

Pro's Job Is Changing—But Greater Earnings Loom!

By HERB GRAFFIS

GEORGE CALDERWOOD, Oshkosh (Wis.) CC pro, made a remark at the Doc Treacy memorial session that should spur pro thought. George said "nothing else in sports is changing as fast as the golf pro's job."

Calderwood has kept a keen eye open for change during the years he's been a pro. He was one of the pioneers in group instruction. He is a merchant who studies the broad picture of his market as well as the specific problems of his job. He is aware of the changing nature of the clubs, private and fee. He knows that the club officials' problems these days are not easy.

Where George begins his definite survey of the pro's dilemma is in distinguishing the pro's problem from that of the official. Calderwood declares: "The official doesn't make a living out of the club. His club work is a sacrifice and generally a nuisance. Not often will his business, his family, or his disposition let him stay on the job long enough to know all he wants to know about it. On the other hand, the pro must specialize and make a living out of golf. Usually he has to make a year's living in a six-month season. With many private clubs having tough going in the present readjustment, their pros are out of luck. When a pro is out of luck nobody cares except that pro and his family, for the reason that golf clubs members rarely have the slightest conception of what the pro's up against.

Two Solutions to Problem

"We've got two solutions to the problem of the pro being out of luck. One is to educate members so we'll get consideration and cooperation for pros. That is a long and costly job requiring more organization than pros have, and demanding persistence. Club officials are changing every year and we have to be continually educating a new group of officers.

"The other solution is to smart ourselves up concerning the changing problems of making a living in pro golf. That

we can do. If we don't, we can't expect to come unscratched through economic and social changes."

American pro golf has survived and developed through numerous changes. Its biggest money is in the future.

The first pros were course architects, constructors, greenkeepers, clubmakers and instructors. After the courses were established, clubmaking boomed. Instruction followed. When you hear unfavorable comment on the progress of instruction, think back to the amateur scores of the old days. Notwithstanding improvement in equipment and course maintenance, the shorter, simpler courses of American golf's earlier days weren't played in scores comparable with the admittedly deficient performances of today's average amateurs. Evidence indicates that pro instruction despite its limited extent has decidedly improved the standard of the ordinary golfer's game.

Hickory Shaft Loss Overcome

The hickory shaft became virtually extinct and with its passing went a steady pro income in club making and repairing, as well as a very plain reason for having a pro on the job at every club.

The pros survived that and in merchandising the steel-shafted set idea increased their profit per sale. In considering Calderwood's remarks about changing conditions, this writer is inclined to believe that one way of the pro solving the possible reduction of new set buying because of restricted recreation budgets is discreet sales presentation of single clubs of varying shaft stiffness.

The hunch is open to argument. With possible shaft shortages and manufacturing difficulties it may be that the public will have to take what it can get in sets of clubs without shopping for clubs having various conditions of stiffness or whippiness. The stock problem is one to be considered seriously, both by pros and manufacturers. However, what the pros, as marketers, may have to think about is whether they can sell more clubs and



Pictured above are practice tees at one of the Southwest's most beautiful and successful driving ranges—that of the Airport Fairways, in Albuquerque, N. Mex. C. J. (Chuck) Smith is manager and owner of the layout, and reports business has been good throughout the year. Equipment includes 10,000 golf balls, and 25 driving tees. Notice the mountain 'target' in the background.

accommodate their market better by selling clubs singly or in sets. The right answer probably is a thoughtful balance of sales effort on sets and on single clubs.

Some people believe that the tremendous spending for defense will more than offset the heavy tax drag on golf business. In such case there should be no special difficulty in selling all club sets available.

Defense plant wages already have boomed business of public course pros although these pros usually have stores as keener competition than the pro feels at the majority of private courses.

At the public courses one sees another great change that has taken place in pro golf. Fifteen years ago the public course pro job was regarded by the pro at the private club almost in the light of a dog catcher's job. Few of the boys thought of the public course golf traffic in Woolworth terms. But the pros who did see that a public course 85,000 rounds a year afforded a steadier chance for pro income than the 14,000 round annual average at 18-hole private clubs, set themselves into some enviable jobs.

Generally though, it must be admitted that pro golf missed a bet on the public and fee courses with the result being that in too few places is expert, alert and thorough pro service offered at the fee courses. This despite the fact that first class pro service can be the biggest business-drawing and advertising factor of a public course next to the character and condition of the course itself. Such many course pros as Bill Hickey at Pasadena, Harry Railsback at Kansas City, Ed Duwe at St. Louis and Red Strauss at Cincinnati are a few of the standouts

many course pros whose handling of their jobs sets a high standard in community recreation service. If pro recognition and publicity of the demonstrated value of such men had been greater, pro earning possibilities at municipal and fee courses would be much better than at present.

