

# Fundamentals of My Teaching Policy

By TOMMY ARMOUR\*

A BASIC difficulty in attempting to give the golf pupil effective instruction arises from the failure to make the pupil understand the difference between teaching and learning. We as pros can't possibly teach our pupils a thing unless they are willing to learn. And anyone who believes that learning doesn't involve expenditure of some conscious and subconscious effort hasn't learned much.

Therefore, one of the first steps in resultful instruction is that of getting the pupil to appreciate that he or she has to exert some effort to learn. We hear a lot about getting our customers into a receptive and sympathetic mood and to overcome their tensivity and stage-fright. But all that means nothing unless the pupil appreciates that getting something out of golf instruction means that the pupil as well as the pro has to put plenty into it.

I admit to having had considerable success as an instructor, and frankly consider myself lucky to have acquired this status because many of those who have been my pupils are those who have an intense determination to learn.

## Pro Must Have Psychological Edge

Now, in the average relation between pro and pupil the pupil is inclined to consider that only circumstances have kept him from being another Jones. The circumstances, of course, are those dictating the pupil's concentration on his primary business of making a living. When the pupil comes to the pro the pupil has foremost in mind—usually—the fact that he is the pro's employer. Thus the pupil places himself in the driver's seat. He is inclined to tell the pro what he—the pupil—wants to learn, and how, instead of the pro being the master of the entire situation.

It is important then that the pro get the psychological edge on the pupil, and get the pupil under the pro's spell and mastery.

That's a reason why I sit in a chair when I'm giving a lesson on the tee. The

professor at school sits in a chair. The pupil stands and performs before the master's eye. That conditioning has taken place in the golf pupil since his earliest days at school, and the pro loses when he fails to take advantage of it.

To get the pupil to understand what it's all about—and rarely does a pupil have more than the vaguest sort of an idea of the principles of the swing or the objectives of instruction—I ask the pupil to have a chair and get him relaxed. An umbrella shades me from the sun. Shades me; get that. I'm the head man.

## Caddie Tees Up Ball

I have a caddie tee the ball for the pupil. I don't do that, for three of the best reasons in the world. It would sacrifice the psychological edge I must retain to keep in command of the pupil's development; it would distract the pupil's attention from my position as his instructor; and it would be unnecessary work.

Conscientious effort on the part of the instructor of course, is imperative in resultful instruction. It's a waste of everybody's time and the pupil's money to give instruction merely because it's paid for. There are cases which for valid reasons the pro usually must keep discreetly secret, wherein the instructor cannot apply conscientious effort to the pupil's improvement. Those cases result in the elapse of just so much lesson time.

After the essential preliminary of the sit-down session is handled, I have the pupil hit about 20 balls. This performance I watch very carefully, analyzing.

The most common type of pupil I start off with an 8-iron because the majority can hit with it. Then I sit the pupil down and tell them the main things that are wrong; not too many things for if the pupil's told too much he gets to thinking of everything except hitting the ball.

Too much detail at a session is fatal. A curse of instruction is the tradition that a lesson must last for a period that's often too long for the pupil to retain zest in the proceedings and which may require the pro to keep talking until he's merely saying words.

I have taken more lessons than any

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other man at this clinic. I know how hard it must be for the muscularly inactive pupil to learn because I have had my own problems in acquiring certain patterns of performance that my own vision, experience and analysis recommend to me.

Therefore, I do not believe in censuring or embarrassing the pupil with sharp criticism for failure to do something that is certain to be rather difficult for one whose mental and physical coordination has become dulled during years of sedentary living. I employ the policy of encouraging without promising too much, and for this policy which I adopted because it puts it up to the pupil to exert himself, I have the endorsement of such psychologists and teachers as Professors Anderson and Gilkenson of this institution (University of Minnesota) and Prof. Kelly of Purdue.

Elementally the problem of golf instruction is that of getting knowledge of the correct swing from the instructor's brain to that of the pupil, then converting that knowledge into action.

It is obvious that if the instructor hasn't clearly in his own brain a thorough knowledge of the golf swing, of what the pupil should know, and why the pupil should know it, the instruction will be inefficient. In clarifying our own conceptions of details of the sound swing pros could spend far more time than they now do together, in discussions of golf strokes. However, the pupil must not be confused with too much of the detail that we must know and recognize as groundwork for our teaching.

Four hours a day is all that I'll teach. In that time I can and do give my best efforts. If the instruction day is too long I cannot give pupils during the latter part of an excessively long stretch the best results. Inasmuch as I consider I cannot give a pupil full value after I've taught for 4 hours, I take no pupils on the tee after my daily 4 hours are over.

I believe in spending part of my lesson income for advertising and stage management that makes the pupil feel that he is getting something other than just another routine lesson.

Pic magazine's May 27 issue had an interesting picture story on the scientific background of Spalding's new Tru-Face woods, showing how the stroboflash pictures at the rate of 30 per second tipped off Spalding's club engineers how to design a wood face that would minimize hooking and slicing.

## NEW GOLFERS' DAY

— An Idea for the  
Promotion of Golf

By **BLAKE McVEIGH**

**G**OLF clubs could well unite in staging an annual New Golfers' Day. The purpose of this day would be to introduce golf to thousands of prospective converts.

Such a day would be calculated to benefit greatly all the forces in organized golf—golf professionals, golf clubs of every description, driving ranges, manufacturers of golf equipment, and the bodies which are concerned with the promotion of tournaments for which gallery tickets are sold.

The idea is to make an appeal to every person already playing golf to take a friend, business associate or relative out on the golf course during this designated day, and to introduce him, or her, into the joys and healthy benefits of playing golf, to get him or her hitting that ball. That's how golfers are born!

Even assuming that the New Golfers' Day created only 25,000 novice golfers, and each, thereafter, spent an average of only \$10 for equipment, that would represent an additional \$250,000 gross business for pros and manufacturers. During a year these same new golfers might reasonably be expected to spend another \$250,000 for clubs, balls, bags, etc. That 25,000 new golfers estimate, incidentally, would call for an average of only five new ones from each of the nation's 5,000 odd golf clubs.

From a collateral standpoint, New Golfers' Day would be beneficial through inspiring a vast amount of free and valuable publicity about the game—its recreational, healthful, social and business benefits. There would also be plenty of humorous and kidding articles written about the Day, but these would not be harmful.

Eventually, New Golfers' Day would function much like the annual Fathers' and Mothers' Days. Over the country there are many thousands of wives and husbands who wish that their respective mates could be induced to take some healthful exercise, such as golf. It would be possible, by suggestive advertising, to induce a good many of these folks to buy gift golf sets for husband, father, wife or son, and say to them, "Now, here are