

George Lake's "Free" Lessons Pay Him Big Dividends

By **BOB HALL**

George Lake, professional at the Municipal courses at Recreation Park, Long Beach (Calif.), who is also president for the third straight year of the Southern California PGA, is a businessman-pro. But he has taken a leaf from the Bible, that item about "cast your bread upon the waters and ye shall receive it back threefold", for one of his most enthusiastically-received promotions.

George has developed a program of free group lessons, designed primarily for the benefit of the citizen or youngster desiring to learn the game of golf—and this year he reports "more interest than ever before".

The whole program is built on the premise that it's more blessed to give than to receive—but George seems to be doing all right even though he gives many hours of time to free instruction for both the adult and teen-age boys and girls.

"Many pros won't fool with classes, especially free ones," George will tell you, "because they don't think it pays. I am interested in golf promotion anyway, but it does pay. I feel that the easiest way to sell the adult golfers merchandise is to show an active interest in their childrens' golf swings.

"And what's more, when the youngsters get to that stage where they enjoy their regular golf games, it gets mom and pop out, too, and that's 100% family promotion."

George's mass instruction series covers every golfer or prospective golfer within a radius of 25 miles of Long Beach.

There are school boys and girls, ranging in ages from 10 to 19. There are more advanced high school boys who are competing on golf teams in inter-school matches. There are more advanced adults, who golf regularly but obviously could use a free suggestion on correcting a faulty swing or stance, and there are other adults, largely businessmen and office girls, who have never golfed, who are given a mid-summer clinic under driving range arc-lights.

George Gets Them All

Within this group are all the persons who hold the future of golf—the young people, the businessman and the businesswoman.

They are finding that golf is not "so expensive", that modern production methods and municipal organization are bringing



Youngsters of all ages are given basic training by George Lake in his popular instruction classes.

the equipment, green fees, and, in short, golf, within the range of every man, woman and child. They are being educated to the game, and when they understand and enjoy it, they realize that golf takes as much finesse as any sport, and brings double returns in health and keen living.

Lake began his high school classes with the opening of the school semester last September, holding weekly sessions for girls and boys of the several Long Beach high schools, all of whom are accompanied across-town to the course by their physical instructors.

He has augmented this with four classes each week, beginning in February, and lasting until mid-June, for the more advanced tournament players among the boys.

Here's the general outline of the whole program:

1.—ADULTS:

A.—Each summer (now approaching the fourth annual event) a series of 6 free adult clinics for any golfer is conducted at night on driving ranges. A public address system is rented, at extra cost to George and to the several other pros in the area who assist in this promotion.

It is estimated that of the several thousand who have taken advantage of this promotion, more than 50 per cent are per-

sons who have played less than 10 rounds of golf.

A special trophy is awarded to the absolute beginner who shows the best swing after the series has been completed.

B.—Professionals within the area, led in this case by George's suggestion, have begun a general policy of playing golf as often as possible with different foursomes, to pass along helpful hints to those who have their troubles, and in the long run to become better acquainted with every club member and guest.

C.—Special demonstrations of golf shots are made at regular intervals by Lake at the monthly meeting of the men's and women's golf clubs, shots being hit into a canvas net. The program is augmented by a golf lecture, and in some instances by planned exhibition matches the afternoon preceding the meeting.

2.—JUNIORS:

A.—Each summer, immediately following the close of the school term, and with assistance from school officials, Lake conducts a 6-week free instruction series for boys and girls of teen-ages. In fact, the program is now entering its 18th annual classes come late June.

These lessons are free, even to the loan of golf clubs should the youngster not have any, with a slight charge of a few cents for the use of driving range balls in the hitting phase of the lessons.

Lake follows this class instruction program with the city junior and juvenile championship tournament for boys and

girls under 18, rents them club sets for 15c at all times, and course officials let the juniors play for 10c.

On free instructions days, Lake allows the kids to use the driving range balls at 2 balls for a penny.

Tie-up With Schools

B.—A lecture series, much along lines of the adult demonstrations at club meetings, is conducted by George on the stages of the several schools during assemblies, the talk consisting of shotmaking, proper swing, stance and grip, and in many cases using a student selected at random from the assembly for a guinea pig.

C.—Augmenting the high school program, George goes a bit deeper in cooperation with city school officials, and visits as often as possible—in fact, whenever a request is made—the gym classes of junior highs to demonstrate proper methods.

D.—This year, George announces that he's going to form junior golf clubs for both boys and girls, following the summer clinics, let them select their own officers, keep their handicaps, and conduct a sweepstakes once a week, with regular tournaments for "Father and Son" and "Mother and Daughter".

"I feel that this entire series, despite being a bit expensive in time to the pro, has a definite value in making the pupil and his parents PRO conscious.

"We stress not only swing, stance and grip, which are all necessary to correct golf, but we bring out the benefits of golf

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George Lake (right) and his assistant Frank Grant (left) demonstrate grip and stance to pupils at one of the Long Beach junior golf schools at Recreation Park municipal course.

