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Pros Have A Post-War Opportunity

By DON YOUNG

ONE OF the healthiest aspects of the present war is that of post-war planning. Even in the face of some experts' opinions that 1945 will still see us in there pitching, scarcely an issue of our metropolitan dailies hits the street without a few lines on the front page devoted to what we plan to do to keep from doing it all over again—and again.

Everything considered, the post-war picture looks pretty sweet for the pros. First, the war is creating, and will continue to create, a new crop of golfers. That means business from every angle—providing we go after it with as much ingenuity as the stores are sure to do. Second, the demand for new clubs, balls, and accessories is bound to be tremendous following such a manufacturing curtailment period as has been enforced. All we have to do is prove ourselves business men and we can corner our share of this post-war market because we have something to offer the golfer that cannot, under any circumstances, be matched by the stores. It is a personal, professional interest that is continuous.

It is probably safe to state that in the past the average pro's reaction to qualifying for club general management has been indifference. Perhaps a certain percentage was justified in such an attitude. But conditions, like strip teasers, are inclined to change, and from purely an unbiased long-range viewpoint it looks very, very much as if the handwriting is on the wall.

General managers have existed at the

larger clubs for years and have proved outstandingly successful. It has simply been a matter of applying a business man to a business job. And thank God a golf club has finally become generally recognized as a business institution as well as a sports plant. However, we now find the "club manager" idea sifting downward into the smaller clubs, which creates the problem of applying such a principle to a limited group and a limited budget.

Many of the smaller clubs, in other words the bulk of the market, are going to find the additional personnel expense of a club manager impossible to handle. There will be just one answer to that one—a pro or green superintendent with enough brains, ambition, and imagination to handle both jobs. Pretty tall order, you say? Yes, but not too tall. It is my contention that any man with enough ability, ambition, and personality to make a success of a small-club pro job can, with a certain amount of personal prodding and burning of midnight oil, make a successful club manager of himself.

Now just how this may be accomplished is something else. Certainly no broad general principle can be laid down to make a pro-manager out of a pro. So the problem evolves itself into a personal one. The job demands a workable knowledge of business, sports, food, service, and entertainment. If you are a successful pro you are already endowed with three of these gifts. So rustle up and see if it isn't possible for you to ferret out

the angles necessary to the preparation and serving of good food, and the presentation of the sort of entertainment that keep club members interested and coming to your golf club.

Visit Around

Surely all of us have among our acquaintances one or more persons who are doing a good club management job of some kind, either private or public. They have to be very good to succeed in a club managing job under today's conditions. Their advice is priceless if you can get it. Further, invest a little dough in your future by spending a liberal amount of it in places catering to food and entertainment. Make it a purely business proposition, keep your eyes open, and see if you can't analyze just what makes this place or that place click. Then deliberately go to one in the doldrums. Certainly it shouldn't tax your imagination too greatly to distinguish what makes one place a success and the other a failure. The facts will be right before your eyes—so use 'em.

I have two acquaintances who have become very successful club managers. Both of them happen to be graduates of a correspondence course in hotel and restaurant management. No the C. S. didn't turn the trick, but it surely helped a couple of boys who had a certain amount of ambition and imagination and sense enough to use it.

Now the facts that you glean in your quest for club management knowledge may not be directly applicable to your situation. But if you will give the matter some thought you'll discover, no doubt, that these facts are basic and some way, some how they are applicable to your very job. So throw your imagination machinery in gear and put 'em to work.

A good percentage of the medium-size clubs have always had club managers. In the majority of cases they have proved not only money-savers but money-makers for the club. In view of this it is certainly not too much to expect this angle to eventually envelop the medium-size field. It's in the air—and it's good sound business sense.

Some of these medium-size clubs are open for combination pro-managers. The man who takes one of these jobs and makes a success of it must be possessed

of ability and imagination and write his work ticket. If he lacks one of these qualities he'll probably be one of the boys who spend a liberal share of their time playing buck nassau with the club champion and complaining that club managers as a class make it a practice of undermining pros to the Board of Directors.

Yes, the club manager idea is certainly on the increase, and since it's good sound business sense it's sure to prosper. The clubs with 15 or 16 on the Board of Directors will select instead about four or five business men, and the whole kaboodle of them will try and get something out of their club membership besides fretting and sweating how to keep the club out of the red—a job none of them relish. They'll do this by hiring a club manager—and telling him if he can't do the job they'll get someone who can.

To the small club pro this eventuality presents a myriad of possibilities. Each small club will be a problem in itself.

Assets of the Pro Job

So far as the pros are concerned, we never have had nor have not now any reason for worrying over the "club manager" situation. In the large and medium size clubs, there is no reason for conflict to exist between the managerial and pro departments—aside perhaps from a small minority of political situations. If your club installed a club manager who made you look silly, you'd better study the situation and see if he didn't sell 'em a bill of goods you failed to have in stock.

Also, we pros are a pretty fortunate lot. The club provides us with a place to do business, and a ready-made clientele. All they ask us to do is develop it. This of course requires business sense and hard work, the very ingredients required in any other business. But by the way, do you know of any other business or profession whereby your success is assured by the patronage of the very people who set you up in business a very little expense to yourself?

That's something to think about—and for which to be thankful.

And in preparing yourself for the new "club manager" era that is surely bound to come, just bear in mind that the secret of being a successful club manager is no different than that of being a successful pro. It's giving people something they want—at the price they want to pay.