



How to Build a Job in Pro Golf



By DON YOUNG

(Concluded from May GOLFDOM)

"The next morning I was waiting for Mr. Conrad when he walked in his office.

"You're early," he greeted me.

"Yes," I told him, "and I'm here to do business. But first I'd like two questions answered. First, just what in the world is wrong with that golf club? Second, I can't understand your tolerant attitude while holding a cinch foreclosure investment considerably below what that layout is worth even for farm land?"

"Son," said Mr. Conrad, "there isn't a thing wrong with that golf club that the right man, who knows his job, couldn't correct. We of course made the mistake of many other clubs during the lush era and over-expanded and over-financed. The depression set us back on our heels and when the going got tough our pro left us. He was a good man but couldn't stand rough going. We hired another one—who proved to be a stinker. You saw the result yesterday with your own eyes.

"As to the mortgage, I realize my obligation as regards the bank's investment. However, this is my town. I expect to die here. And as a citizen and business man, I am aware of my civic duty and obligation toward this town. In this case I find my civic duty foremost. That club in the past has been a fine golf club and a credit to the community. It can be made a finer club than it ever was in the past, not only of high value to the community but a real civic asset, as important in its relation to our community life as schools, churches, and business houses. This town needs that club, needs it more now than ever before. I'm firmly convinced it is worthy of even further investment. All it requires is the right man for the job. Whether you are that man or not, I frankly confess I do not know."

"I handed him the plans I had drawn up. He read them slowly and carefully, then reached for his hat. 'Come along,' he said. 'Let's talk to some of the boys.'"

"We spent two days interviewing and arranging a meeting of every man in town who had ever held a membership in that

club. We insisted that every man bring his wife. Mr. Conrad opened the meeting with a speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have spent two days of my time arranging for this meeting, the purpose of which, as you know, is to discuss what possibly can be done to save our country club. My bank holds a \$15,000.00 mortgage on that club which falls due next January, and in view of the club's present condition and the public's interest toward it, I can assure you foreclosure will be made unless suitable arrangements are made previous to that date. If foreclosure is made, it will have proved a very profitable investment for my bank.

"However, from a strictly personal viewpoint, I wish to say I am willing to go the limit to prevent that foreclosure, but in doing so I must be firmly convinced that you people want that club and are willing to suffer and sacrifice a little to get it back. You are being given an opportunity tonight to make your decision. If your decision is favorable toward the club, show me 100 signed memberships for next year and you can depend on me to the limit.

"In relation to this proposition, allow me to introduce Mr., a golf professional who I am convinced is the key to the whole situation. I suggest that you listen to what he has to say, discuss deeply and intimately the problems he presents to you, and deliver me your decision two weeks from today. I'm stepping out of the picture at this point. From here on the meeting, and its consequences, are in your hands."

"Well, I got up there and harangued those people like a soapbox statesman, and I must confess I was amazed at the results I got. Those people were sincere in wanting that club. What they lacked was leadership and 'know how' and they seemed to accept me as the man who could furnish those qualities. Before the meeting ended they had dissolved their old Board of Directors consisting of 12

men and elected a new Board consisting of three. This was done at my suggestion and explanation that I wanted three sound business men who really wanted to serve as directors and would take an active, every-day interest in the job. One was to handle the finances, the second the golf course and play, and the third the clubhouse and related activities. I went into my suggested program with them thoroughly, which resulted in a scheduling of a meeting two nights later at the City Hall, with representatives of every civic organization in town present.

"The following day I spent two hours with the editor of the daily paper and not only obtained his enthusiastic cooperation but arranged for a strong two-week's publicity campaign at no charge. As a result, everyone present at the City Hall meeting was mentally well-prepared for what would take place. Every minister in town was present as well as committees representing the city council, the school board, the parent-teacher's association, and every civic and luncheon club in town.

"This town, like many others of its size, had a juvenile social problem on its hands—with no apparent solution. I believe I sold 'em back their country club that night on that basis alone. I explained how, although the club was a private one, we proposed to make it a real civic institution, serving directly or indirectly every single person in the community. The meeting closed with the stamp of approval from every church and organization represented. Two weeks later we presented Mr. Conrad with a new membership list of 112 members, and in turn were rewarded with not only a mortgage renewal but an additional \$5,000.00 loan.

"All this time I had been so engrossed in the job that I had given no thought to my personal relation to it, but one night as I lay in bed it suddenly struck me that I had shouldered a tremendous obligation toward that community. I don't mind telling you I was appalled at the thought, but I had gone too far now to turn back.

