

How About Golf's Public?

By Herb Graffis

PGA internal wrangles come to climax at Pomonok — pros' good-will in danger

PUBLIC reaction to the unfortunate wrangle that preceded the 1939 PGA championship at Pomonok certainly did pros generally no good, and if the lads are figuring on reviving this rag-chewing about technicalities in the secrecy of their annual meeting, they'd better forget it, kiss and make up. It would be the height of folly for the PGA to stage an annual meeting battle on the highly controversial technicalities that swirled around the case of the surprised and silent Denny Shute. Although the PGA for the past few years has gone to extremes to keep directly from reportorial ears annual meeting details that might benefit the relations of pros with club officials, the golfing public and the press, a rehash of the Pomonok affair would be so loud and lusty it would penetrate the walls of the PGA klavern and be heard by those journalists who know that details of a big family quarrel always make a scandal the public relishes.

Apparent disregard of the public interest by certain PGA officials has influenced numerous amateur golfers to believe it is time to broadcast a polite reminder that the rank and file of golfers are the bosses of the game, not the PGA, USGA or any other outfit. Government always exists by consent of the governed, in golf, as elsewhere.

Financial Flop Frightens Bidders

Especially unfortunate was the nationwide publicity given the Pomonok case because it was followed by the sad financial flop of the tournament. This didn't provide any solid foundation for solicitation of future PGA tournaments which are financed entirely by the host clubs' guarantees. Now that the Federal Trade Commission has ruled out the PGA ball refunds, and the dwindling profits of the manufacturers can no longer provide financing for large subsidy staffs or such outright gifts as the approximately \$45,000 which the manufacturers gave the PGA for "promotion" last year, PGA officials have the heavy responsibility of treating very pretty whatever fresh out-

side money they can get. Santa Claus is in the iron lung so far as the PGA is concerned.

There have been whispers about a conflict in interest between the playing pros and the home club pros. Those pros, in both departments, who consider engaging in such a conflict with their lip, are only getting the entire golfing public fed up with all departments of pro golf, barring whatever the individual pro can do with his members to stand in right.

Pros Must Work Together

There is no legitimate reason for conflict between the tournament pro and the fellow of lesser fame, but usually far more financial security. Maybe the playing pro's clubs are sold through stores. The public says "what of it?" The home club pro using his noodle and energies can offset the store business, and generally does. There aren't 15 tournament pros who now are in a position of such financial security that they can be certain of being out of hock by March 1, 1940. If the public gets any erroneous idea—through the messing up of a tournament-home pro conflict—that the PGA is trying to hold up golf equipment prices, the suspicion will backfire on all pros.

However, in the wrangle which followed the attempted enforcement of a PGA rule, the public received from newspaper comment the idea that the PGA was becoming an arrogant, mercenary organization. This is a serious matter to the PGA. Other rules of the PGA, as those who are acquainted with its regulations, by-laws and code of ethics well know, have been waived flagrantly. The rule designating a dead-line for dues payment by players exempt from sectional qualifying happened to be somewhat mystifying to the public in the case of the PGA's two-time former champion, Denny Shute. The public has been reading pro pleas that the USGA automatically qualify for the National Open all former National Open champions who desire to play in the event. Then appeared the confusing and, in some respects, comical inconsistency of the PGA

Pros who have members intending to visit England and Scotland can get booklets describing the famous British courses from Golf Clubs Association, 524 Calendonian Road, London, N. 7.

ruling out one who had won its championship twice, the British Open once, and played on several Ryder Cup teams.

The inconsistency was heightened by the signing of a petition by some of the name players, demanding that Shute be allowed to play. It must be remembered that in a free country, as the U. S. is supposed to be, anyone has a perfect right to express his wishes by petition. A few years ago, certain players signed a petition to consider the case of Robert Harlow, then tournament bureau manager of the PGA, who was tossed out of his job by a political maneuver of the kind that has cost many pros their jobs. The signatories to that petition were threatened by a ranking PGA official with expulsion unless they withdrew their signatures. The same official threatened to resign from the PGA unless the Pomonok petition governed. Such vagaries make the public laugh. The boys ought to get together on their signals. PGA officials have expressed the conviction that it is imperative the dues deadline be strictly enforced; their implication being that unless the PGA championship trip were held forth as bait, the boys wouldn't pay up. That is debatable, too, in view of the good credit standing of PGA members and the emphasis the organization has put on the credit factor. In this matter of the dues deadline, the main complication is that of allotment of places, sectionally, for the championship. However, even that seemed to have been handled in the past without any public disturbance, by the stragglers paying at the first tees.

Lesser-Lights Have Legit Kick

Much of the jawing about the Pomonok case concerned making an exception of Shute, two-time former champion, and ruling out other tardy PGA members of lesser fame. The lesser known boys have a legitimate squawk there. At that, for the betterment of pro-public relations and the protection of the tournament sponsors, probably the fellows without comparatively recent championship records would have reconciled themselves quietly and philosophically to a flavor of favoritism which, theoretically, should be non-existent when the boys draw their drivers out on the first tee of a tournament.

But, the thing's all stirred up, and the public's talking. Whether the talk will die out and leave both home and tournament pros in public graces as a pro golf unity having good judgment, is your own guess.

Individually, the pros do all right with their members, but collectively, they are getting into deep water and had better beware. Now is an especially bad time for any pro squabble, with the PGA attempting to get introduced a coreless ball on which manufacturers are asked to pay \$1.00 a dozen royalty into the PGA, and still maintain current retail prices on which both pro and manufacturer are finding it difficult to make a reasonable profit. The public may begin to get fed-up and ask "How about us?"

"How about the public?" should be the PGA's first thought, just as "How about my members" is the first thought of the PGA member who makes a success of his business and stands high in the esteem of his members.

Public reaction was not considered when the PGA got itself into its mess at Pomonok, so the sooner the public is allowed to forget the PGA forgot about the public, the better it will be for pros.

Advocate Elimination of Sand Traps

VETERAN pros who were acquainted with the late A. H. Toogood, one of England's prominent pre-war pros, will be interested to learn that his grandson, age 8, not long ago became probably the youngest player to get an ace. The lad knocked in an ace on a 110 yard hole at a Tasmanian golf club.

News of the youngster's achievement was received by Ralph Stonehouse, Indianapolis pro, in a letter in which the boy's father, also an A. H. Toogood, commented favorably and enthusiastically on a statement by Ralph, reprinted in Golf in Australia. Stonehouse favored doing away with sand traps, saying that the star players had virtually solved the sand as a shot-making hazard.

Toogood, one of the top-notch Australian pros, maintains that grassy hollows provide a shot that's more puzzling to the stars, less aggravating to the average player, and less expensive to maintain than sand traps.