

Improve Teaching or Pro Golf is in Peril

By ED M. FITZJOHN

RECENT REFERENCE in GOLFDOM to establishment of school in which pros could be taught to teach golf correctly, and to the difficulty experienced by the pro due to lack of control of the pupil, was welcomed by this writer as indications that he had been sound in criticisms he has voiced, probably to the point of boredom to some of his listeners. The sincere critic does not have a pleasant task. He is fearful that his studied judgment may be regarded as the vain expressions of a veteran in the veteran's customary role of lamenting the passing of "the good old days." And, above all things he does not want to be regarded as a nagger in a game which has pleasure as its objective.

So the older man in golf who came from the other side where his scholarship in the game was often a solemn and intense affair, equally as serious as the practice of the younger American playing pros, generally is reluctant to express himself concerning the status of instruction. But that reserve I abandoned some years ago when I became convinced that golf teaching by many of the younger men in the game was becoming a sad mess.

Not that it's all in that condition among the younger men, but prior to the war and now a considerable proportion of the younger American pros' teaching is poorly based, ignorant and ineffectual.

Some frankly have admitted it and endeavor to improve. Efforts have been made, in isolated cases, to bring science into instruction. That is nothing new to golf instruction. We used to play and discuss the golf stroke with many eminent doctors and engineers years ago on the other side of the Atlantic. Whether that influence or the general attitude of considering knowledge as something to be gained by patience and thoroughness was responsible for the approach of the old country pro to the teaching problem, I

can't say, but I am certain that sounder instruction principles prevailed generally.

I am positive, also, that the sounder basis of the older school's instruction is reflected by the difference in average scoring of American and British golfers prior to the war. As near as I was able to determine, in the 15 years before the beginning of World War II, the golf of the British businessman and artisan was approximately 10 strokes better than that of his American cousin.

That was a more serious situation than we in American golf realized. The golfer is not being given the values he should have from the game when he is allowed to believe that a score of around 100 is satisfactory "businessman's golf." That error is reflected in the too-high turnover in club memberships, in the casual use of courses by members, and in the necessity of expensive clubhouses with night-club entertainment programs and other expensive and costly entertainment features to sell memberships in private clubs.

But the American playing pro was the peer of the profession and that supremacy diverted attention from the deficiency of the general standard of golf instruction. The playing star, because of natural gifts and tremendous application to his specialized job, acquired a personal technique that got the ball into the hole at the expense of considerably less than the normal number of strokes. The gap between the playing star and the average golfer who supported the game became greater on the scorecard.

Consequently the average golfer's hope of improving his game to the degree of feeling at home on the same course with the tournament star became very dim. The star's game was a sport differing from what the average golfer played as golf.

And the younger pro, seeing that the rich rewards were in tournament golf,

devoted himself far more to his own game than that of his members. Merchandise sales and club cleaning were larger sources of revenue than teaching was, so teaching followed club-making into a slump. Club-making vanished and had it not been for women taking lessons the pro instruction income would have gone to a meager figure at many clubs.

Nevertheless, the sale of golf instruction books, regardless of their value, was quite good, indicating that golfers were eager for instruction.

I believe that an impartial review of the evidence will show that a serious mistake has been made by not giving proper attention to training golf instructors during the years of the game's great expansion in this country. Most of today's instruction is confusing and impractical. In the earlier days, the men of the old school taught Hagen, Jones, Sarazen and the host of star amateur golfers who were brilliant when the general standard and interest of amateur golf was much higher than it was in the decade preceding the war. These playing exponents of the game exhibited sound basic patterns which the new generation of playing stars followed in teaching themselves.

But, for some strange reason, the teachings of these sound old school men who really understood golf and how it should be taught, and from whom the younger element of instructors should have acquired the pattern of their instruction, usually, were ignored or disdained. Yet those American instructors who have the best records as instructors were almost without exception men who followed closely the methods and policies of their old mentors.

To put it bluntly, because of ignorance or ego, or both, golf instruction has deteriorated in the United States, and the expert counsel of those whose consistently resultful instruction shows over many years, has been unheeded.

Golf instruction, with too few exceptions, has ceased to be an art and has become a matter of ball knocking done through sheer physical effort. No wonder one sees so many poor golfers, commonly called hackers, when these unfortunates have come forth in an era of inadequate instruction. Golf is not a game of knocking a ball, but a game of controlling a ball. This control is acquired through understanding of the principles involved and applied correctly. How many average American golfers understand the basic principles involved in controlling the ball? Very few of them! But what pro instructor ever told them or himself knows?

When one plays his golf from basic understanding nothing under the sun can

stop him from becoming a good golfer, but under the procedure which generally has prevailed in the attempts to teach ball-knocking nothing but dissatisfaction and discouragement can be expected by the pupil. This is one reason why pupils don't stick. They take one or two lessons and not having received any miraculous results from some mechanical detail that is talked to them, get discouraged and quit to go their own way.