"There were a few things I insisted on being written into the new by-laws of that club. One was that no child, after entering high school, was to be considered a part of a family membership. Instead, we presented the children of each member with a participating membership at no charge, which was valid until they graduated from college or dropped out of school. This sounds a little crazy, but it enabled us to present like memberships to children of parents financially unable to belong to the club, which under any other circumstances would have sounded like charity. This placed all the youngsters on a common basis, and no participating

membership could be revoked except by a majority vote of the club membership. That made every deserving kid in the community a member of the country club, whether their folks had a nickel or a million dollars.

"Another important point written into the by-laws covered the problem of complaints and suggestions. A padlocked 'complaint box' was made available in the clubhouse and members were not only requested but urged to use it. Complaints and suggestions had to be filed in a sealed envelope with the complainant's name and address on the outside. This box was opened at the general club meeting every two months and action taken thereon by the entire club membership. Unsigned or verbal complaints were completely ignored. No department head employee of the club could be discharged, nor any club official relieved of his office, except by majority vote of the membership, and at least 60 percent of the membership was required to be present before a vote could be taken. We make these general club meetings an excuse for a holiday event every two months and rarely have less than 80 percent of the membership present.

"An additional important by-law was the required meeting every 30 days of the three-man Board and myself. No meeting could be held without all four present, and if any one of the four could not meet on the specified date, an alternate satisfactory date was arranged. No complaints of any kind could be discussed at this meeting, it being necessarily confined to club business and administrative matters.

"One of the first investments we made with a portion of that new \$5,000.00 loan was to remodel the clubhouse and arrange an attractive place for dancing and small parties. As soon as it was ready we opened the clubhouse for dining and dancing three nights a week, gave it strong publicity to the membership, and encouraged the youngsters to come out and let off steam. Within 60 days we had every juke joint operator in those parts howling about business. We installed a heating system and kept the clubhouse open all winter. Both skiing and skating were available on the grounds and the club not only did a whale of a business that winter but showed a nice profit during a season it had normally been closed.

"I knew I was on the spot that first year and had to deliver the goods or I was through in pro golf forever. So I went right through with the program I had laid out to them and didn't miss a lick. The school board formally approved golf as a part of the athletic program and the entire administration of the job, as well as the teaching, was turned over to

me—at no compensation. They supplied me with enough canvas for indoor classes and I immediately took over one entire side of the gymnasium. Clubs and balls were a problem so I appealed to the membership and they snowed me under with used equipment. I worked it all over in my spare time, of which incidentally I had very little that winter, but there wasn't a kid in school taking golf that didn't at some time during the winter get the rudiments, as well as the feel, of everything from a No. 1 iron to a putter.

"I can truthfully say I never worked harder in my life than I worked that winter—but man, did it pay off! Late in March I put on an indoor golf show in the gymnasium and believe it or not there wasn't an empty seat in the house. One of the feature acts was a rhythm number by 20 little girls who never before that winter had handled a golf club. They were costumed as white rabbits, used white drivers with crimson streamers, and did their stuff under lighting effects to music. It brought down the house. One hundred and fifty kids took part in that show and there were many requests that it be made an annual affair.

"When the course opened in the spring, school classes were cut to once a week, Saturday mornings. I carried on the program from that point right through the summer, holding regular Saturday morning classes and turning the course over to the kids two mornings each week for play and tournaments.

"During the winter I had convinced the Board that two very important things we needed were a good greenkeeper and a good dining room operator. They saw things my way and we obtained good experienced men for both jobs and paid them enough to make the jobs attractive. When we opened in the Spring we were really ready for action.

"By June 1st we had the golf course in spic and span shape and looking like a million dollars—but it was a job! Our 3-nights-a-week night club business increased steadily and the employing of a first class dining room operator was fully justified by the biggest dining room revenue the club had ever enjoyed.

"We inaugurated a southeastern state championship meet for five counties that summer, held it early in August, and were rewarded with 150 entries. It proved a financial success and still continues as an annual event in that section. I arranged a full program of play and tournaments that in some way would be attractive to every single member. The social committee cooperated with a like program and there wasn't an idle week at that club from the opening spring party to the Thanksgiving Ball.

"That first year was a success in every way. Every department of the club did a

grand business and showed a fine profit. Early the following December I installed two practice nets at the club for the members and our second winter's program was carried on, with increased tempo, exactly as the previous winter's had been. On the 2nd day of January we paid off that \$5,000.00 loan and obtained a renewal on the balance. We also managed to buy some badly-needed new maintenance equipment. I took stock of myself that month and found I had enjoyed one of the best years, both financially and professionally, that I had ever experienced in pro golf. I had worked like a horse—but loved it.