The PGA stars don't "grip" the club, they "place their hands on the club."

And we came to the unanimous conclusion that a point that has been missed in the past that present day professionals have come up with is that the right elbow is away from the body at the top of the backswing and when it starts to move on the down swing all of the motion is not toward the body. The elbow moves forward some and as it moves it closes the club face. The right has an all important little task to perform other than just hurrying back to the side.

The Michigan section was assisted by Ohio section pros including PGA 5th dist. VP Harry Moffett; Leonard Schmutte, VP Northern Ohio; Marty Cromb, Sec. Northern Ohio; and James Cromb of Toledo.

CHIPS FROM MICHIGAN

Buck White, 1946 Memphis Open winner and loser to Jug McSpaden for a Tam O'Shanter All-Amayrican victory, is new pro at Battle Creek CC. . . Bill Wright goes from Lakepointe to succeed the late Jimmy Millar at Klinger Lake. . . Emerick Koscis is signed as pro by Marshall CC. . . Jack Orlick will handle the pro job at West Shore GC. . . Don Soper has John Cosmos as his new asst. . . Bob Gajda has been added to the pro staff at Red Run. . . Bob Reith has been hired by Horton Smith for Horton's staff at Detroit CC.

A 10-match team match for the Bob Howell trophy will be played between pro and amateur stars of Michigan at a club and date to be announced. . . Caddies Welfare of the Michigan PGA will hold a caddie tournament this year. . . Club and date to be set. . . State is divided into 4 sections. . . In charge at Detroit is Jack Orlick. . . In Monroe section, Warren Orlick who also is chmn. of this committee. . . In Saginaw, Don Soper. . . In Grand Rapids section, Danny Nowack. . . Winners in the junior and senior caddie classes will be sent to National Caddie Assn. tournament at Columbus, O.

Joe Devaney, veteran pro at Grosse Ile, is practically a university. . . Look at the list of pros and fine assistants who got their training working for Joe. . . Jack Orlick, Warren Orlick, Ben Orlick, Don Soper, Jim Murray, Hal Whittington, Walter Nagunski and Pete Osach.

Lake's Lessons Pay Off

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clubs to suit the individual, and many club sales result from such a promotion.

"Those who can afford individual lessons, after obtaining the free ones we give them in a mass instruction class, form our return trade, which in most cases far surpasses our initial outlay in time, effort and materials."

George estimates that between 8,000 and 10,000 persons have been given free in-

struction at the Recreation Park course since he took over the job in 1936, and that in addition no fewer than 250 free mass instruction classes at night, in which he has been assisted by fellow pros in the vicinity, have had an average of 100 in each class.

The return trade has been among leading reasons why Long Beach's municipal course netted more than \$30,000 last year—and has for more than a decade—with play increasing to such a pitch that the city's 27 municipally-owned holes cannot handle all the customers.

"Stress is laid in all cases," Lake continues, "on the basic fundamentals of golf instruction, so that the foundation for both juniors and adults is sound.

"After the lessons, our plan for competition and tournaments brings out the desire to improve. It encourages practice, more lessons and better equipment, and is, no doubt, considering the junior series, one of the basic reasons why so many fine junior golfers have begun in Long Beach."

Woodrow Wilson High of Long Beach, one of George's prep instruction groups, has, since 1929, won the Southern California interscholastic team championship 12 times in 17 years, while Long Beach Poly and Huntington Beach High (then obtaining free lessons from Lake in 1935) have each won the title once.

Over that time, rarely has been the season that Wilson High didn't have a golf squad of 35 to 50 candidates (this year they had 74), and from five to 15 capable of shooting consistently in the low 70s.

Out of George's school and junior clinics have come such nationally known "boys" as Joe Nichols, runner-up for the 1931 National Publix title at St. Paul; Doug MacKay, who beat Nichols for the Chicago City open title that same year; Ernie Combs, Jr., dandy of Pacific Coast resort golf in the mid-30s; Bobby Judson, now pro at Fircrest in Spokane; Curtis Williams, Les Hensley, Jackson Bradley, now assistants to Jimmy Hines at North Shore Club, Chicago; Ted Richards and others who have ruled Pacific Coast junior golf for nearly 2 decades; Jimmy Clark, winner of the world record medalist honor and the A. S. Kerry "Sportsmanship Award" at Spokane during the national publix championships in 1942; Willard McCay of U. of California and Frank Newell of U.C.L.A., Pacific Coast intercollegiate champions of 1937-38-39; Delbert Walker and a host of others who can look back on some phase of the free instruction clinics as aiding in their early golf development.

"The clinic appears to have great value to all concerned," Lake concludes, "both in aiding health and fitness for the individual, while the result in business for the professionals within the area can hardly be measured in dollars and cents, but I know it's there just the same."