

PROS—Look To The Future

By Willie Hoare

AS we look back on pro golf in this country it is plain for us to see that our profession has been undergoing constant, drastic changes. Those veteran professionals who are best fixed with worldly goods are those who were conscious that changes were taking place, and who kept ahead of them.

Is there any reason to believe that pro golf has reached a point of fixity, after which no change of any consequence is to be made? Certainly not! Changes of a violent nature are taking place, or impending. No thinking pro can view the present situation and believe that it will prevail until the end of his days. Consequently, the foresighted pro will carefully study conditions and trends for his own protection.

Let us quickly review the changes in pro golf that have taken place in the United States. The review will put us in a frame of mind for accurately adjusting ourselves to probable future developments.

The first professionals in this country were combination clubmakers, course architects, instructors and greenkeepers; the importance of the various functions being, generally, in the order named. We must remember that when pro golf got started in this country, the amateur players were mainly the fashionable rich people and the thrifty Scots who retained love of the game of their homeland. As the rest of the country began to imitate the rich and discover the charm of golf, and as the caddies grew up, there was a demand for more qualified pros than were available.

Pros Became More Specialized

The pros, then, gradually retired from course architecture and construction, with the exception of those who decided to make this design and building of courses their major work in golf. Demand for specialized attention to course maintenance and the players' insistence on a superlative refinement of course condition, then figured in relieving the pro of another of his original duties. His lesson time and bench-made clubs also were in such heavy demand that he had to have someone take over primary responsibility for course maintenance.

This left the pro with instruction and

club-making. There wasn't much of a club selling problem then because the individual craftsman had a demand for about all the hickory-shafted clubs, he could make. Instruction became increasingly important to the pro as the steel shaft became popular. Then is when many thoughtful pros began to realize that pro golf had overlooked something in not making a concerted effort to emphasize the fundamental value of expert instruction. The average American still has to be sold on the wisdom of expert instruction in sports, and is perfectly content to be self-taught when he—or she—has no ambition to become a champion.

2,000 Pro-less Clubs

We in pro golf today might reflect that there are approximately 2,000 U.S. golf clubs where there are no pros. Most of these clubs are so small that they would be able to afford a pro-greenkeeper only with difficulty, but it is significant that they spend their limited funds for a greenkeeper and do without pro services.

We pros might also give thought to the estimates that show almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of the patrons of practice ranges never have been on golf courses, but are quite satisfied to whack away at their buckets of balls without being told anything authoritative to help them get into golf as promising players.

So now we have had a bit of background showing what has taken place in pro golf to change the pro status from that of nurses to an infant sport to businessmen in the giant of the sports industry. Government figures show that golf goods have a decided lead on any other sport, except that employing firearms and ammunition. We are in a big business now, but are we preparing ourselves and looking ahead, as able businessmen should? We were through the manufacturing stage when there was more demand than supply for

The nation's best Syrian golfers held their annual tournament September 3 at the Valleywood GCse, Toledo, Ohio. Event is sponsored by the National Syrian Golfers' Assn., and each year attracts many golfers of that nationality to the one-day competition. Joe Ezar is one of the outstanding Syrian pro golfers.



Bon-Air CC (Chicago district) represents the interesting and profitable job of converting a private golf club into a commercial pleasure plant, with the golf course and pool being feeders for a rushing night club business.

Re-design and rehabilitation of the locker-room was accompanied by installation of a new pro-shop at which Herbert (Scotty) Irwin presides. Irwin has a highly attractive shop in which a main feature is window display space. With non-membership traffic going out of locker-rooms onto the course merchandise is so extensively and invitingly displayed that many players are drawn into the shop for purchases.

Irwin, a veteran in pro golf although still a fairly young man, solved a difficult shop layout problem by this use of window space instead of walls.

our goods. Now the conditions are changed with respect to golf merchandise. Can we solve the new problems without qualifying ourselves to meet the new competition?

When I think of the older pros who made good substantially, it is very easy for me to see that each of them had an almost uncanny faculty of analyzing the temperament and requirements of the public to which they were so close. The pro of today is not as close to his members as the successful old pro was, and therein lies pro golf's major problem. There are more golfers than there used to be, so naturally it's harder for a pro to get close to them. The factor of price is far more important than it used to be, not alone because of tighter times but because of the spread of golf interest to people in a lower financial strata.

In endeavoring to adjust ourselves we pros play into the hands of the store competitors by devoting our association plans to price protection on merchandise rather than to making our main concerted effort that of winning the sentimental and logical favor of the public. We argue among ourselves about politics in which the public

has no interest, and at the best, amusement; or we fight with manufacturers, and do that often in such a manner that the public gets the idea, wrongly, that we pros are trying to make or keep golf goods prices high for our own selfish interests.

