

Golf in Schools Accents Need of More Courses

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Probably the most important trend in the business of golf is the increased attention given to the development of golf among high school and college students.

Hundreds of pros have had considerable experience in conducting junior classes and have seen how these juniors have grown up to become active club members or players of many rounds on public and fee courses. The junior classes are the second stage of market development by pros among the youngsters. In most areas there is a lot of work still to be done in this stage of development.

Certainly the pros realize the primary importance of youngsters in assuring the growth of golf as it was from caddy ranks that most of the pros came. You'd probably be safe in estimating that at least half the private club members in the northern states caddied during their boyhood.

It is certain that the growth of caddies into smart and vigorous young manhood and solid position in business and social life accounted for a great deal of the expansion of the game during the 20s.

So we can look back and see that in two periods the American golf business has profited greatly because of interest of young people. In reviewing these periods we ought to be able to see that in neither instance has the encouragement of older golfers been anyway near on a par with the interest and energies of the kids.

In the earlier days the caddies were attracted by the earning chances in carrying bags. Very little was done to consciously develop their interest in the game. Now pros and club officials still have plenty to do before they can consider the job of junior development at their own clubs thoroughly well done.

The explanation of the deficiencies is simple. The pro is a busy man and, like his members, has to devote the greater part of his attention to making a living. The officials and members want to use the courses without any possibility of being bothered by the younger people.

New Deal for Youngsters

Anyone who looks over the golf picture today is bound to be impressed by the de-

velopment of golf in schools and colleges. This development still is rather sporadic and is handicapped by lack of playing facilities and weather. The latter handicap is being overcome by wise attention given to indoor and net training of school students. There's still much to be done in this field as indoor golf exercises and practice have to have lively and competitive interest to keep the attention of the younger people.

We may be seeing the new idea in golf expansion taking form in the plan which Frank McCormick, athletic director of the University of Minnesota, has engaged Les Bolstad to put into operation. The McCormick plan is to coordinate high school and smaller college golf activities with those of the state university. The Minnesota PGA is a vigorous and essential factor in the plan.

At the university Bolstad is teaching golf to many who are majoring in physical education and will go out into high school jobs with the ability to impart the fundamentals of the game to their schools' students. The Minnesota pros have planned their own work to take increasing interest in the development of high school golf. In that field they, as well as pros in other states, already have done quite a lot of work.

Considering the work that is being done to get the high school and college students keyed up to golf interest and ability greater than that which previous generations have had, it would be a serious mistake to have a substantial percentage of it wasted by lack of playing facilities.

In the larger cities where property values are high and distances are great the solution of the course shortage problem is a municipal recreation task. The income of public courses over operating expenses in the majority of cases has made public golf a sound civic business enterprise. But in the smaller towns there is a lamentable lack of courses where the youngsters are welcome.

There isn't much money for golf construction or maintenance in most of these places but there is unused land usually available. Often it is land that would be

quite good in topography for a golf course but not much good for anything else.

In Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas and in other southwestern and central states hundreds of courses have been laid out on ground the owners have been glad to loan at no rental payment or nominal annual rental. The courses are "cow-pasture" courses but they do give the golfers opportunities for play.

The greater number of these courses have been laid out inexpertly, cleared and otherwise constructed by fellows in their late 20s or early 30s. These fellows or some neighboring farmer do whatever mowing or other maintenance work is necessary. They are make-shift courses, but they are great cradles of golf. You need only to read H. B. Martin's book "Fifty Years of American Golf" to be reminded that most American golf courses started this way.

The Young People As Builders

It strikes me that golf's spread in the smaller towns must emphasize getting the high school and college students stirred up on the idea that they can build acceptable courses of their own where courses are not available.

Most American boys up to about 15 years ago, I am told, built their own baseball dia-

monds. The golf course building and maintenance is more of a job, but in the case of small town courses quite a bit better than the customary "cow-pasture" courses, the work certainly is not beyond the capacities of young Americans.

I'm inclined to believe that with the high school and college students taking the lead there would be no difficulty in raising among small town businessmen the comparatively small amount of money that would be needed. The energies and keenness of the high school and college students would provide the work and drive necessary.

Advice and help from the pros and greenkeepers of clubs nearest to these sites of the young peoples' enterprises I know would be forthcoming freely. The greenkeepers and pros already have heavy demands on their time but I can't call to mind one who wouldn't be glad to help young people in such work and contribute invaluable aid without charge.

This "cow-pasture" course need is one that we in the golf business can't lose sight of. Although we are accustomed to the finer places and have brought up our members to expect only the best, we can't neglect service to youngsters who can't afford such layouts.

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