


# INSIDE GOLF

by  
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My dear..... :

Your letter discusses the same problem as several letters I have received from other club officials who are friends of mine.

Resignations during the winter always are a serious matter to officials at clubs in the larger portion of the country. These resignations vary from 5% to 25% of club memberships, with almost 15% being the annual turnover at the majority of representative clubs during the past six years.

In numerous discussions with club officials and pros I have suggested that the resigned members be classified for study in average score groups. This classification has revealed that approximately 90% of the resignees are high handicap members.

The evidence bears out what happened — but what we may not have noted — in the panic years following 1929. Then we saw that comparatively good golfers, regardless of their financial setbacks, dropped out of the game. Those who don't play the game well, consequently don't enjoy its healthy entertainment as they should, are the ones whose golf club membership ties are least staunch.

Therefore, in solving the membership annual turn-over problem, club officials first must look to improvement of the standard of play among their members. That, of course, means that retention of members who are not ruled out by unanswerable financial factors depends a great deal on how the pro can employ his talent in teaching the members to play well.

I, like you, often have heard that some excellent player "never has had a lesson in his life." It's just that sort of unfounded statement that has retarded the extension of competent pro instruction. I know hundreds of better players and am positive that none of them has progressed without able instruction, even though in some cases the instruction has been primarily that of being in close association with a sound model of play.

There can be no denial of the beneficial relation between frequent, first-class pro instruction, members' low-scoring, frequency of play, club income and fewer resignations.

On that account, I urge you to consider your problem of resignations by making a closer tie-up between your members and pro instruction. This is something that can't be effectively done by leaving the entire job in your pro's hands although ..... at your club is one of the most capable in pro golf. It is fundamentally a selling job for club officials and a service and tutoring job for your pro and his assistant.

The more lessons your members take, the better they play and the less inclined they are to resign during the "off season." This is not mere theory. It is the experience of clubs that have been employing the most profitable of recent ideas for capitalizing on pro ability.

This idea, which is being used by possibly a dozen good clubs in the United States now, sets a fee per member for unlimited golf instruction during the year. The lessons may be 5 to 15 minutes long. The proposition also is made available to members' wives. Time is booked in advance for the most part, although the pros seems to be able to handle the brief lessons, or practice supervision, on a catch-as-catch-can basis quite satisfactorily to all members.

Half of the fee is payable at the start of the season and the other half at mid-season. Acceptance of this plan is made a part of the membership agreement. I am told that after a few weeks experience with the plan very few members have any objection to make to the plan. The instruction adds a new, lively element of interest and value to the club membership. It assuredly is a service unfortunately missing from most club facilities.

Other club officials tell me that use of this unlimited lesson plan brings people to the club far more often and has produced

substantial increases in house revenue. It has made low-eighty players of men who were indifferent club members shooting well over a hundred, a season or so ago. The clubs are holding their members' closer because of taking an interest in improving members' performance and in developing a pride in scoring.

The plan, by providing the professional with assurance of income and a basis of rating his tutoring results, has brought the pro department into proper position as a valuable element in solicitation and retention of members.

The plan, at some clubs, has been in operation for at least four years. It has been uniformly successful although it is by no means standardized and details have to be worked out at almost every club. At some clubs time is saved out of the lesson book by the pro for half-hour lessons at the pros' customary private-lesson fees.

I suggest that you and your board and your pro give thought to this plan for next year at your club. In my opinion, it's a plan that eventually will be widely adopted.

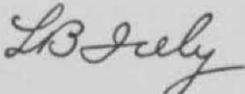
You might consider, too, another plan that has worked out well at some clubs. This other plan is offering the new member a series of lessons with his membership. Simply deduct from the new members' initiation fees or dues the pro's fee for a series of six lessons, then turn the fee and the new member over to the pro for education in golf proficiency, club interest and full employment of the club's facilities for friendship, health and entertainment.

Knowing ..... as I do, I know this pro of yours will do a grand job for you and the new member, and will see to it that the new member is started right instead of being allowed to shift pretty much for himself.

I hope I've been able to bring out some points that will help you minimize the membership replacement job each year. It's a big job at clubs because so many of the club officials didn't start on it soon enough, which is when the new member joins.

With best wishes to you and to Mrs. .... in which Mrs. Icely cordially joins, I am

Sincerely,



President