

Teaching Problem Draws Comment

★ Judging from letters received by GOLFDOM, from golf professionals throughout the country, the comments on professional golf instruction, by Ed M. Fitzjohn, professional at the Albany (N. Y.) CC, in August issue of GOLFDOM, revived wide awake interest in the department of pro operations which has long awaited needed improvement. Definitely, the pros are ready for guidance which will help them improve their teaching methods.

This does not mean that the pros admit that the American standard of teaching golf is anything but the best developed in any country, but their comments confirm the fact that their methods are far from perfect.

Pros from the four corners of the nation presumably rushed to their typewriters, or writing desks, to partially or wholly, agree, disagree, limit or enlarge upon the claims of Fitzjohn, that pro golf teaching in this country has deteriorated since the embryonic days of the game when golf instructors were of the "old school from the other side," and that no accepted basic teaching pattern has been designed by American pros that can be followed with reasonable assurance of lowering the average score of his members to the prouder side of 100.

Joe Novak, chairman of the PGA Teaching Program Committee, which includes as members Byron Nelson, Craig Wood, Harold McSpaden and Larry Nabholz, in no wise accepts Fitzjohn's statement that British golfers have scores averaging ten strokes less than American business men golfers, stating that is "only an opinion," subject to proof.

Novak claims that the time and money spent by the PGA on their tournaments is basically and psychologically correct in keeping the "horse before the cart" by getting the public interested in first taking up the game of golf, then teaching it to them as they apply at courses. Such tournaments, Novak claims, keeps bringing new followers to the game.

For over three years, Novak states, the PGA Teaching Committee has been developing a teaching program based on questionnaires sent to their members throughout the country. He writes: "In recent years a new life and determination have been placed in the PGA Teaching Program. Under the leadership of Tom Walsh, analysis of players, equipment and swings were made and much valuable information has been gathered. . . . Motion pictures have been taken of players in actual competition, clinics have been held

and conducted throughout the country . . . and this program will continue to be put into effect with one thought in mind, and that is to provide the PGA professional with any and all information necessary to aid him in being most able and efficient in his work."

Willie Maguire of Houston, PGA treasurer, wrote that, "I am sure the PGA Post War program is being dealt with by a number of our Committeemen who are good merchants themselves" in answering Fitzjohn's fears that stores would "grab" most of the after-war supply business. Continues Maguire: "I have always thought that a good sound teacher and a good business man will be able to control at least ninety-five per cent of his members' business." Maguire concludes his remarks with a cordial invitation to Fitzjohn to attend the coming annual PGA meeting in Chicago during November and discuss the question with officials and members.

In the main, the pros accepted the subject of Fitzjohn's discussion as a matter of vital importance to the golf professional's welfare. As one put it, "An exchange of ideas . . . can only lead to greater interest in the game . . . and I believe articles such as Fitzjohn's will tend to crystalize thought and stimulate action along constructive lines! Less theorizing and more factual evidence should be developed covering Fitzjohn's recommendations with reference to 'controlling the ball'. Future popularizing of the game should place more emphasis on control and less on strong backs".

A leading southern pro says, "I feel sure most of the profession are in accord with the general sentiments expressed (by Fitzjohn); and certainly there will never be a better time than the present when the general public, due to the war, is so extremely mechanical minded, to go thoroughly into present teaching methods and find out, if there is, first a better method of arriving at a proper golf swing, and secondly, better methods, in fact much better methods, of putting instruction across."

This writer points out that too often the "popular" golfer of the year is too apt to be put up as the prized example of how to play, with teachers and golfers alike trying to ape him. Comes the new year with a new "top player" with a different style and all previous instructions "goes to pot". "So, why not set up a fundamentally sound method," he concludes, "and rather than accept the ideas of to-

day's star, we can actually take his methods and check them against a fundamentally perfect swing, and find out the strength, or weakness, if any."

A top-ranking California pro writes: "How to go about training professionals to teach is a problem". He further states, "I feel it takes many years of experience and study to become a successful teacher of golf."

Other pros feel that perhaps some mechanical contrivances might be developed for use in instruction, one pro claiming such contrivances "would not be too difficult to figure out, with the result being a much more intelligent understanding by the pupil and a far more definite, uniform method of having the instruction carried out than is now the case".

The most caustic comment was received from a nationally known pro, winner of many leading big-purse tournaments, who penned: "I can tell you in very strong terms that pro golf instruction is losing out because it hasn't contributed sufficiently to the average pupils' improvement. He still can't break 100 and he's tired of having the pro tell him how nice he looks. The golf pro will have to learn the scientific way of teaching golf, utilizing, for instance, slow motion pictures, which have proved so effective in the highly accelerated pace with which millions have been successfully taught during the war emergency. Why not use this visual education at Sunday supper clinics?"

A leading amateur golfer, now in his fiftieth year, pointed out that many of the older golfers do not want instruction. He writes: "There is undoubtedly need for expert instruction for young folks. Personally, my interest in playing now lies in companionship of the links rather than trying to improve my game and I rather suspect this is true of most men over 50." He touches an indicative spot however, when he states "The demand for competent instruction is not as great today as the early twenties or as it used to be in Great Britain . . . most club members allow themselves only a limited time from their routine for recreation and prefer to spend the time in the happy associations of the links rather than on the practice tee or taking lessons."

Resigns After 21 Years

★ Tommy Wilson, golf pro for over 21 years at the Ansley Park Municipal Golf Club, Atlanta, Ga., resigned on September 1st. His resignation was due to ill health, it was reported. Wilson came to Atlanta 24 years ago as assistant pro at the Druid Mills GC, accepting the Ansley Park position three years later. His brother, Billy Wilson, who came to America three years after Tommy, is pro

at the Bobby Jones Municipal GC. They hail from New Castle-on-Tyne, England.

Wartime Golf Course Maintenance

★ Reports from greenkeepers, superintendents and golf pros throughout the country on golf course maintenance during the current year, all point to two major difficulties of operation during wartime, namely the shortage of help and the lack of equipment.

With respect to the former, one superintendent aptly speaks for most when he says their club hired "anyone who could stand reasonably erect and move in a generally forward direction."

With the problem of supplies, the adages of "Make it do, use it up and do without" held sway.

Nevertheless, most greenkeepers and officials continued research and testing for solutions to their local problems, and many a home-made implement was devised. In most sections of the country severe drought was the bane of those responsible for the maintenance of playable fairways and greens, with all seeming to have pulled through without too many complaints from members, now war-problem conscious in their own business enterprises.

Reports state that more expenditures were made in connection with clubhouse repairs and additions rather than on the courses, where the rule of "it has to do" generally applied due to replacement and repair scarcities.

A number of maintenance men, possibly more visionary than most, foresee the use of numerous electric outlets, similar to water outlets, all over post-war golf courses. They claim electrical equipment, particularly electric lawn mowers for the greens, will be in demand, along with a lot of other electric gadgets "that would let us have more fun than a bride in a brand new kitchen."

Army-Navy "E" for Spalding

★ For their outstanding record in quality and quantity of war production, the men and women of A. G. Spalding & Bros., Inc., Brooklyn plant, were awarded the Army-Navy "E" at ceremonies held at the Masonic Temple, Brooklyn, October 16th. Since shortly after the United States went to war the Spalding plants have been devoted entirely to the manufacture of war materials with an increasing volume of their production in the past year representing athletic equipment ordered by the government for men and women in the Services.