Golf teaching is a simple thing when it is done in an intelligent manner. But it isn't easy to learn to teach simply and right. We realize that some understanding of the construction of the human body helps in teaching golf, but we can't expect to acquire that understanding or apply it by listening to medical authorities give us a few half-hour or hour lectures.

The healthiest sign I have seen appear in professional golf in the past few years is that of more concern about instruction. Although the efforts to direct this concern into constructive channels have been retarded by indifference, ignorance and ego, even the fact of recognition of the sorry state of most golf instruction holds some promise of the situation eventually being corrected.

You can appreciate the serious mistake made by American pro golf in neglecting instruction when you think that the pros' whole career depends on people learning golf, yet the greater part of the Professional Golfers' association attention and money has been devoted to tournament play. I believe that a logical consideration of the facts would indicate that had the same amount of money been spent by the PGA on instruction research and teaching of teachers as has been spent in tournament promotion, and had half the amount of time and worry devoted to the pros' own tournament promotion been allotted to instruction, there would have been two or three times the present number of golfers in the United States and a much greater average income for the competent pro.

In expressing this opinion I do not want to be interpreted as being against the fine entertaining job done in pro tournament golf. I make the comparison merely to point out that pro golf has been guilty of the grave error of minimizing attention to the main reason for the existence of the pro job. This error has been accountable for the fact that fewer than half the golf courses in the United States have pros. That is the fault of nobody except the pros. Yet, does the PGA show alarm and take vigorous action in a situation which threatens the business future of most of its members?

The pro's position as a merchant is
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tensively. The new radio show, "Here's Babe Ruth!" steps up to the plate on Saturday morning, July 29th—and every Saturday morning thereafter for the duration of the program, over the entire NBC network, coast-to-coast, over 138 stations. There will be practically no section of the country where folks can't tune in the Babe. As before, the famous radio announcer, Ben Grauer, will umpire for the fifteen minutes of the program, and serve as general liaison man between Babe, the kids, and the listening audience.

Each week there will be a different "team" of kids in the NBC studio in New York, and they'll hurl some very fast questions about baseball at the Babe—who will do his darndest to bat back the right answers—and how.

The Babe will present famous baseball guest stars and Spalding will present prizes each week for the best baseball questions sent in by kids listening to the show.

Metalsalts Plans for Postwar Expansion

The Metalsalts Corporation of Paterson, New Jersey, producers of redistilled mercury and mercurials, has just acquired the tract of river fronting land adjoining its present plant. The additional property is to be used for expansion purposes in the postwar schedule of the company. The plans for new products, additional employment, and expanded selling efforts have already been drawn, according to Mr. William Stieh, president of the Metalsalts Corporation.

Improve Pro Teaching

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founded on his reputation as golf authority, which, in turn, is founded on the man's results as a teacher of golfers. We have seen the pros' merchandising position weaken before store competition as the pros' hold as effective instructors weakened. After the war there will be energetic efforts made by chain stores and individual merchants to cut into the share the pro expects of postwar golf equipment business. And unless the pro in most cases qualifies himself a whole lot better as an instructor this competition is going to reduce the pro job almost to that of a caddiemaster or shop boy.

Much in this article I know will be offensive to smug pros. Some of what I have written will, of course, be subject to competent debate. Some of the self-satisfied know-it-alls will say I am only a sour old curmudgeon muttering into my long gray beard. Still others will ques-

tion my judgment in washing our instruction linen where the public may see the laundry.

But I hope that what I have written will jolt all the pros. Unless the standard of pro instruction is raised to a much higher general level in this country, pro golf as a career for a man who wants to live on a good American standard is in precarious condition.

Acushnet Awarded Fourth Army-Navy "E"

For a splendid production record equalled by only a few war plants in the country, the Acushnet Process company has been awarded its fourth Army-Navy "E" Award, it was announced by Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson. This fourth award is a third star to be affixed to the "E" banner.

Since 1936, when the relationship between the Chemical Warfare Service and the Acushnet Process Company began, this plant has produced consistently for the Boston Chemical Warfare Procurement District. In addition to war material for the Chemical Warfare Service, this company manufactures war items for other branches of the Army, the greater percentage, however, being for Chemical Warfare. Indeed, Acushnet is one of the most outstanding plants under the jurisdiction of the Boston Chemical Warfare Procurement District and is widely acclaimed for its production of rubber component parts for the gas mask. Acushnet was one of the pioneers in the development of the gas mask, and Acushnet and its ingenious president, Philip E. Young, are responsible for the development of the first fully-molded rubber facepiece, the forerunner of the modern Army service mask issued to all G.I.'s.

Through the years, Acushnet has continued to maintain its high record of achievement and in November 1942 received the Army-Navy "E" Award. This banner was augmented approximately six months later by the first Star Award and in January, 1944, by the second Star. In winning a fourth honor, today, Acushnet has won a distinction held by a very small number of war plants. Only three percent of the war factories in the country have won the "E" banner, and Star Awards are correspondingly fewer.

Acushnet Process Company is one of the first, in over one hundred plants producing for the Boston District.

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