

The Pro Needs Help—Now!

By WALTER KELLER

THE RETURN TO civilian life, and to golf we hope, of young men and others not so young who left golf to enter war plants, is not going to produce the great cure-all for the golf game and the golf pro.

Among vocations, the golf professional business definitely is on the sick list. Long suffering from what might be called "unpaiditis" for want of a more proper descriptive word, the golf pro is now leaving his job at the club and is going into other industries. He is doing very well because he is hired on a more stable basis.

Let's diagnose his chart. Can you explain why most golf club members and officials expect that their professional should look and act like a \$10,000 man on a \$60 a week salary? And, I didn't say \$60 a week the year 'round. You will have a tough time finding the right answer to this one. What ever your answer my hope is to impress upon pros and officials alike the growing urgency of finding an early practical solution to the pro's basic problems, or the whole golf industry will miss the postwar boat.

I have referred to the pro's basic problems. Let's look at the most basic of all; the basis on which he is employed. It is such that his income almost entirely depends upon the profits of what merchandise he can sell during his selling season which embraces but five or six months at most; and his potential customers which are sharply limited in number. For this comparatively small customer market he is expected to have on hand a fairly complete stock of merchandise. Thus, of necessity he must be a good "guesser" of his needs for the year—based on the unpredictable whims of his members.

Golf clubs have an investment of anywhere from \$100,000 to over a million dollars. They employ a golf pro whose job it is to serve the members in any way he can—help reduce members' handicaps, keep track of their equipment and service it, supply special items of merchandise, or be available for an emergency round with a member and a big buyer from Buffalo. He creates and conducts events that will bring more members out to the club more frequently. This increased attendance increases patronage of other facilities and builds up club income. He gives talks at club meetings, free group instruction to members' sons and daughters, and often counsels with respect to golf course renovation and upkeep.

For all these and other details the

majority of golf clubs pay the pro little or no salary—only equipment sales concessions, which net him from \$1,500 to \$5,000; and very few talk the latter figure over with Uncle Sam's collection men.

Would an industrial executive hire a man to run a department of comparable importance in his plant or business, and hold him accountable for so many diversified responsibilities—then ask him to accept the same uncertain basis of remuneration as that offered the pros? If you found such a man he would leave as soon as he got a better offer, which would be quick. That's what has been happening in golf. Pros are getting better offers, and those who are not sought out are constantly seeking an opportunity to improve their chances of economic existence.

A normal turn-over in pro employment is to be expected. The club's membership, its operating staff and even the businesses of its members undergo turn-overs. However, the turn-over among golf pros is of such high frequency as to plainly indicate that something is more basically wrong with the plan of employment than with the man employed. Surely, as seasoned business men, the club officials should be quick to acknowledge the costliness of such faulty routine and to be able to plan to correct it. Something should be done, soon, or we will face the largest turnover in pro jobs since the game became big business here in the United States.

In many instances, during the labor shortage, a member has spotted a live-wire pro at his club and promptly found a nice place for him in his own business. In such cases, the pros who have been "gobbled up" now have better opportunity to get more enjoyment out of their golf than they did during their pro careers. They will earn more money, will be employed the year 'round, live a fuller life, and who knows—they may even raise a youngster or two. Many good men have left the game and many more are finding it easier to be tempted. Certainly, their clubs stand to lose far more than the pros in trading proven performance for inexperience.

Any pro who assumes his club responsibilities without salary is off to a bad start. He has placed a value on his ability and services that cannot command much respect from his officials and members. He will have to scratch out a living from lessons and sales confined mostly to the playingest members. Under these conditions he cannot concentrate on helping B,

C and D handicap players, where his help is most needed, and where most of the club's dues and house spending is centered. Then, most likely he will be given a contract for but one year . . . which means he has only six or seven months in which to get acquainted and prove his worth.

If you can hire a pro for say a minimum of five years, and put in a few clauses in the contract to the effect that gambling and drinking with the members are OUT—that he will be paid a salary, and that a certain amount will be added to each member's bill for golf instructions for the year—and that all lessons are free and that it is up to the pro to reduce the members' handicaps—then you will begin to see the making of a good pro—and a more successful club.

You've got to keep this in mind: A golf pro must live 12 months of the year out of six or seven months' earnings from the golf shop.

How many of the "member pros" are in a position to follow the winter circuit, in the hope of filling-in the off-season five or six months by picking up some tournament winnings? It would cost him more than \$1,000 bare expenses—and you and I know that only a few of the top notch campaigners win enough to make their winter tourney tours pay out.

No—the pro's solution to off-season insolvency is not winter circuit winnings. The practical, profitable answer to his club, as well as himself, is for the club to employ him on a twelve months basis, and pay him accordingly. And, what will he do during the non-playing months? Organize a club bowling league, assist in the promotion of other club activities that will keep the membership active, get his shop in order, plan his tournament schedule—and many other things that will make the routine smoother and keep the members enthusiastic.

The golf game has a wonderful future but today's setup regarding the golf professional is definitely faulty in foundation. As it stands, it does not and, unless changed, will not attract the well educated, ambitious type of young business men who could contribute so much to the game's development.

Take care of your pro, Mr. Board Member. Plan and budget for him on a more reasonable basis in your meeting this winter. Believe me, he will see to it that your action increases your club's assets.



CRAIG WOOD

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Henry P. Cowen, V.P. of MacGregor Golf, Inc., announces a new sportswear line to be marketed under the signature and trade name of Craig Wood.

Craig Wood sportswear, styled by MacGregor, will be broader in scope than the company's sportswear lines in the past, introducing many new and exclusive features. Every item has been designed primarily for active play, with golfers', tennis players' and other sportsmen's requirements foremost in mind.

New packages have been designed, and the complete merchandising program includes colorful counter and wall displays for pro shops and other merchandising helps for pro-shop over-the-counter sales.

Craig Wood sportswear will be ready for presentation in January. Stock will be carried in Dayton and the company's seven branch offices throughout the United States.

Mr. Cowen is most enthusiastic about the new line and equally enthusiastic about merchandising it under one of the most popular names in golf—Craig Wood. Thousands of sports-minded people are familiar with Craig's record of accomplishments. Hundreds of pros personally are acquainted with him. He is duration U. S. Open Titleholder by virtue of having won the last tournament played for the title, in 1941. He won the Master's Tournament the same year and holds the world record low score for a championship tournament, with rounds of 64, 66, 68, 66.

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