"Today we have one of the finest nine hole golf courses in the state, a brand new beautiful clubhouse big enough for every activity the organization demands, and don't owe anyone a red cent. But more important than that, we have the unqualified approval of every citizen of that town. Regardless of whether a family belongs to our club or not, we have in some way managed to make them a part of it.

"Socially and from a sports standpoint our club is the most important institution in town. It is almost unheard of now for any organization to hold a luncheon meeting at any time of the year anywhere but the country club. It's the accepted thing to do. We serve the best food, at the right prices, and the surroundings and atmosphere are always pleasant and cordial. We have solved a serious local social problem by providing wholesome, supervised entertainment for the community's young people. We take these youngsters at an early age and make them honorary members of our organization, and give many of them, who would be denied it otherwise, an opportunity to grow up and accustom themselves to a healthy, cultured, sports and social atmosphere among refined people.

"Twice each year, on the 4th of July and Labor Day, we hold open house for the city. Everyone is welcome. They can play golf on our golf course, play tennis on any of our four tennis courts, bowl on our grass bowling courts, play croquet on our croquet grounds, lounge in the clubhouse or lawn chairs, dance in the club room, picnic on our picnic grounds, and stay at night for the fireworks. There's no charge. Last Labor Day we had, including guests, more than 1200 people at our club. We try to send everyone home with the feeling that our country club is not an exclusive place for a few chosen aristocrats to play shinny, but an organization that is performing a real civic job and proving itself of real value to the entire community.

"Well, that's about all," finished Eddie reflectively. "It's been eight years now and I've loved every minute of it. And furthermore, under our present plan of

operation, our club's eighth year was just as busy as its first year. And when I told that club president I was making more money at my small club than I could make at his, I wasn't kidding. We close now for a month each year during January. When I left last week they handed me a bonus check for \$1,000.00. Perhaps that will give you an idea.

I must have looked a bit bewildered. "That's all," grinned Eddie. "There aint no more."

"Okay."
I made a future golf date with Eddie, bid him goodnight, and headed the Oldsmobile toward Coral Gables. At about 22nd and Coral Way the thought occurred to me:

"Just what is wrong with pro golf?"
Then suddenly it dawned on me that Eddie had the answer.
Nothing.

Short Courses Prevented Golf Wartime Slump

By MAURICE WHITE

Supt., La Grange (Ill.) CC

GREENKEEPING short courses most certainly have been a major reason why golf has kept up so well during the war. Directly as the result of what greenkeepers have learned at short courses the standard of wartime course condition is higher than it was in peacetime 15 years ago.

The short course influence has extended even to courses whose men haven't attended these sessions because the short course students have established maintenance standards and freely passed along what they've learned.

In this time of ball shortage who would be inclined to risk ball loss on courses infested with weeds and with soggy areas

that would engulf a wild shot? Many of us have heard during this early summer's dandelion season how play dropped off at courses due to lost balls or time spent looking for balls. But I know that what I had learned at short courses about large scale weed control and applied at La Grange eliminated the dandelion as a source of ball trouble to our players. Others have had the same experience.

The short course lectures and discussions on drainage have paid out especially well during wartime when players haven't much leisure time. In these times players simply wouldn't wait as they used to have to, in order to have a course dry out so play would be possible.

Now we know enough about drainage to get rid of surplus water soon without interfering with maintenance of good turf condition. The drainage methods extended by short course education also have made it possible for us to cut grass after rains instead of being compelled to wait until the grass grew so long in wet places that it would be difficult to locate balls.

Another very valuable aid to wartime maintenance that has been extended by the short courses is the correction of soil conditions. Rebuilding a green in wartime very seldom would be possible but what we've learned about changing soil condition by top dressing, etc., from the talks of experts and our discussions at short courses has enabled us in many cases to improve our greens despite lack of labor these days.

Like many another course supt. who is using every expedient and idea he ever learned or decreed, in order to keep a course in good condition these days, I am constantly reminded of how frequently the short course sessions are paying dividends now. Golf certainly would have been out of luck in wartime without this advance in maintenance knowledge.



GOLF IN THE ALEUTIANS

This golf practice net was made by Army air force men in the Aleutians to make it possible for the fliers who get to a rest base to keep the feel of golf. A few balls and a few clubs are in steady use. The spots on the illustration are the result of a photographic dark room mishap.