

# The Real Caddie Problem

Columbus, O., club officials are sponsoring the national caddie tournament to be played at Columbus, O., Aug. 26-31. That event can be added to the Western Golf association's long and earnest work for the Evans caddie scholarships as evidence that more real American sportsmen are really concerning themselves about caddies.

What is called the caddie problem by the golfer is merely the difficulty of getting enough boys to carry bags and watch the balls.

The real caddie problem is far greater than that. It's the matter of demonstrating a sincere and foresighted interest in the training of the youngsters as good American citizens.

There hasn't been enough of that done. The businessman at his golf club often can see the nursery of an attitude that has become so lamentably extensive in adult labor relations. Despite the genuine consideration of some among the members, far too frequently the club official attitude is simply that of getting a supply of juveniles to work while the golfers are at play.

Caddie rooms and recreation facilities usually are supplied not primarily for the welfare of the kids, but to attract labor in a competitive situation. The caddie master whose job, from the community and club standpoint, should be one of the most important at the club, many times has to rely on candy and beverage sales and a percentage of caddie fees to make a living.

Then we wonder why some kids grow up without a great deal of trust in what is termed during prejudice-arousing political campaigns as "the country club set."

We think of our caddie problem this year as that of getting enough kids so we won't have to put up with double-carrying by the caddie.

That isn't our caddie problem this year, next year or 10 years hence.

The demands of the youngsters for double-carrying with its substantial take-home pay will work itself out exactly the same way the general labor situation will work itself out. The bag carriages and the better light bags will have many players content to caddy for themselves. The cost of golf will be reduced, therefore there'll be more players with the ultimate result of there being more and steadier employment of caddies.

But, while nature is taking its course, golf may miss an opportunity to be a tremendous factor in the development of millions of fine American citizens.

How blundering we generally have been in the club handling of caddies was disclosed in several cases during the war years. Wives of pros who were in military service and young men high school teachers, physically disqualified for military service, did amazingly well in handling the caddie recruiting, training and supervision at clubs. These people, prior to emergency, had only sketchy knowledge of what the caddie management job required. They went at the job from the kids' angle rather than in the customary manner of clubs trying to get kids for the members' convenience.

The really expert caddie-masters, of which there are far too few in golf, are successful because they think of the kids before they think of the members and the club officials. These experts also are smart enough not to let the members and officials know that.

We all will do better for ourselves as golfers and American citizens if we stop thinking of the caddie problem hind-end-to and consider that the major difficulty could be what the kid might think of as his golf club problem.

Just because some kids are not jubilant and grateful for the chance to work at a golf club need not discourage the club officials who really know kids. Look at the juvenile delinquency figures these days and you'll know that managing kids is not easy. It might have been a bit easier if golf clubs had thought of caddies as kids rather than as adolescent and unpredictable employees.