



WILLIE MAC FARLANE

MacFarlane Charts Pros' Future Course

By DON YOUNG

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I SPENT A VERY INTERESTING hour with a very interesting personage discussing a very interesting subject. The hour was spent at Miami Shores CC, that beautifully architected layout at 100th Street and Biscayne Boulevard, Miami; the personage none other than the peerless Willie MacFarlane, the Shores' capable pro-manager; the subject—the future of pro golf.

My purpose in calling on Willie was purely a selfish one. During the past 24 months ideas had been banging around in the back of my head concerning the future of pro golf in general. In fact, they had been rattling around so long I was beginning to wonder if they might not be slightly wacky—a very logical conclusion. Hence my desire to seek a figure in the pro field whose abilities encompassed not only that of fine playing, teaching, and merchandising, but one whose past experience might be so wide and varied as to produce the ultimate in sound judgment.

In Willie MacFarlane I found that man.

I'll mince no words about my personal opinion of Willie. For my money he's a genius in the pro field. My conclusion is based on the fact that one can practically count on the fingers of one hand the pros of Willie's age who have found it possible to retain most of the fine playing touch they possessed in younger days, while at the same time continuing highly effective teaching. Combine these qualities with that of being one of America's keenest pro merchandisers, a past master of the difficult art of public relations, and one of the most pleasing personalities in the pro game, and you have Willie MacFarlane. There are all too few like him.

It was a pleasure to walk into Willie's well-arranged shop. The quality and amount of merchandise reflected not only solid confidence but had all the appearances of a prewar golf shop.

"So you're going back in pro golf," said Willie. "Well, I wish you luck."

Since the last few words seemed slightly tinged with a touch of gentle sarcasm, I pounced on them. After four years in a war job I was inadvertently looking for confirmation of my decision—and perhaps a spot of sympathy.

"Don't misunderstand me," explained Willie. "Pro golf is okay. But I'm just wondering. The situation doesn't look any too rosy at this point. But of course," he went on, "I'm thinking principally in terms of the critical ball situation and no clubs to sell.

The discussion went on from there—and on and on. Finally he gave me the opening I wanted.

"In your opinion," I asked, "what sort of a future is in store for golf?"

His reply was prompt and to the point. "Wonderful!" declared Willie. "There's no reason why golf shouldn't expand tremendously after the war. As to the future of pro golf—that's another question entirely."

"What do you think is most needed in the pro field?" I inquired.

"More good pros," replied Willie unhesitatingly. "And you can put that word 'good' in big, black capital letters. By good pros I mean capable ones. By capable ones I mean men who are not satisfied merely with a living out of a six or eight months' job in the summer and a sojourn to Florida in the winter.

"What we need are more men who will go on a job, work it for all it's worth, and stay there twelve months a year regardless of location. If the club isn't a twelve-months club, he should make it one.

"We're cursed with too many drifters, boys who work the 'cream' off a new job and move on to another. By the middle of the winter they're broke, or close to it. Their credit is always questionable. They think of teaching in terms of a quick \$2.00 lesson. They refuse to study merchandising because they have never given attention but to 'cream' business.

"As a consequence the pro field gener-

ally has lost too much of the good, solid business, the obtaining of which requires sound merchandising and business brains."

"What's the remedy?" I asked. "Do you think merchandising and teaching schools would help?"

"Most assuredly," he replied, "and I think the PGA is the logical body to sponsor it. However, even then we have the problem of getting the boys to attend. If we can get them to attend we must be very careful to not overdo the group lecture idea. Pros as a body just don't take to group instruction. We should have enough competent men on hand to take these boys individually, discuss their personal problems with them, and offer sound advice to fit their personal situation. In the pro field the group lecture idea is like the group instruction idea—it's good only up to a certain point.

"In my opinion some such program, carried out widely and in detail, will be one chance of the pro field keeping pace with the expansion of the game that is sure to come after the war. We don't need more top flight pro players. What we need are more competent teachers, merchandisers, and men with managerial ability. There are good incomes awaiting such men and the need of them is certain to be great in the future. The future of pro golf lies in our ability to supply them.

"I am firmly convinced," continued Willie, "that we pros as a class have been consistently passing up one of the most lucrative fields in our profession—the small and medium-size golf club. We continue to think too much in terms of 18 holes and big memberships—which means a certain amount of 'cream' business. As a consequence the small and medium-size field has suffered from a lack of compe-

tent pro attention, and as a result the manufacturing interests and the game itself have suffered also. Frankly, one of the best pro jobs I ever held, both financially and professionally, was a nine-hole suburban club.

"After the war there will be literally hundreds of these nine-hole clubs crying for men with ability to operate them. It is true these jobs require both pro and managerial ability, and quite often a good knowledge of greenkeeping. Nevertheless, they are worth five, six, seven, even ten thousand dollars a year to the man who can handle them properly.

"As a class we pros shy away from such jobs. We're inclined to be too individualistic and, perhaps, a little too much afraid of work, especially where responsibility is concerned. The combination proposition sounds like a lot of things to look after and very little time to play golf. As a matter of fact, however, I've never known a successful clothing merchant who knew everything about socks and nothing about shirts. That's something for us pros to think about."

"Well," finished Willie, "that in my opinion is the situation. And we have a job to do in correcting it. I hope we can. It would mean a lot to everyone concerned, the pros, the clubs, the manufacturers, and the game itself. And it is a job I believe can be done."

I shook hands with Willie with a good feeling way down deep, like a glass of ice water on a hot summer's day.

I'll end with a bit of advice to brother pros. If you've never talked to Willie MacFarlane, do so. He's a grand gentleman, a fine professional—and he knows what he's talking about.



A well-kept golf course just a short distance from a U. S. Army base in India. The ninth green is in front of the typical tea planter's bungalow-type clubhouse.