

# What Are a Pro's Duties?

By JOE NOVAK\*

A GOLF professional is hired at a golf club for the sole purpose of keeping golf interest at high pitch at that particular club, so that said club will be prosperous, and the members happy. In order to accomplish this, a golf pro's duties are very numerous and his abilities have to be equally numerous.

First of all, a pro must play the game well, not necessarily win tournaments or any tournament, but must play in good golf style. Secondly, a professional must be a business man—at least have enough business sense to properly stock and operate a golf shop so that the member's demands will be properly filled. And, a professional must be enough of an executive to supervise a properly trained corps of caddies.

## Lists Other Duties

In addition to this a golf professional must generally:

1. See that members' clubs are cared for properly.
2. Aid in arranging and conducting an interesting tournament schedule.
3. Aid in establishing and maintaining a fair and practical handicapping system.
4. Supervise general play on the course.
5. Assist in care and upkeep of the golf course.
6. And last, but not least, must be able to teach the members how to play. To do this, the professional must basically know the game, and have an ability to impart that basic knowledge.

Now, in none of the varied duties that a professional has to render, are the opportunities so great or the pitfalls so numerous, as in teaching. When a golf professional is teaching a member or giving a lesson, the opportunity to establish friendship, win admiration and confidence is unlimited and aside from the revenue gained from teaching, the opportunity to make sales of needed equipment is unsurpassed.

However, when one undertakes to teach another (try it on your wife), the teacher

goes on exhibition—every move, every expression, every statement is subject to close scrutiny; and a member's respect, admiration or confidence rises or falls according to the calibre and the manner of instruction. And don't forget that a winning smile and a neat appearance are important here.

Because of the numerous duties a golf professional has, the ability to teach is not all-important—he can make up in some other department as a player or an executive, supervise the shop or the course, or the general play. But this is only true at the larger clubs.

For the rank and file PGA pro, however, the ability to teach is very often the difference between success, or just another job. So golf instruction becomes and is, except in a very few cases, the most important phase of a golf professional's business. Ability to teach brings in revenue, increases sales of merchandise and perhaps more important than these, establishes the instructor in a position of respect, confidence and admiration.

## Instruction a Weak Spot

Golf instruction has been one of our weak spots. There is no logic or reason behind the first two illustrations of this weakness, nevertheless they serve to illustrate a rather disappointing situation.

How many times have you read of some new victory on the golf links after which the new champ comes out with the remark, "I never had a lesson in my life." This idea of never having had a lesson is not true because he must have had lessons, silent or otherwise, when he listened to someone or unconsciously or consciously imitated someone's golf style.

Another common remark is this, "No use in my taking lessons. I know what I am doing wrong." During the past few years it has been said often that the word "don't" seldom should be used in teaching. That is a most progressive step. Such a plan in teaching enables the player to concentrate on something constructive, rather than making him mainly conscious of his errors and weaknesses, and developing an inferiority complex.

Another observation that golf instruc-

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Corner of the new golf shop at Starmount Forest CC, Greensboro, N. C., where George Corcoran is pro. The shop is attractively paneled, and the floor covering is good looking and withstands spiked-shoe wear. There's plenty of room for inviting display of enough merchandise to prove to players that they still can get equipment for the game.

tion is one of our weak spots lies in this: Reliable sources place the number of golfers in this country at about 4,000,000. (About 2,300,000 active and 1,700,000 inactive players.) There are 1800 all-class members in the PGA, and another 1200 who do not belong to the PGA, making a total of some 3000 professionals. Now, with an army of 4,000,000 golfers, each professional actually has a potential school of 1333 golfers.

Well, how many country clubs are there of 1333 members and how much golf instruction is done at clubs having such a membership? Certainly, it is more than one man can handle. But that is exactly where we ought to be today, with each professional having 1333 members to take care of and more teaching than he can take care of. Instead of that what have we? A sort of general hesitancy to take golf instruction, particularly from anyone but the home club professional because potential students are afraid "that their style or their game is going to be changed!"

Maybe it needs changing, but what I am trying to prove is that the golfing public does not have enough confidence in the professional. The golfers should not hesitate to take lessons whenever they get a bit off because the qualified pro-

professionals fundamentally teach the same kind of golf, with variations that can easily be reconciled.