Now, considering the approximately 1,000,000 high school and college golfers receiving golf primary instruction, there are about 5/6th of all American golfers whose play is not as members of private clubs. That's something for the pro to think about in planning his present and future work.

In the case of numerous older pros accent has been placed on the greenkeeping part of their work. It has been largely on account of seeing close-ups of greenkeeping short courses that the PGA has placed more emphasis on educational sessions. Both at Purdue and at the University of Minnesota the highly profitable pro educational conferences have been established after successful experience with greenkeeping short courses. At Minnesota the pro course was pushed by younger men who had attended the school. The youngsters had 100% endorsement and help from the older men in Minnesota pro golf.

At Purdue and Minnesota much attention was devoted to the problem of quickening the rate of pro instruction results. The pro has seen, during the latest depression, that the man or woman who scores well manages to retain golf club membership and a frequent playing schedule despite reduced income. Therefore better scoring looms as No. 1 among pros' plans for earnings defense.

With but few exceptions the clubs where there are the highest percentages

of handicap cards in the A and B classes have the best paying pro jobs.

Some pros with constructive imaginations see the pro job of the future as one that will have general responsibility for a broad and year around recreational plan at the private club. Not only golf but tennis, swimming, trap- and skeet-shooting, winter sports and such winter indoor affairs as badminton, table tennis and bowling leagues, will be planned, promoted and supervised by the pro in the future, according to some forecasters. Already quite a few pros are extending their work along these lines.

Those who see the pro's future developing in this direction say that two factors must figure chiefly in successful revision of the private country club scheme; one, an extension of the club's activities to use the plant investment profitably the year around, and another, the switch of country club emphasis from drinking and cards to physically beneficial entertainment.

Great Room for Increase

Possibly hope of much change from drinking to actual exercise at private clubs is a faint one, but figures show great room for increase of pro income. Approximately 4 times more each year is spent at golf club bars than at the pro shops.

One keen observer of the golf picture points out that pro ownership and operation of many successful golf practice ranges is showing that pros have learned how to spread out in getting a larger market. He adds that practice range operation has taught pros plenty about merchandising to the public.

When it is considered that the nation's 3,500 pros are in fairly frequent contact with only a little more than half of the nation's 2,162,000 adult golfers, but are getting in on the ground floor with the 1,000,000 high school and college students who are coming into golf, it will be appreciated that the pros' opportunities for market expansion are vast.

An Eastern pro veteran who's kept pace with change told this writer recently: "I think pro golf is just coming into big earning. Inside of 10 years we may see two or three dozen pro jobs giving far more net income each year than the leading tournament prize winners of the past several years have made."

Maybe he's right. But how this money can be made calls for pro planning now.

Statistics Released on World's Largest Golf Tourney

ALMOST a 30% increase in the field of the second annual Remote Control national handicap tournament sponsored by the Indemnity Insurance Co. of North America showed that bad weather could not stop the world's largest golf tournament.

Final results tabulated on the competition played on 1042 courses June 14 showed 9983 qualified cards. There were 9181 men and 802 women in the competition.

Although the tournament was restricted to amateur guests of local insurance agents the pros came out well ahead. There were 559 prizes ranging from a \$100 value top to \$2 value consolation prizes, all of the \$5,164 prize list being in pro-shop merchandise certificates.

Pros took considerable interest in the tournament inasmuch as it is the first national Handicap tournament sponsored by a large business organization and has been committed to pro-shop prizes. Ed Dudley, tournament committee chairman of the PGA, was on the board that supervised the Remote Control event.

Five aces were made by men and one by a woman, Anne S. Cooney, at the Oak Terrace CC. The men shot their aces at Chagrin Valley CC, Merchantville CC, Old Newbury GC, Skagit CC and Shores Brook CC.

Players were grouped in classes according to handicaps and according to lengths of courses over which they played. There were 928 courses over 5800 yards in length, and 114 from 4800 yards to 5800 yards, played in the event. National low gross was a 61 made by Milton Beale, prominent Iowa amateur, over the Clinton (Ia.) Municipal course. Beale contested in the 1 to 10 handicap class and the 4800-5800 yd. course division.

In the longer course division Grant Bennett, playing the Hillcrest CC course at Winston-Salem, N. C., won national honors with his 64.

Numerous notables in national life, as well as a number of prominent men and women amateurs contested. Members of the Giants and Reds ball clubs, their game washed out by rain, participated at Cincinnati. Paul Derringer, Gabby Hartnett, Joe Moore, Carl Hubbell and Mel Ott all got net scores in the 70s.

Plans for the 1942 Remote Control tourney already are in the making.