

GOLF'S FUTURE IN PERIL UNLESS PROS DO EDUCATIONAL JOB

AN essential selling job on the value of pro services must be done now or golf will not be in condition to take advantage of its vast opportunities after the war, says Edward P. Rankin of the L. A. Young Golf Co.

Ed sees in the present shortage of pro personnel and the tendency of smaller clubs to do without the services of a pro a situation which is fatal to smaller clubs.

He maintains that, notwithstanding the impossibility of getting younger pros, other than 4-F and then often on a part-time basis, the PGA has an urgent task in educational work among officials of moderate-sized and smaller clubs. Unless club officials are kept reminded of the value of competent pro service, the war-time practice of doing without a pro and the annual turnover of officials may establish a custom that will greatly reduce pro employment and earning opportunities after the war, so Rankin reasons.

His observation is:

"As anyone knows who has been around this business for any length of time, the golf professional is definitely the backbone of the business. If this is the case and we are to preserve the interest in the game, we must keep the pro on the job.

Pro Makes Club Pleasant

"In my opinion, when a pro leaves a golf club and he is not replaced it does not take long before that club becomes just a place where a guy goes to play golf, providing he can find three other guys to play with. In most cases the pro is the man who keeps the club tournament going, who sees to it that the member, when he comes out to the club, has somebody to play with and, in general, makes it a pleasant place for the member to go.

"I remember back in the prosperous twenties when practically every small town through the southern states had a golf course and a pro. When the depression came along, the first thing that those clubs thought about doing to curtail expenses was to take the salary away from the pro. As a consequence, the pro was unable to eke out a living

and moved to greener pastures. In many cases no pro ever returned to those southern clubs and, as a consequence, today a big percentage of them are no longer in existence and the balance don't amount to very much.

"Today, clubs all over the United States are faced with the same conditions as those southern clubs experienced in that the pro in most cases is not able to make enough money to keep him happy with his job.

Pros "Double" in Plants

"As a consequence, in all sections of the country pros are leaving their clubs to go to defense plants where they can make a nice living. This is indeed a fine thing, as undoubtedly defense plants need manpower more than golf clubs do. However, there are quite a few cases where the pro has gone to his bosses—the club's directors—and asked whether he might keep his job by coming out to the club in the evening and on Saturdays and Sundays. This arrangement in some cases that I have checked into has worked out very satisfactorily. The pro is making plenty of money, he is able to keep his connection with the game and the club keeps the pro shop open.

"Quite naturally, in addition to the club activity and pro future involved, I look at the situation from the manufacturer's angle. The minute the pro-shop door is closed, those of us in the manufacturing end of the business no longer can keep in close contact with the club.

"It is true that we may get some business from the club as a result of members going to some other pro shop or some dealer for merchandise, or by the club conducting its shop on a limited basis. However, that all is bound to mean a sharp drop in the habit of buying golf goods at the club, and that habit, if allowed to vanish, may be difficult to rebuild at the club. And, without shop income to attract first class pro service by possibilities for good earnings, it certainly isn't going to be easy for pro golf to get the class of men it needs to expand and adequately service golf after the war."