

# Instructor or Player?

By BOB HALL

Larry Gleason Has the Answer to That Question—For Himself at Least—

**S**EVERAL times in the 16 years that Larry Gleason has been golf professional in Long Beach, Calif., he has engaged in major tournaments. Each time he has made such fine showings against the regular playing professionals—although never taking first prize money—that many have wondered why Larry has kept from seeking the glare of the tournament spotlight.

Here's the story of Larry, the man who prefers to stay at home. He's no different from hundreds of others working day in and day out at private and public courses the nation over. You seldom read about them outside their own sector, but they're always on hand when a member wants to make that slice go straight, or iron out a hook.

Larry can—and has—played golf with the best of them. Yet, day after day he had greeted his many friends on the lesson tee, and given not a second thought to the rich open tournaments of Southern California.

"I came to a very definite decision to devote my time to teaching golf, rather than follow the tournament tour, in 1926 when I became professional at the Long Beach CC (now Meadowlark, a public course)," Gleason says.

"The course had just been opened. There were many members who were learning the game, and were badly in need of instruction. I felt it was my duty to the club to stay on the lesson tee," he continued.

## A Real Veteran

Larry has been a golf professional 22 years. He got his start in the Chicago district as a caddie, later coming to Southern California in the mid-1920s. For the past 16 years he has been serving golfers in the Long Beach area, and his many fine pupils attest to the success he has had.

Among his pupils have been Mrs. Betty Hicks Newell, who got her start five years ago with Larry; Ernie Combs, Jr., quarter-finalist in the 1934 National Amateur;

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Peggy Rutledge, a definite comer in Southern California women's competition, who qualified for the National last summer, and Jackson Bradley, young Lakewood assistant professional, who recently joined the Marines.

Larry's pupils have brought many titles to Long Beach. His teams at Long Beach CC won the women's association championships in 1926, their first year, and were runners-up in 1927. He switched to the Municipal course at Recreation Park in 1928-31 and coached those teams to two championships. Since that time he has been at Virginia Country Club.

The Virginia women have won the Eastern division flag eight times out of ten; the men, six times and have been in the Southland finals three times. His juniors, Les Hensley, Combs and Curtis Williams, won the Southland junior titles four straight years, 1927-30—and Bradley took over the Southern California inter-scholastic and junior crown in 1939.

"There are several reasons for my sticking to the lesson tee," Larry will tell you. "First, as I mentioned before, I felt it my duty to the club. After all, I'm selling my knowledge of the game to them and I can't sell them much, nor help

them much, if I'm often miles away battling other pros for a title."

"Second, Eastern and Midwestern professionals, who have to close their shops for the winter, and touring pros who do little else but play in the opens, have more time to devote to practice and to competition. It's like trying to beat them at their own game.

"Third, it's decidedly more profitable to tend to business than to play in the tournaments. Only the first four or five finishers in the tournaments break even financially anyway, what with entry fees, caddie fees, increased hotel rates and the usual expense of vacationing. I couldn't afford to vacation too long. Business just doesn't follow one around the country.

"Fourth, I really enjoy teaching. The mechanics of a golf swing are simple, but to control these mechanics, to teach others to hit clean shots and to enjoy their game, seems to me both enjoyable and interesting.

"And fifth, one gets acquainted with a fine class of ladies and gentlemen, and has most interesting chats. To me that's living. I'll always cherish my memories of the lesson tee."

Larry has studied golf. He plays one

of the most consistent games in Southern California. He has won more than his share of the monthly pro-amateur sweepstakes of the Southland PGA and other minor outings over a period of 16 years. He is a member of the American Legion. He also served for many years as an official of the Southern California PGA.

"Perhaps the most valuable experience I received from play in the open tournaments," Larry says, "were tips and good advice I obtained from the more experienced professionals in the teaching phase of the game. From their kind words, their little hints and the like, I've been able to store up a fund of information that has stood me well on the lesson tee.

"To MacDonald Smith, Eddie Loos and many others who have given freely of their advice, I have felt most grateful."

Larry doesn't have a set system for teaching golf. He believes that the swing should be adapted to the man or woman, that each would-be golfer should be taught to hit the ball the way he or she is built to hit it, and that enjoyment of the game comes first, good scores second.

He inaugurated mass or group instruction at the Long Beach Country Club in 1926, first California pro, and one of the first in the United States, to begin this now popular phase of teaching.

## New Society Gives Duffer Chance at Prizes

By JOE KRAYNICK

THE guy who pays the freight in minor amateur tournament golf—the middle-aged duffer who shoots in the low 80's and up, only to be dropped into the third or fourth flight while younger golfers battle for the club, district or invitation champion—is getting his share of prizes in at least one state these days.

The Junior-Senior Golfing Society of Connecticut is responsible for this major change in the division of the spoils and the fun of being hailed as a winner, much to the satisfaction of everyone, including the parent Connecticut Golf Association. To say this society, composed of men between the ages of 40 and 55, has helped Connecticut golf is putting it mildly. It practically assures the success of every tournament by large turnouts and generally its members are the "life of the party" at the 19th hole.

As a matter of record, the society was



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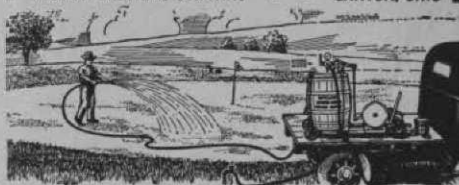
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