

IT TAKES
ZEST
TO BE A
SMALL-TOWN
PRO

By **DON YOUNG**
Clewiston (Fla.) GC

THERE probably isn't a golf professional in the country who hasn't been the target for the following completely witless remark—or something close to it: "Boy, how I envy you! Out in the fresh air and sunshine every day. Playing golf for a living. What a business!" You'll hear this bit of cockeyed conversation bandied about locker-rooms, pro-shops, and out on the fairways. And occasionally you'll find it cropping up at various and sundry church oyster suppers. Just what generates this gem of occupational philosophy is hard to say.

Long ago I succeeded in soothing my rages in this matter by accepting it as simply one of the facts of life—such as brown-patch, cut budgets, and falling hair. Because I found when it came to refuting such beliefs, the refuting job become an endless chore of no mean refuting—and finally convincing the subject of exactly nothing.

I have been fortunate or unfortunate enough (take your choice) thus far in life to have been associated with a good many different lines of endeavor. I've been a clerk, an athletic goods salesman, a musician, songwriter, window decorator, sign painter, collector (bill) and newspaper reporter. I've conducted a cleaning and dyeing establishment, and at one time had some experience in the restaurant business. I also took a fling at digging ditches. And once, in a careless moment, I invented a gadget that, figure as I might to the contrary, was sure to make me rich (but didn't). And finally I became what I am today, a golf professional.



DON YOUNG

I'm quite sure now that professional golf was the very thing I wanted to do all the time. But fate, along with the easy-money times of the post-war period, decreed that I should finally get a little horse-sense in my head before engaging in an occupation that is comprised of two distinct roads: one, that of pleasant, slow starvation; the other, plenty of hard work, which, if intelligently applied, gives one a fairly even break with the nemesis of Little Red Riding Hood.

No man could have entered pro golf at a more inopportune time than the writer. The stock market had just done its fancy diving act and the depression was on—and how! But I was convinced that four years of study under old Tom Harris, whom I still consider one of our most capable teachers, would overcome all obstacles, depression or no. So I embarked on my new occupation with a light heart—and not a dime in my pocket.

Having definitely decided to adopt professional golf as my permanent vocation, I threw myself into the job with a whole-hearted zest and determination that had probably been woefully lacking in anything I had previously attempted. Otherwise I might now be something of a clerk, sign painter, or ditch digger. At any rate, since that day I have seen pro golf in all its phases in most of the ways and byways of our grand country. And I love it now as never before!

Since a good share of my professional operations have been confined to the small



Here are the pros of clubs located in or very close to Louisville, Ky. The boys were attending a District outing early last fall when the photographer got them together. They are, from l to r, kneeling: Joe Lally, Shawnee GC; Ray Ottman, Big Springs GC; Bob Craigs, Audubon CC. Standing, from l to r: Chas. Oehler, Cherokee GC; "Smiling Bill" Kaiser, Hillerich & Bradsby pro sales manager and present Kentucky Open champion; Jack Ryan, Louisville CC.

and medium-sized clubs, Herb Graffis expressed himself as believing I possibly have a trick or two up my sleeve that might prove of some value to the small-club pro in his fight to keep from starving to death.

I guess my present professional status could be reasonably compared to the fellow who sings: "I got a pocketful of dreams". As a financial success I've proved to be no great shakes. But I have packed considerable experience into the past 10 years—and managed to gain a little weight at the same time. There have been times during that period when I would have gladly sold out, experience and all, for \$1.85. And other times when I would have refused to step out at any price.

But I console myself with the thought that professional golf is one of those vocations in which one seldom finds financial independence. The blame for such a situation, perhaps, can be laid more or less at the doors of the men engaged in the work. On the other hand, pro golf is a young profession in America. And the type of human being that seems to choose taking chances in this lottery of endeavor

A friendly tip to managers who pride themselves on their cuisine and liquor service, is to write Peter Greig of Greig, Lawrence and Hoyt, Ltd., 347 Madison ave., New York City, and get on the list for Greig's Wine and Food Newsletter.

It has in it some marvelous recipes and information on wines, especially.

ors leads me to believe that in a not too distant future this phase of the game will enjoy improvement. Intelligent thought intelligently directed seems to be the magician that turns the advancement trick in all professions. And pro golf of late is happily exhibiting a robust development in this respect.

At the time of golf's inception in America, the pro problem was a minor one. A group of men with money simply imported pros, clubmakers, greenkeepers, etc., and told them to build a golf course. However, as the game caught hold of the public's fancy and spread within a comparatively short space of time to all sections of the U. S., the pro problem increased twelve inches with every foot of growth the game exhibited. Alert young amateurs and ambitious caddies saw possibilities in taking up pro golf for a livelihood. Consequently we were, before long, blessed with an over-abundance of pro—good, bad and indifferent.

