

## Junior Golf Vital to Smaller Club's Future

By EDWIN J. BAGGETT

THERE'S a tendency for the smaller 9-hole clubs to consider many of the larger club ideas as something beyond the reach of the smaller club, but that policy doesn't hold good at the Monoosnock CC, Leominster, Mass. At Monoosnock, Pro-mgr. Errol Richardson, says the club's idea is to consider that if an idea is found good by the large and wealthy clubs, it calls for adaptation and use by this smaller club for the simple reason that the wisely operated smaller club must make ideas a substitute for money in numerous instances.

For instance, the idea of junior golf class instruction, which is almost standard procedure at the majority of larger clubs, is given vigorous application at Monoosnock, a 9-hole club. Instead of having the classes considered as a casual sideline of pro duties and conducting them only on Saturday mornings during the summer, Richardson extends the classes into the fall as far as weather will permit. Naturally when football begins there will be a slump of interest among some youngsters, but Richardson points out that in establishing strong interest of youngsters in golf instruction there is always some challenge that should increase the ingenuity and effort of the pro. Hence, he maintains, the smaller club pro with kid classes should not become discouraged because there isn't a stampede of kids to get first class instruction free. The kids have to be sold, like anybody else. Their notion, in many instances, is not that they are getting golf instruction free but are paying for it by the sacrifice of time they have been in the habit of devoting to other activities.

The way Richardson looks at the kid class proposition is that it is a very important long-range business development

and insurance work for the smaller town, as well as the larger metropolitan district, club.

Richardson points out that the higher rates for caddying coming at a time when many thousands of limited incomes have recently taken up the game is reducing the number of kids who came into golf via caddying work. He says the great popularity of lighter bags and bag carts is something to force golf to look ahead in making its expansion plans instead of depending so much on the caddy factor for kid golf education as in the past.

He further maintains:

"Golfers are made, not born.

"As proof one need only look at the overwhelming number of ranking professionals who learned the game in their early, formative years. At Monoosnock are the five Jancaitis brothers, all top-flight amateurs. They grew up on the outskirts of the club and were caddying almost as soon as they were taller than a golf bag. They learned the game from the bottom up.

"It is high time for all country clubs to consider as an essential detail juvenile classes, free-of-charge, and to make necessary equipment for the classes available to all children of members.

"This is especially important to the small golf courses of the country. The big clubs with a vast financial backlog and wealthy members can be run on the same general policy as they were 50 years ago. The great change in golf has been in small clubs in the past decade.

"It is now an established fact that golf is not a 'rich man's plaything.' In the past 10 years hundreds of thousands of persons have discovered the game and this



Clubhouse of the Monook Country Club, Leominster, Mass.

influence is now being felt by smaller clubs over the country.

"Golf has become a national game—and, thereby, a national industry. But it is not yet secure! Golf must continue to build its popularity while the opportunity is here. The large clubs may not bother because any change will affect them slightly, but the small clubs must.

"The simplest way to do this, the most satisfactory, the soundest for a foresighted policy—is to introduce the game to youngsters.

"There are few children who do not like the game once they know it. Golf grows upon a person.

"Pros should make one of their foremost public relations jobs free lessons for school-age youngsters. These classes should be publicized in newspapers and through personal invitations to Boy and Girl Scouts, school, or club groups.

"At smaller clubs where there are no pros, a visiting pro may be secured. The expense will be a good investment for the club. Or perhaps a competent member of the club will volunteer for the job.

"Hold the classes on a weekday morning during the summer school vacation, or at any other time when it will not interfere with normal club business. Give the youngsters instruction in correct stance, grip, swing, etc. And don't neglect teaching golf courtesy, caution, and proper care of the course. (Replacing divots, etc.)

"Remember that youngsters are easily bored and shy from regimentation. Your primary purpose is simply to show them that golf is fun! The pro can do this by actually letting the kids play when they

are ready and anxious. Kiddies tournaments, putting or driving contests, and other events can be staged just as for adults. It's a good idea to have an older person or a supervisor with small groups.

"This whole program, in fact, may tie in with your city's recreation program. In Leominster they have such a program and the sole task of the supervisor is to keep the kids amused.

"Any club official knows that the happiest and most regular golfers are the low-handicap men and women. The duffers come and go. Almost anyone who has played golf since he was 10, let's say, is pretty sure to be better than average. That kind play year after year. They are your best customers.

"The biggest single bottleneck to the idea is securing sufficient equipment. This is not insurmountable, however, for only the barest equipment is required. Have your members turn in every old putter, brassie and 5-iron they can dig up.

"The club can pay, perhaps, a quarter or fifty cents for them and turn them over to the children at cost. In no event should the profit angle be attempted here. Your one idea should be to get equipment and old balls into the hands of the youngsters now. You, and golf itself, will reap big dividends in another decade.

"A two-fold purpose will result from a juvenile golf instruction program. The future success of small golf courses will be insured and another increase may be noted today. Parents of children are very apt to visit the course and become interested themselves. This should be of secondary importance but it will more than make up for any extra work involved."