



# The Pro Also Has

# CONVERSION PROBLEMS

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**I**N THE CLUBHOUSE pros hear their businessmen members talk about problems of conversion. And these problems are headaches. But if the pro thinks the conversion problems of most successfully switching from wartime to peace are not going to be any trouble to him he is mistaken.

The stored-up demand for golf goods is going to break loose in a flood. Many smart merchants—department, chain, and sports stores—are going to make aggressive bids for this business of old and new golfers. The pro to hold his own and to strengthen his prestige and earning position in this situation, will have to be foresighted.

Today he has to be well along in conversion.

This conversion to peacetime golf was planned ahead at Edgewater. Edgewater is well within the city limits of Chicago. In that respect it is almost unique among the older and distinguished golf clubs of the country. We're only about a half hour from Chicago's Loop. Many of our members live near the club. They include a number of Chicago's prominent businessmen.

Quite a number of these men were at years when normally they would have begun taking things easy. Then the war came along and they worked harder than they ever worked for years before. Very definitely these men, and their wives who were deep in Red Cross and other war organization work, have been kept going at high speed in their work because they

have been able to get in enough golf to balance the pressure.

### Let Nature Take Its Course?

"Well, where's the conversion problem in golf with them? They are the solid, knowing sort of members who'll always do business with the pro." That's the comment some might make about my situation. The analysis is right. Our members are accustomed to belonging to the finest in golf and city clubs. They know that I am on the job and have served them by making sure that they get the best equipment available.

But they have been getting five years older at a time when age begins to dictate changes in a man's golf clubs. And during that five years not many clubs have been on sale. So I will have a conversion problem of making absolutely certain that my postwar stocks are perfectly suited to a membership older than I served when the war started. This is one of the things to be prepared to meet in conversion in the pro shop.

The way to study that problem is on the lesson tee or in playing lessons. My lesson business has been especially big the past two years. One day last month I gave 22 half-hour lessons.

The increase in lesson business hasn't been entirely spontaneous. I've nursed it along for three reasons. One is that I know these men needed some exercise and if they didn't get time for much actual play I saw that they got exercise on the lesson tee. Another is that with all the

things they've had to worry about in war business I wanted to see that they scored as well as possible so their golf didn't turn out to be another trouble instead of a pleasant relaxation. And the third was that I looked ahead to my own conversion problem so that when these men convert their businesses back to a peacetime basis and have more time to play they'll be playing good sound games.

Every pro knows that the man who is playing consistently and in reasonably good figures is going to play golf every chance he gets. The men who quit golf are the fellows whose scores are so high and so inconsistent they don't get much fun out of the game.

#### Wartime Simplified Instruction

I've found in teaching these men that better scoring is definitely the result of attending to the very simplest details of instruction. They are men of very active and questioning brains. If you give them too much detail you arouse their curiosity past the point their muscles can follow. Most of them were pretty fair baseball players when they were kids and despite their sedentary occupations still retain enough of the baseball knack to be able to throw the clubhead at and through the ball.

But when they get thinking about pivoting, the right elbow close in, the straight left, and many other details to be regarded in the intensive instruction and performance of the low handicap player or the pro, they get tangled up.

In trying to prepare for successful conversion in the pro department I gave considerable time to women's instruction also. It looks to me, from indications at Edgewater and from what I hear in talking to other pros, that in the first five years after the war there will be ten pretty good women golfers for every one we had in 1940.

It looks to me like we are just on the verge of really getting going in women's golf. Two things probably give this hunch a solid foundation. Women generally are getting more athletic. Girls and young women don't come to the lesson tee as muscle-bound and as awkward as they did 28 years ago when I became a pro. It also is true that the pros are not as awkward in teaching women as they used to be. One of the very noticeable advances in pro golf during the past ten years, in my opinion, is the improvement in the fine art of women's golf instruction.

#### Caddie Attitude Improves

Another signal of conversion to peacetime golf not being far away is in the caddie attitude toward the game. This has been very plain<sup>1</sup> - evident at Edgewater. Even though our location is good for getting caddies we had our difficulties.

But now on Mondays when I give the caddies group lessons and the club allows them to play we always have more than a hundred show up. With these youngsters as the nucleus of our caddie supply we generally have plenty.

But in solving that problem another one came up. We have what I believe to be the best-maintained golf course in the world. Others may want to argue that, but I'll stick to it. Our supt., Gerald Dearie, suffers the tortures of the damned when the caddies are on the course and may mar its carpets of greens, fairway, tees and rough. And there's no getting away from it, kids now are more careless than kids were allowed to be when you and I were youngsters.

So that brings up a matter of education and discipline to which the boys are responding well. They either respond or they know they are imperiling the playing and instruction privileges of the whole crowd.

I've studied these kids quite carefully trying to determine the reason for the somewhat sudden growth of keen interest in golf. My conclusion is that Byron Nelson's record of tournament earnings has had a tremendous influence on the boys. You have youngsters reading that Byron's tournament winnings in a year are around \$40,000 for playing golf and you have those youngsters ambitious to be the Nelsons of years to come. It was the same way with kids and baseball when Ruth was drawing a huge salary. And what Negro kid didn't want to be another Joe Louis?

I've seen in my shop an interesting reflection of the kids' imitation of Nelson. I carried visors for some years, putting most of them back into storage each winter. But in the past two seasons, with Byron wearing a visor, the kids keep buying me out of stock.

A lot of these lads show promise of being quite good golfers. Many of them will grow up to be fine businessmen and possibly members of the club where they once caddied. We've got a famous precedent for that. Chick Evans, who used to be a caddie at Edgewater now is an honored member of the club. Another and much more recently honored caddie is Jack Atten, a promising youngster who used to caddy for Chick and who is now following in his footsteps. Jack was made an associate member of Edgewater just recently. That seemed to inspire him to win his first championship, the Chicago District GA Junior closed title.

When the days come when our caddies are successful young businessmen, they'll be buying from the man who taught them golf. They're part of my reconversion plan.