

A New Teaching Plan



For More & Better Golf

Attracting more people to learn—
payment for results — two features
of revolutionary teaching proposal.

by
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GOLF, like many other human activities, is in the throes of a revolution.

The old order is passing. If we examine the golf picture with an open, investigative mind, we're forced to admit that many phases of the old order have been obsolete for years. We have been handicapping ourselves and the game by not making this discovery years ago.

We professionals have retarded our own advancement and the progress of the game by adhering generally to an instruction policy that has not changed much since King Charles I took lessons 300 years ago.

We are aware that something's wrong. We know that the majority of golfers shoot over 95. We know that the highest mortality in golf club membership is among the high-handicap players. We also know that regardless of financial conditions those players who are in the 80s or better manage to keep playing and enjoying the game. We know that, in most cases, the better the players score the more they play and the more they enjoy the game.

Our livelihood as pros, and the stability and progress of our clubs, depends on the volume and pleasure of play.

Keenly appreciating these factors we are vaguely conscious that something's wrong with our instruction.

Technically the standard of qualified pro instruction has been remarkably raised in the past 15 years. But average scores of golfers have not been proportionately lowered!

Something's seriously wrong with our instruction plan.

Club officials and pros sensing the pre-

vailing defect have adopted the flat-fee unlimited lesson plan in a few cases. I understand it has resulted in a noticeable, but not especially conspicuous, improvement in the standard and frequency of club play.

The flat-fee unlimited lesson plan is but the haziest sort of a start in the right direction. I believe I've learned the policy effective instruction will have to take. The discovery was made not at a golf club where the straitjacket of the obsolete tradition remains firm, but at that thriving innovation in golf, the practice range and school.

Results are what count with the man and woman who come to the range school for golf instruction. That customer keeps coming—and often from private clubs—because his game shows improvement.

You'll admit that golf bugs try harder, spend more money, and put in more time than students of any other sport,—yet they make less progress. There is only one conclusion, granting that the professional involved does his best, and that is that we are not giving full value for money received.

No professional worthy of the name is a conscious gyp, but the sooner we realize that we cannot punch the time-clock on a golf lesson, the happier the flock should be.

It was different 20 years ago when the pace was leisurely and a round of golf was a nice way to spend the afternoon. During those times, the pupil would hit a few shots, talk a little, hit a few more, and then stroll casually away at the conclusion. The gait is faster now, the players are keener and the capsule method is the modern way.

I've changed my instruction set-up and it's paying dividends. Dividends consisting of more money,—satisfied pupils,—and more leisure time.

Each pupil is treated as a special case, given individual treatment and the fee is set to suit his pocketbook, time, and ambition.

I refuse to quote rates until I've seen what a person can and will do, but I do give each one a free lesson at the end of which we talk business. And I don't care if one tells another the arrangement, or if they find out rates vary . . . all I want is results. If results are being accomplished, the customers are satisfied. In fact, all my clientele is satisfied or removed from the list. I operate on a harmony and cooperation basis; money back if not satisfied and then *get out!* (Can't recommend this for you country club pros, but I own my place and can weed out.)

Life offers too much for time to be wasted where lack of cooperation dooms the experiment from the start.

So, instead of the pupil contracting for a course of hour lessons, every minute of which he's going to get if it kills him, I operate in this manner.

1—A free trial lesson. 2—Analysis. 3—Chat with the customer to determine just what he wants and then . . . *agreement upon a definite goal!*

Then state the business proposition and, if necessary, let the pupil decide and give his answer when he comes for the second lesson . . . and he will come! The gambling spirit wins.

Take the case of Tom Jones, who didn't know what he wanted. He vaguely desired to get straightened out. To get "back on his game."

Player Didn't Want 'Perfection'

After the first few swings I knew that the errors crystallized over 20 years couldn't be corrected in one lesson. I also soon learned that Tom Jones didn't want to break 80. It wouldn't fret him if he never broke 90 again. He had a comfortable bend in his left arm and a jerky little hitch in his backswing. When he hitched just right, he could hit the ball reasonably well and within 30 or 40 yards of his target. With the help of a few long putts, he could get around in 95 or 96. That was good enough for him and had been good enough for 10 years. Why change it?

Tom took a savage practice swing at a piece of cellophane, caught it just right and watched it sail out in front of him.

"There," he said, "That's what I want to do; hit 'em like that and get back into the 90's."

"Well, make up your mind," I answered, "either to try to hit them like that or to get back into the 90's. Which would you rather do?"

Tom looked blank. "Is there any difference?" he asked.

"You bet," I answered. "You can study your form, analyze your style, and change your swing. Then practice like hell for a long time and you'll get so you can hit shots like that. Would you rather do that—or get back to your game in the 90's?"