In order to get some idea of golf instruction and the results obtained it might be wise to consider for a moment the instructional methods and their influence in golf. Golf is just a little over fifty years old in this country. Let's trace golf instruction through that period to see what has been happening:—

1. All the early books on golf followed a general style or plan: Chapter No. 1 was on the driver; No. 2 was on the brassie; No. 3 was on the cleek; No. 4 was on the midiron; No. 5 was on the mashie; No. 6 was on the mashie niblick; No. 7 was on the niblick; No. 8 was on the putter, etc. etc.

The result that such a presentation can have is that the reader or pupil is bound to get the impression that each and every club in golf is used or played in a different way. Learning one way is difficult enough.

Of course, the matched-set idea has done a lot to correct any confusion from this plan, but there are still many schools of instruction that teach driving one way, playing irons another way, approaching another way, putting another way. The game would be simpler and easier to learn

Pat McDonald, pro at Rolling Green CC, Arlington Heights, Ill., sent a card to his membership in early February informing them of the scarcity in golf balls, but with the reminder that he was going to take care of all members wanting golf balls. Members were asked to indicate what price of golf balls, and how many, they wanted, and to leave it up to Pat to see that they got them.

if play of the clubs were taught to the same basic pattern.

The above plan of playing every club differently is somewhat closely similar to another school of golf instruction. The plan of playing each club differently is somewhat closely allied to the school of instruction that insists that individual instruction is necessary for each person playing golf. This is an assumption I am sure can be refuted. Physically, all human beings have the same general make-up; a body, two arms, and two eyes, and sets of muscles to work these arms, legs, and body. If they wish to throw something, they use certain arm muscles—if they wish to walk they use certain leg muscles. We all have the same general muscular and the same general bone structure. So we all walk, run, kick or throw about the same way.

Just as an argument, let me present this thought—suppose there were a uniform plan of instruction, and an instructor gave exactly the same instructions to a class of ten pupils. Obviously, out of the ten pupils, some would respond better than others due to a better understanding they received, or due to better physical make-up or ability. Giving all ten pupils the same instruction, after a few lessons the results would be that some of the ten would be very good, and some of the ten would be fair, and some of the ten would be lagging in performance. It would then be necessary to do just what they do in the army—make up an awkward squad—and give these backward pupils individual attention, and perhaps some varied or personal instruction to aid them over the obstacles that resulted from incomplete understanding or physical weaknesses.

A third type of instruction is the type that decrys use of the body. It is the instruction that calls for emphasis on arm and wrist action only. This type of instruction developed the so-called "pronation" type of play, where all control is vested in the hands and wrists. This type of instruction, no doubt because of its basic warning, "Don't use your body"

is responsible for the rigid putting and approaching styles.

Just a comment at this point on this so-called British type of play. Apparently, in all sports, the British carry out this idea or practice of no pivot, no body action—a good example of this is in their national game, cricket, where there is little or no body motion. In comparison, Americans employ the "swat" or "break your back type" of play, because Americans are inclined to always want to score a home-run or a knockout.

It may be that this explains that some years ago when American golfers went to England with their full pivot style of play they easily out-scored the lighter hitting pronation style of British golfers. As a natural result, this pronation type of golf instruction is on the wane but have we replaced it with anything as definite as that was?

So, briefly, then, in golf instruction we have had the following schools:

- (1) Play every club differently.
- (2) Teach every pupil individually (differently).
- (3) The "Don't use the body" rule, all of which is somewhat contradictory and bound to produce confusion.

Is it any wonder then, that golf instruction as such has been one of our failings? How can these inconsistencies do anything but provide confusion?

Is it any wonder that golfers hesitate, yes, refuse, to take lessons?

Now in addition to the difficulties and the confusion that are bound to result from a conflict of theories or teaching methods there are other reasons why the PGA must through its teaching program improve the golf instructional phase of the profession.

There is, and rightfully so, a considerable and well organized promotional effort being made in golf—and the PGA should support all these promotional efforts because eventually they will produce more golfers to use our merchandise and more golfers who will need our advice and guidance.

A great deal of this promotion is being done in the schools and colleges of the country where the task of teaching golf is of necessity being delegated to persons outside of the profession.

Such a development requires close watch by the PGA so our established reputation as authorities on the game will not be lessened or lost sight of in any way.