It is high time that we, collectively, do what the most successful and foresighted among us are doing individually. Otherwise, we are in danger of having adverse conditions sweep pro golf into a long-lasting slump, instead of so handling conditions that we will be their master.

Just what should we do in directing our thinking and action so we will protect and enlarge the pro future? Each ambitious and intelligent pro will have his own answer. I have my own list of points that will have to be considered by the pro, and I submit them in the hope that they will provoke thought and constructive argument.

1. Individually we must educate ourselves in business. Just as a primary item; how many pros can—and do—study and analyze the monthly financial statements of his own club so he is in a position to contribute business judgment to improve-

A club manager who is one of the real artists of cuisine indulges in a quiet bit of heart-break. He comments on the small size of a superb menu at a distinguished club, saying we've fallen on evil days when one of the last strongholds of the gourmet succumbs to a streamlined menu.

ment of the club's position? If pros don't do that, would you say they have exhibited qualification to control the multi-million dollar annual business of golf goods retailing?

2. We must individually direct our efforts to training of the young in golf. We must see to it that high school and university youngsters are given a zest for the game and a command of its fundamentals so we are not dependent on caddies growing up to replace less active older players. We have the additional important duty of selecting and training our own assistants so we may provide clubs with competent pro material. The plain truth is that there aren't enough thoroughly trained pros to supply the need right now, and that deficiency is a sign of neglect in education that pros collectively must correct.

3. We must get closer to our members. Our financial position depends on a smart use of personality as well as of business judgment. The one big thing that we have in pro golf is the possibility of close and helpful contact with the players as *they play*. Because pro golf has not continued to develop that tremendous asset, stores have been able, by the impersonal factors of newspaper advertising and price, to get closer to the buying player than the pro

who can—and should—have a personal interest in the value the player receives from the merchandise he buys.

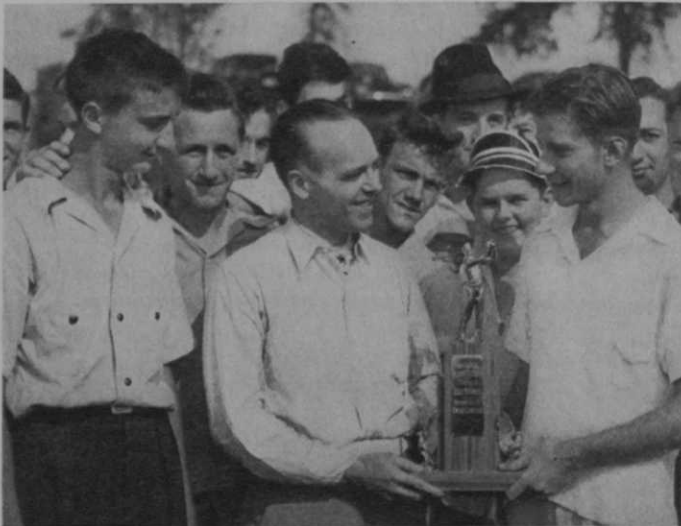
4. We must give a lot of thought and foresighted planning to a generally new basis of pro income; probably that which calls for each club member paying a fee for pro service along with annual—or semi-annual dues. That would provide instruction as a set factor of membership, just as playing is, and bring the pro closer to all members. It would provide a definite income for the pro instead of a fluctuating lesson income. It would bring members out to the club oftener, and by increasing their proficiency, get them playing more golf—and more enjoyable golf.

In many clubs that now are having difficulty in getting members, a new basis of pro contract, calling for an increasing guarantee dependent on the number of new members secured, would make both the pro and officials aware of the pro's value and responsibility in getting members and keeping them.

Death of E. C. Conlin Is Real Loss to Golf Industry

EDWARD CHARLES CONLIN, for 16 years with the United States Rubber Co., died at his home in New York City August 21. He was 61 years old. Illness that took a serious turn last April and compelled his retirement as sales mgr. of the US golf ball dept. caused Conlin's death.

Prior to his association with the US



Winner of the recent Summit (Ohio) county juvenile golf tourney held on the J. Edward Good Park course, Akron, was Parke Thornton, Jr., shown (right) receiving the winner's trophy from Judge Oscar Hunsicker, Juvenile Court, donor. At left is Walter Baily, runner-up. Thornton and Baily, both 17, tied for medal honors in a field that numbered 244, and, oddly enough, Baily defeated Thornton in a playoff for the qualifying medal. No entry fee or green fee was charged the youthful contestants, and they were fed every day at noon with eats 'on the house.' They consumed 100 lbs. of weiners, 40 cases of soda pop, 400 candy bars, 70 doz. buns and 30 cases of milk. The tournament attracted considerable attention among adults, and several hundred adult spectators attended the tournament every day.