Finding most of the metropolitan locations occupied, these young pros turned to the small clubs, the only means of staying in the game they loved. And immediately pro golf was faced with a problem that still is today, literally, a splinter under the profession's thumbnail.

Twenty years of batting around in this game has convinced me that of all the jobs related to golf, the small-club pro has the toughest. Unlike his metropolitan brother who, as a rule, draws a decent salary and is assured of from 200 to 700 members from which to try and wrest a living, the lad in the tank town starts from scratch. First, more often than not there's no salary. Second, budgets are just something to juggle around between the pro, the greenkeeper, the bridge club, and the Friday night pot-luck suppers. And invariably the card sharks and grub hounds emerge unscathed. Third, the attractive item of club care is woefully absent in the setup of the boy in the sticks. Too many of his clients tote 'em from home to the club and back home again, with a personal scrubbing of soap and water the first warm day of each March.

For membership the small-club pro is handed anything from 50 to 150. Ample allowance for small town psychology, which is exactly the same in Golden Rod, N. Y., and Sweet Potato, Idaho, pares these figures down considerably. There's always a certain percentage of maiden

ladies who belong to the local country club because it is the thing to do. They probably did at one time decide to play the game, but having busted a brassiere strap the very first swing, they retreated to the ladies' room with flaming cheeks, nevermore to emerge on the first tee. Over their knitting on the club veranda, these charming girls whisper among themselves that the new pro is certainly a handsome chap. But they seldom, if ever, enter the pro-shop.

Other important figures that cut deeper gouges in the available cashable membership of a small club include all of the public school officials and teachers. Having wholesale contacts with athletic goods houses, what is more natural than their demanding golf equipment on the same basis?

Further, there are the various local business houses of every type who have catalogs available on everything from Diesel engines to hot-fudge sundaes, each and every one containing a wholesale golf line. And since the small town business man has a reputation for nursing his nickels, it is not always the easiest thing in the world to interest him in golf clubs and golf balls at retail figures.

There are many other angles that tend to reduce the source of revenue to the country-town pro. After assembling them all into one group and doing a simple job of subtraction from the club's roster, the figure remaining is often quite amazing. The number is so small, in fact, as to lead to the conclusion that the town's business men, from banker down to popcorn vendor, would never be so asinine as to attempt going in business with such a small clientele available. But the pro does it—and in a good percentage of cases gets away with it, too.

Another department in which the small-club pro finds himself definitely behind the eight ball, as related to his city brother, is that of lessons. Too often the small town golfer is imbued with the idea that all one must do to improve one's golf game is to take a lesson from the pro. And if that one lesson does not happen to produce the desired result, the pro finds himself sarcastically referred to as "that guy" and "lousy teacher". A half dozen of these county fair hot-shots can sometimes shove the boy out on the protruding end of a decaying limb. And if, in this event, the limb should happen to break, the crash proves to be a very definite one indeed.

(To be continued in February GOLFDOM)

California Caddies' Organization Clicks; Plan Merits Wide Adoption

HERE'S a caddie idea that should be widely copied. The brief outline of the plan is taken from the excellent, newsy bulletin of the Southern California PGA. Under the heading, "Caddies Come Into Their Own," the Bulletin reports:

Orchids to the Caddie association organized at Hillcrest, Wilshire and Lakeside. Such organizations merit the wholehearted support of the club members as they are designed to help the boys help themselves.

For the benefit of those not conversant with the set-up, may we use Hillcrest as an illustration.

The Association receives 25c for every set of clubs in the shop. Members pay \$1.00 membership fee and \$1.00 monthly dues. They operate their own cafe, which is a concession. Loans are made to members but must be repaid within 6 months. Hospitalization is available at a reputable hospital at cost. The Board of Directors settle all disputes and their findings are final. The other club Associations are operating on a like basis and are really proving themselves worthwhile.

Spalding Exhibition Foursome Concludes Tour; Played to 300,000 Spectators

THE Spalding Rover Boys team has ended its 100,000 mile tour which began May 17, 1936.

Horton Smith and Jimmy Thomson will continue with Spalding's playing exhibitions and demonstrating and lecturing before school groups and at athletic coaches' gatherings. Harry Cooper and Lawson Little will play tournaments, and may make connections with clubs.

The boys played to more than 300,000 spectators.

Thomson and Cooper have sent their entries for the British Open.

Post Card Stunt—Bright little stunt that Tom Walsh, pro and manager of Westgate Valley pulled. Tom's course is daily fee. At the close of the 1938 season, he mailed his players a postcard thanking them for their patronage and telling them that 25 tons of fertilizer were put on the course late last fall to make the course condition still better next year.