on a small job to retain my golf game and make money, too. Argue as you wish, but nobody can do as good a job of looking after your business as you can do yourself. Winning forty cents from Bill Jones is not half as important as being in your shop to welcome John Smith when he comes out to play; making him feel at home and convincing him you are interested in his club comfort and golfing welfare. And contrary to most pro's reasoning, this job of convincing is not best accomplished on the golf course.

How many lessons a year does the club champion take of you? Very few—if any. But Alex McWhuff is just taking up the game and needs your help and encouragement. You'd better do most of your playing with him—and the rest of the thirty handicappers. That's where your bread and

butter is coming from, so you'd better be on hand to slice it.

Yes, the small-club pro, in order to be successful, most certainly must be a business man—and a magician, a juggler, and a court jester. He's engaged in one of the world's toughest occupations, and his survival depends largely on the quantity and quality of gray matter under his hat. The methods found successful in one location may prove a first-rate flop at another club. In short, he must make his own bed—and try and get eight hours sleep on it.

In summing up, however, I know of one method of operation that will work for any pro, any place. Here it is.

I have a shoe which I place in the hands of my assistant. Whenever a club member walks into my shop and buys a set of clubs without my having previously approached him along those lines, my assistant is instructed to don that shoe and vigorously apply same to the part of my anatomy generally most used by the unsuccessful pro.

The shoe is hob-nailed and has a copper toe.

## Driving Range Operators

### See 1939 Another Good Year

**S**TOP-and-sock operators are looking forward to another boom year. The business has increased steadily during the past four years, although there continues to be a high mortality rate among the untidy and poorly designed and equipped establishments.

Those practice tees that have done well operate on a basis of careful attention to attracting and serving a market that demands neatness and order. The most successful of these places are so well groomed in layout and equipment and so attentive to the desires of the customers, they are run on almost a private club platform.

Several expert operators of prospering practice tees estimate that as many as a quarter of their customers never have played a complete round of golf.

In most cities the practice tees have been virtually free from price-cutting wars. It has been found that cut prices haven't drawn business to a place that was lacking in qualifications of location, tee construction, good maintenance, neat equipment and polite and competent attention.