

What's Ahead for the PRO?

By DON YOUNG



★ Accurately forecasting post-war pro conditions is probably about as easy as predicting the end of the war. However, there's no ceiling on conjecture, consequently speculation throughout the pro ranks is lively. Although differences of opinion seem wide and varied, there's almost universal agreement, and with plenty of reason, that some radical changes are on the way. Just how these changes may effect the pro remain to be seen, but the idea certainly furnishes plenty of food for cogitation.

A review of the pro situation as a whole, coupled with sound reasoning, leads one to believe that whatever benefit pros may derive from post-war changes will depend largely on the pros themselves. This idea of course is somewhat at variance with some prevailing tendencies. The idea though, is by no means a fresh one. It was born in 1776 and has done right well for the past 168 years for any American with a dash of gumption. In fact, the idea is a kid-glove fit for the pro. He's a rugged individualist and probably always will be. If the American idea is ever fascitized, the Smithsonian Institute in future generations may very likely display a wax replica of Walter Hagen as an extinct species. There are, we understand, no golf pros in Nazi Germany—certainly none in the American sense of the word.

One of the first post-war pro considerations was discussed in a recent GOLF-DOM article which warned of a possible pro shortage due to a large percentage of the profession having enjoyed a quite palatable dose of steady industrial income with about half the worry of their former jobs. Such a condition is entirely possible.

Competence Is Key Note

However, the average club pro, in spite of his club connection, feels himself to be very much of a private business man, and it is entirely possible that those now temporarily employed in industry will not take kindly to industrial regimentation as a steady diet. But should the shortage occur it must be met, as the article pointed out, with greater efforts at pro education in the way of training assistants.

In other words, if the pros wish to become the dominant factor in the golf field, they must acquire that domination through the same procedure followed by any domi-

nant profession—by presenting competent men.

There's no doubt that golf is due for a great upsurge following the war. This is an encouraging factor for the pro, but should be only if the profession as a whole takes steps to meet it. From a merchandising and marketing point of view it can prove a veritable godsend. However, should the profession fail to measure up to the standards necessary for dominance in the field, this golden opportunity may very likely prove a knife that will cut the pros' throats for a generation.

Analysis of the situation is relatively simple. Pros howled for years about cut-price downtown stores, industrial balls, etc., and other merchandising angles that cropped up to plague them. It must be remembered, however, that such a situation resulted more or less directly from the profession's failure to solidly establish itself as a sound merchandising outlet and credit risk. As a result, manufacturers were forced to find other outlets for their merchandise in a rapidly-expanding field—to the pros' professional, morale and financial loss.

Right now it looks as if the pros might be in for a new deal, or at least a chance to sit in the game without the cards stacked against them. Of the golf stocks throughout the country today, probably 80% is in pro shops. The situation would prove a mighty happy one if the pros could keep it that way, not only to the pros but the manufacturers as well. Distributing seasonal merchandise through several different channels is a costly procedure—as the past financial statements of golf manufacturers will prove.

A Country Club Opportunity

Perhaps the next important consideration in the future pro picture is somewhat of a social one. We'll have an army of new golfers coming back from the wars and most of them will be public course golfers. Consequently private club pros and officials, especially those of small and medium-size clubs, are nervously wondering just how this may directly effect them. Again it is not too wrong to predict that they will get out of the situation exactly what they put into it.

Social problems following any war are of important public interest and the forth-

coming post-war period is certain to be no exception. Happily it will present the average small or medium-size private club with a grand opportunity.

The average American golf club throughout the suburban and rural areas has never in the past taken definite steps to properly present its actual value to its immediate community. In the future it will probably be forced to do so in order to exist, but in doing so can undoubtedly strengthen both its institutional and financial structure immeasurably.

The outstanding social problem following World War I was the speakeasy; following World War 2 it will probably be the "juke" joint. Metropolitan communities, with a host of diversional activities, are well equipped to offer young America something wholesome as a substitute for unsupervised "jukeing". The average rural community, however, is not so fortunate.

Since the youngsters are bound to have their fling, why not provide them with a proper place to do it—and what better place could there be than the local country club. A "juke" box sounds every bit as good in a country club as it does in a "juke" joint, and parents with teen-aged problems on their hands certainly should welcome such an opportunity to provide their precocious offspring with wholesome, supervised recreation. If it is provided, certainly the youngsters have no excuse for patronizing the "shack-in-the-woods" variety of place for the purpose of letting off steam.

Offhand this may sound bad to some of the smaller golf organizations. It will mean keeping the club open three or four nights a week the year 'round. In some cases it will mean the installation of proper heating equipment for winter activities. Such items run into important money.

As a matter of fact, the situation will provide the average rural club with an opportunity to become the hub of the community's social structure, and if properly handled should prove a sound business investment. In any event, it will lift the local club to the institutional place it deserves in the community's social scheme by the simple expedient of promoting and sponsoring a worthy and commendable community social project. City councils, parent-teacher associations, and other groups should not only endorse it but actively cooperate in making it a success, both to the community and the club.

A Pro Opportunity

All of this, while shouldering additional work on the average small-club pro, at the same time provides him with opportunities for additional income. If he is to derive any benefit from it, he must prepare himself to handle the job. The average small club can afford the services of only the active executive head, and

whether the pro gets this job will be strictly up to him and his ability. His rugged individualism, incidentally, should not suffer too much in the transformation.

He can further enhance and promote the community program in many ways that local conditions permit, such as securing the cooperation of the local school board to support a high school golf team. He can in fact do a complete job in this respect by supervising golf classes during the winter in the high school gymnasium—at no compensation to himself if necessary. Contrary to most pro's reasoning, this type of activity pays, not only in ultimate financial gain to himself but in importance in his relations to the community generally.

Yes, there are some major changes due in the golf picture, and they're all to the good. The day of the six-months-a-year club conducted primarily for the summer bridge activity and waistline reduction of a select group of tired business men and women is probably on its way out. Replacing it will be a club of local institutional integrity and recognition, performing an important public service.

The pro, if he is smart, will not pass out with the old idea. He'll begin to plan now, with sheer professional and business intelligence, to lift himself up to become, in the eyes of his own community, as important a figure as the butcher, the baker and the hardware merchant.

This Stunt Collected Used Balls

A new angle successful in obtaining used balls for reprocessing was worked out by Eddie Hogan, pro at Riverside GC, Portland.

A ten gallon glass jug was placed in the clubhouse lobby. Every one who put three used balls in the jug was entitled to one guess as to how many balls there would be in the jug when it was full. Each individual would be entitled to an unlimited number of guesses just so that for each guess he placed three balls in the jug.

The prize to the winner and to the runner-up was a war bond, the size of the war bond depending on the cash value of the used balls when turned into the manufacturer.

The jug was filled, in approximately six weeks' time. The cash made it possible for Hogan to give to the winner a \$50.00 war bond and to the runner-up a \$25.00 bond.

Big Ten Event Starts May 27

Athletic directors of the midwestern Big Ten conference have set May 27 as the starting date of the conference's 1944 golf championship. Club has not yet been named. It will be one of the Chicago district establishments.