

Began Junior Classes 18 Years Ago—Now They Pay Dividends

By RAY HAYWOOD



Earl Fry's son Eddy, now with the Marine Corps at Okinawa.



EARL FRY

EARL FRY, one of California's five famous golfing Frys, is receiving dividends from a long-range instruction program he instituted at the Alameda Municipal Golf Course (Calif.) where he is professional. The program operates on the theory, "catch them young and you have them for life."

With this in mind, Earl conducts junior classes early Saturday mornings for boys (or girls) from eight to 18 years of age. Instruction, balls and clubs are provided free by Fry.

The course, the pro shop and the game in general have benefited thereby in several ways, Fry has learned. Youngsters given a sound working knowledge of the game's fundamentals usually succumb to its charm. They join golf clubs, buy balls and clubs and generally promote the game. This all adds up to more business, Earl says.

Many of Earl's present club members had their first golf instruction in the junior classes which were founded when Fry went to the Alameda club 18 years ago. Now, in the income bracket, they pay greens fees and purchase equipment from his shop.

Classes are limited to 20 students. Earl provides each with a brassie, five-iron and putter and sufficient "shag bag" balls. Instruction begins with putting and chipping and works up through the irons to the driver.

One important element of the game—etiquette—is taught at an early session. The youngsters are shown the advantage of replacing divots, raking sand traps and not driving into other players.

Class students have in part helped alleviate the Alameda caddy shortage.

Youngsters seeking money with which to buy clubs are usually eager to pack for adults.

During the first lessons Fry pays particular attention to the correct grip, stance and balance. Because of this drill in fundamentals, many of the boys who had their first lesson at the Alameda course are now contenders for local amateur honors.

Perhaps the most outstanding student has been Earl's son, Eddy, 20, who was one of the area's best when he entered the Marine Corps two years ago. When last heard from he was fighting on Okinawa.

Earl started Eddy on the game when the boy was eight years old. Seven years later, weighing only 110 pounds, Eddy won the Alameda City Championship from an adult opponent who went down by a 10 and 9 margin after 27 holes. He medaled 63-33 for the holes he was required to play.

In addition to his own pet project—the free junior classes—Earl instructs girls from Alameda high school as well as members of the school golf team. The latter groups are charged only enough to pay for the balls they lose.

The average daily play at Alameda is proof that Earl's plan is sound. An unusually high percentage of the players are the professional's former free students.

Other former students are members of practically all the Metropolitan Oakland area golf clubs. Earl lobbies enthusiastically for the junior class plan. It will pay dividends at private clubs as well as public courses, he claims. Professionals who are able to interest their members' children in golf are building a solid economic foundation for their own futures, he says.