Tom didn't hesitate. "Don't change my form," he said. "Just put me back on my game. I don't want to fool around with a lot of theory; I just want to hit the ball again."

Short Lessons Do the Trick

Here's the way it worked out. I charged Tom Jones \$10 for the job—no limit on the lessons. We didn't work on an hourly basis, just 10 or 15 minutes while he was fresh and his mind was receptive. He was back on the game that was standard for him in four or five short sessions. He was happy as soon as he broke 100 again and felt that his money was well spent. An occasional corrective lesson, at \$1.00 per, kept him in shape the rest of the season.

I call this type of instruction "coaching," and sometimes it amounts to no more than watching the pupil take 10 or 15 practice swings.

The average pro passes out great funds of free tips and information every day. Sometimes a slight change in grip will cure a slice for a day. No golfer really likes to labor on that lesson tee—particularly on weekends. It spoils his playing time. A few minutes coaching will quite often suffice,—a temporary service rendered and a temporary service paid for.

When Tom Jones capitulated and announced that all he wished to do was "get back in the 90's," my job was more than half done. We had agreed upon a goal that was within reach of the pupil. The work was directed and neither of us became bored at the repetition necessary to prolong an hour lesson.

PROFESSIONAL SHOP

SPEED REMINGTON.....Professional
TWITCH 'N SLICEM COUNTRY CLUB
GOLFTON, MICHIGAN

Name, *Tom Jones.*
Address, *Lake Drive.*
Age, *56*; Weight, *165*; Type of Build,
Rangy—Long Arms.
Business, *Retired—Army.*
Club Member..... Guest.....
Pupil's Assets, *Excellent Putter; Good Half*
Shots. Capabilities, 93—98.
Goal in Mind, *Stay under 100. Weak*
Points, Tries for too much distance.
Proposition, *\$10.00 to put him back.*
Amount Paid, *\$10.00; Bal.....*
Scores, *112—112—105—97—98—95.*
Merchandise, *will buy new woods in about*
one month

Remarks: *Likes attention—Pat him on the*
back. Has been playing about 18 years
and will take a lesson from anybody.

Here is a sample blank filled in for a mythical
"Tom Jones." The value of the notations to the
instructor is obvious.

If a player wishes to develop a good hitting style, then let him discuss his individual problem with his pro, agree upon a definite goal and, only then, go to work.

A beginner is a sheep with a different beat, for he must develop a hitting style before he can even think of playing the game.

After that first free trial lesson, you will know his possibilities. Then is the time to talk finances and to discover a few things. How often will the pupil practice? How often will he play? Has he time to take three or four short lessons per week? Is it his ambition to become a long driver the first season out or will a fair-to-middling score be suitable?

All of these things should influence the type of instruction. Have some mimeographed questionnaire blanks handy to make the agreement official and, incidently, provide the pro-shop with a wealth of varied information on each pupil.

Basically, there should be a column for the recording of monthly scores, thereby showing tangible proof of improvement, and, another column, not too small, for merchandise purchased . . . because a customer working on a deal of this sort would not be keeping faith with his tutor if he bought equipment without advice from same. Would he, now?

Fifty dollars is not too much for the

beginner to pay for a foundation course of instruction that will place his game between 98 and 105,—which is average 'second season' golf. Half of the fee would be paid in the first month and the balance when the job is complete. It amounts to about \$7 dollars per month, pro-rated. This method will enable the pro to accomplish more in the spring when he is pressed for time, and will lay up a bit of cushion money for the tail end of the season.

Set a Goal—Then Work Toward It

In addition, if you take the trouble to ascertain *exactly* what the pupil desires, you can rest easy at night in the knowledge that you are doing a job that has been planned in advance. Both you and the pupil will follow the same blueprint and there will be no floundering in the murky fens of—"gee, what's the matter with me? I was all right yesterday."

This design of golf instruction is almost parallel to the treatment a doctor accords a patient. The doctor cannot punch a time clock . . . 30 minutes to this patient . . . 60 minutes to that one. Some patients need only to have their ruffled feathers smoothed, like Tom Jones. In other cases, a major operation is needed.

We golf professionals are no less than doctors of sick golf games. Each client is a separate problem and must receive separate treatment.

We should never perform any major operations unless absolutely necessary, because dissection is always a messy business and it is practically impossible to get all of the pieces back together without the whole thing looking like what it is, a patched up job.

Yessir, boys, something has to change. What was good enough for pappy just isn't good enough for me.

Purdue Clinic Dates are April 8-10—
1941 golf clinic at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., will be held April 8-10, instead of 9-11, as previously announced, according to recent word from Purdue officials. Plans are well under way to make the 1941 event even more successful than last year's clinic, an affair attended by more than 3,000 who turned out to watch the performances of pros from 15 states—from as far South as the Gulf Coast—and from Canada.