

Pro Vets Showed Way to Handle Postwar Boom

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THE SAFEST guide for younger professionals who are planning to best serve their clubs, the game and themselves in the postwar golf boom is that supplied by the men who registered outstanding success in the golf business after World War I. These men did a remarkable job in probably the greatest advance quickly made by any one sport. It was due in no small measure to their performances that golf grew from a comparatively minor recreation enterprise in 1917 to have a plant investment of approximately a billion dollars before Pearl Harbor.

These pros who built the business and grew along with it have done well financially for themselves and have established themselves as beloved and valuable citizens of their communities. Obviously they had basic principles and practices that can be just as effectively applied after World War II as after World War I.

Others who came and went in the hectic 20's had just the same opportunities as the men who made good. The mistakes of those who failed must be heeded as well as the solid constructive performances of golf's successful pro builders.

In 1918 there developed demands for golf courses, golf architects, pros and equipment of all kinds. The equipment demands far exceeded the manufacturing capacity of pro shop benches and the larger manufacturing facilities then available. It became plain to the foresighted pros that the growth of golf, and consequently the pros earning capacity and security, was associated with a vast increase in playing goods manufacturing capacity.

The charm of golf was beginning to take hold of the country. Some golf growth was inevitable but had it not been for the sagacity and foresight of the wise pro businessmen of that period, the growth might have been checked seriously. However, these pros kept step with progress and expanded as businessmen. Conditions changed and these men changed with them to become alert merchandisers and to expand their services beyond any point dreamed of prior to the first World War.

Now in studying the success of these men what point did they all have in com-

mon? Every one of them worked on a policy of long-haul gains rather than the short-term practice of hit-and-run profits. They saw ahead of them the possibility of thousands of golfers instead of the few hundreds they then had as players at each club. They were quick and thoughtful in treating each member as an advertising and selling factor who could influence their friends to trade with the pro who had treated them so competently and considerately.

Pro Wins High Standing

These men who did so well for themselves and for golf earned business and social standing of an enviable sort. Their families have been raised to become our finest type of citizens. Golf provided these excellent men with opportunities they cashed in on by their brains and effort.

Others who had the same opportunities regarded the pro job as a pleasant way to make an easy living. When hard work interfered with their enjoyment they let the work slide. Often they had entertaining personalities, but that gift wasn't enough to outweigh their weakness of character or their failure to apply themselves conscientiously to an exacting business.

So these men kept drifting from job to job and finally lost out altogether in pro golf. They couldn't bring themselves to understand that success in pro golf calls for command of the fine art of salesmanship and of teaching, as well as playing ability.

Greater Rewards Probable

The same class of young men made good in pro golf after World War I and will establish themselves in successful pro business careers during the next 10 years. They may have even more work to do, but the rewards probably will be greater because of the game growing larger. The merchandising problems and opportunities are increasing for the pro, just as they are for many other merchants in the postwar period. The demands of the pro job are increasing too. There is no way of making more money without doing more and smarter work and having more problems. The older pros and older businessmen in every other field learned that while they were getting greyheaded.

Golfdom

Nevertheless, there will be young men missing the boat on postwar opportunities in the pro-golf business because they may think that there is something unique about this business in having customers eager to do business with a man because he happens to be in a pro job. It just simply doesn't work that way.

Veterans Can Advise

It would be worth millions to the younger pros and to the golf business in general if the newcomers could have good head-to-head talks with the fine old-timers such as Donald Ross, Bertie Way, Willie Maguire, Johnny Inglis, George Aubach, Joe Novak, Willie Hoare, Jock Hutchison, George Sargent, Willie Ogg, Howard Beckett, Eugene Wogan, Leo Diegel, Jack Mackie and scores of others I can name. I know the good judgment of these men because I've had the benefit of it in solving many of our mutual problems. It is no secret to the good businessman pro that the manufacturer has the pro's problems multiplied many, many times.

One of the soundest businessmen I ever knew was the late Tom Macnamara who was with our company for many years. Tom was one of the fine representative characters of the old pro school that did such a grand job in helping build American golf.

Let's recall what Tom and his contemporaries did.

They took genuine personal interest in their members and in the caddies and their shop boys. The clubs they sold were expertly fitted to the players. They not only were astute teachers but they kept an eye on their pupils' games and were free with helpful suggestions. They implanted a strong interest in golf technique and playing equipment.

Competition Makes Players

They saw to it that programs of competitions were presented and conducted so every member felt he had a chance to win a prize. Because of these competitive opportunities members played more and took more lessons and wanted the best in golf equipment. Tom and the rest of these very successful trail-blazers in American pro golf had that magnificent knack of master salesmanship which makes the customer want to buy. That's much more effective than any of the permissible high-pressure selling that can be done at a golf club.

Fellows who came into pro golf in the 20's and patterned their business performance on these fine predecessors of the Macnamara period learned that success in the pro golf business wasn't primarily a matter of genius. They were willing to work hard for what they hoped to get.

There seems to be a belief that the playing stars of recent years worked

harder on their games than those who preceded them. I don't see how anybody could work harder or more effectively than Gene Sarazen. Young fellows who are getting pro jobs in this postwar era might well consider Sarazen as an outstanding example of the successful pro.

Gene has been in the high-income brackets for years. I've watched him with practically paternal care since the time when he became a dark-colt winner of the National Open.

I've seen that among his other gifts and developed talents he has the finest judgment in applying his time effectively. He taught himself what the young pro must learn to succeed, and that is, that the main item the pro has to sell is his own time. When brains are used in budgeting the pro's time, and there is the minimum of time wasted on matters that won't advance the pro's business and personal interests, then the pro is on his way to success. That looks coldly selfish in print, but the way it works out is that the member, in one way or another, eventually pays for the pro's wise use of time in serving the club.

Study the Job

Personal relations between the pro and his members are one of the most delicate elements. The pros who've lost out by gambling and night-clubbing with members are, unfortunately, fairly numerous. These fellows were good, pleasant young men but they made the mistake of not bearing in mind that the pro's most lasting and valuable business friendships are formed by his competent and gracious performance on the job.

There isn't much room for errors in the pro business. It's often a 6- or 8-month business with a limited number of members as customers. Those conditions put a premium on sound business methods. The young pro today will learn before he gets himself firmly established that he must:

1. Have a simple and careful method of bookkeeping, because he's in business to make and save money;
2. Make a careful study of merchandise and merchandising;
3. Increase his knowledge of the golf stroke;
4. Study the most resultful methods of instruction;
5. Keep on the alert to improve member, committee and fellow-employee relations;
6. Study to improve the caddie situation for benefit to the youngsters, the members and the club;
7. Became increasingly familiar with course construction and maintenance methods;
8. Acquire a broad, sound knowledge of all the business factors connected with operating a golf club.