

Pros Must Tell Public of Teaching Advance

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PRO GOLF is getting set for strengthening its foundation as a business so the flood of golf merchandise sales after the war will be primarily controlled by competent pro endorsement.

The pro business foundation is teaching. It used to be teaching and club-making. The steel shaft and a bigger demand for clubs than bench artistry could supply, took us out of the club-making business. Our position as authorities on the design, construction and proper fit of clubs still is paramount. But as teachers our ability and opportunities have continued to increase.

However, we still have an urgent and tremendous job of advertising and selling competent pro instruction. The public doesn't know the advance that has been made in golf instruction as the result of PGA attention to this matter during the past 10 years.

The work that began when George Sargent, as president of the PGA, made super-slow motion pictures of Jones, Hagen and Joyce Wethered has gone far. Ten years ago I doubt that any of us would have believed that there could be such general agreement on fundamentals of the golf swing as today exists among experienced professionals. Even five years ago we would have doubted that the PGA committee on instruction, headed by Joe Novak, would have been able to get most of us to concede that our differences of opinion and observation regarding basic details of the swing were far more matters of words than of mechanics. When the PGA made its first survey on what pros regarded as fundamentals of the swing there were, as I recall, over 200 details set forth as essentials. But after extensive analysis and discussion these many so-called fundamentals turned out to be actually only a dozen or so basic points, differently described by different pro instructors.

In the meanwhile the golfing public had become confused. There had been established a general public belief that golf teaching was a matter of rare genius or repetition of a few phrases such as "keep yirrrr head doon," and "slow back." We pros made our individual interpretations of causes and effects of the swing as we studied playing stars in action and from motion pictures. We were bound to make errors in that difficult job.

We had the further handicap of most of the pupils wanting amazing results quickly, and without much work. When you consider that the majority of our

pupils were businessmen who'd become muscle-bound in offices and came out to the lesson tee in a rush and in no mental mood to have the mental and muscular coordination necessary to learning golf, the teaching pros have produced astoundingly good results.

Golf instruction is not a job that a bright ex-caddie can master in the first few years of his job as a pro. Johnny Kevolta pointed out the difficulty of the task in saying that if anyone thinks it is easy to get words to describe muscle and nerve sensations, try to tell how it feels to hold a knife and fork properly.

By the national and sectional PGA instruction clinics we began to get a clearer understanding of our own instruction problem. The talks on physiology and psychology of instruction that Dr. Robert Dyer has given at PGA sessions, and the lecture of Prof. John Anderson of the University of Minnesota on effective teaching of manual performances, explained to many of us, really what we were trying to do, and how best to do it.

We began to greatly improve our results in teaching muscular illiterates the ABCs of a sound golf swing.

But does the public generally know that?

It does not! Too often the pro begins instruction with the public not having much confidence in results but hoping for a miracle.

A job that the PGA has to do for service to the public is to put on a powerful educational advertising campaign on the revolutionary advance in golf instruction. The pros need something as attention-commanding in this respect as the tournaments have been in the playing field.

When we do get across the conviction that golf instruction has reached the same foundation as the teaching of the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic we will sharply lower the present national average of scoring which has about 95 per cent of all players shooting 95 or better. With better scoring there will be more play, more fun for the players and more business for the golf clubs and the pros.

I have had a number of people ask me what, or who, gives a pro the authority to become an instructor. That's a proper question. The PGA in assuming responsibility for pro golf also must assume responsibility for assuring definite results to the public that buys golf instruction from pros.

Probably some people are no more able to learn golf than some unfortunate youngsters are able to learn their school lessons. But at least the public must be made to realize that golf instruction in the fundamentals now is on a rather uniform and sound basis. The public must be acquainted with the facts that golf instruction in the primary and intermediate stages is not a complex matter, but something simple and certain when correctly done.

Further, the pupil should be given lesson sheets or booklets as text material to be studied along with the personal service of the instructor, and the practice. I found this very helpful before the war in using the sheets supplied by the National Golf Foundation. These sheets give the pupil a clear picture of the swing and prevent misinterpretation of the instructor's explanations. Now the pupil tries to remember what the instructor said and frequently forgets, when practicing or playing, just what he was told. Then the pro is blamed for not teaching the right technique.

There should be much more individual advertising of golf instruction by pros. A pro should give freely of his time in educating his members to take lessons. This can be done in the shop, in the locker-room, the first tee, and everywhere else golfers congregate. Giving free tips invariably encourages players to make lesson appointments.

To make players more lesson-conscious the pro must take genuine personal interest in the members' games. Asking how his shots were in the round the member just played, how the practice was, and keeping close watch of changes in the handicap cards, arouses a favorable reaction. The pro who doesn't query a member about the reason his handicap increased is neglecting an opportunity to

be of considerable service to that member.

One of the most important details in a promotion campaign for golf instruction is sincere attention to junior golf development at a club. It is essential that the youngsters get started right with an understanding of the basic principles of a sound golf swing. With these youngsters receiving the right foundation they'll build themselves as golfers and as boosters for golf. The parents of the kids also will respond to that indirect approach.

Wood's Esquire Story on Nelson in Pro Poster

August Esquire magazine carries an able article by Craig Wood on "Byron Nelson, Lone Star." Wood wrote "Why golf's Huckleberry Finn rates greatest of all time in the eyes of one he has forced to finish second." Craig told in informal first person some of his observations of Nelson's ability, comparing it with that of others of golfing's great, and including sufficient factual information to back up his contention that Nelson is Golfer No. 1 of all time.

MacGregor Golf, Inc., Dayton, O., manufacturer and distributor of Tourney clubs and balls, and with whom Nelson and Wood are affiliated as Pro Advisory and Technical staff members, had the story blown up to poster size and mailed to pros. While the article had been prepared months in advance, its release in the August issue was most timely following so closely after Nelson's winning of the 1945 PGA Championship at Dayton.

INSECT PEST CONTROL—Sodium selenate solutions may have possibilities for golf turf insect control. Developed by Dr. W. E. Blauvelt, Entomology Dept. of Cornell U., the material has been used for insect control on ornamental plants in greenhouses. At present the chemical is not permitted to be used on edible plants until it is learned what effects, if any, there are on man or animals. When solutions are sprayed on the soil the plants take up the chemicals. Figuratively speaking, when the bug bites the plant, the chemical bites the bug, and the plant wins the fight.

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