

INSIDE GOLF

by

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September 20, 1939

My dear

Your letter of the 20th throws a responsibility on me. You say that your club is considering changing your professional because he is "dead on the job."

Please don't think that I am trespassing on our long friendship if I say that in this case of the pro situation at your club those who are primarily guilty of being "dead on the job" are you and your companion officials. You have been entrusted by your members with the task of seeing to it that the pro department is one of the most valuable of your club's assets and have allowed the situation to get critical.

I know your pro because I have talked with him for hours at tournaments and at pro meetings. You don't know him. Knowing you so well I have discreetly questioned your pro trying to learn why he hasn't taken up his problems with you. The truth is that the fellow's afraid to talk frankly with you. Your club has him more concerned about holding his job than about employing his initiative and energy to handle his job.

You and I, with our employee relations duties in our businesses, would consider ourselves to be negligent should we permit such an attitude to develop in the mind of any of our business employees. Still, I know of many cases where such a condition exists between club professionals and their executives who are successful executives of businesses.

With but few exceptions, every successful golf club I know has an excellent professional. If the pro is deficient in the performance of his club duties, his deficiency is the accurate reflection of short-comings in the management of the club by its elected officials.

The initial mistake by the officials may be that of hiring. After all, club officials seldom are experienced in the business of golf until they've been in office for a few years (if they submit to this sacrifice). Generally there is a tendency to think that the pro makes a fortune considering the requirements of his job. I have heard club officials say, time after time, that their pro who has no rent or light bill to pay for his store, no heavy clerical, sales or advertising expense, should have the softest snap in merchandising.

I know the facts.

What the club official forgets is that the pro has a restricted market, a short season and considering the seasonal style character of much of his merchandise, a mark-up that is probably as low as any of the speciality shops. I know that there are at least 21 items of pro shop operating expense of which 10 are common to practically all pro shops, and in most cases must be charged against the pro's cost of doing business. As a matter of economics the pro is one of the most economical service factors in the retailing of high-class merchandise.

I know that many of the pro's business problems would interest you by their complexity. I often find myself impressed by the good judgment and energy that these fellows employ. Many of them do wonders in operating their comparatively small retailing units at a profit which permits their families to live in a decent way, reflecting credit on their employing clubs.

Now, in your own case, do you appreciate that your club, which is supposed to collect its pro's accounts for him owed him on the first of this month \$.....? This information I get from our credit department with which your man is working closely in trying to handle a precarious situation.

If your pro tries hard to collect, the chances are he incurs official or member displeasure and is out of a job. That happens too often at golf clubs. Consequently, I wish you would bring this matter up at your board meeting with that tact of which you are a master. It's a delicate and unjust position for your pro. But, it goes to show you that as far as being "dead on the job" is concerned, the pro has some foundation for discouragement.

It would be easy for me to supply you with a list of men who are looking for pro jobs. It is greatly to the interest of the game, its clubs and its officials as well as its pros that we keep active in this direction. But, in this case, you have a man who potentially is as good as anybody in the country for your club.

What is needed at your club is not a new pro, but a new pro policy on the part of its officials.

I have, as you know, the highest regard for your business ability; a regard that I have made evident by asking for your opinions and advice quite often. In serving your club as you are determined to do, conscientiously, why not favor your pro with some of your business advice?

Get him to tell you frankly, and in confidence, what he thinks the job needs. He may blame someone else for some of his faults, but don't we all?

Then you tell him, in detail, what you think the situation in the pro department requires.

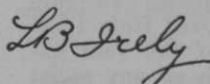
Get into a huddle with your fellow, in some spot where you won't be disturbed, and make a habit of holding these conferences until you both settle on a plan of policy and action that will benefit your club. I know your man is for your club just as earnestly as you are.

Try this. In times past I have suggested this to, and, who, as you know, have carried the onerous burdens of golf club officialdom. It worked in their cases.

This situation is a great deal like that one you had at your plant at, where you told me you had fine equipment but were losing money until you changed the method of operation. You don't need new personal equipment in your pro department, but you certainly do need a new and informed manner of using what you have.

With best wishes to you and the good wife, I am

Sincerely,



President