

# Courtesy and Personal Interest Always Pay Dividends

By **LARRY GLEASON**

Pro at Visitors' Country Club, Catalina Island

There's nothing more pleasing than to be greeted with a handshake by someone who can recall your name, your home town or with a "how's that big boy of yours?" after months or maybe even years of absence from your favorite vacation haunt, beach or mountain resort.

That, to me, is the very first requirement for a successful golf professional or pro-manager at the country club in a resort area.

Make people feel as though you personally are glad to see them again, show personal interest in their comfort, their welfare, their family and in their golf, but since, in most cases, the resort visitor is on vacation, guard against overdoing the attention.

Give your visitor welcome courtesy, a cordial greeting, let him feel you want sincerely to serve him, then leave him to his enjoyment. See that he gets it, if possible, without having been a pest.

Conducting a pro shop in a resort area, or in my particular setup here at Catalina Visitors' Country Club at Santa Catalina Island, a pro-manager combination, is different in many ways from the usual pro situation.

To my way of thinking, it embodies all the problems of pros from every section of the country, because the resort golfer comes from coast-to-coast and from border-to-border. He's from the public course, the private course; he's from the small town, the large city; he's rich and he's poor.

It's a more cosmopolitan clientele than the average club will have, and the pro should keep that fact in mind.

Thus, a resort pro is required to carry a wider range of merchandise.

I have found it advisable to divide my shop merchandise somewhat, with Class-A or high grade and higher-priced material on one side of the shop, and general merchandise on the other.

Resort merchandising is a lot like that in a big chain store, people have a wide range of ideas on price, and feel embarrassed if they pick out a club which sells for \$15 when they only wanted to pay \$7.50.

Display of merchandise and prices should be such as to allow each visitor to choose his own price level.

This insures against embarrassment for both visitor and pro, saves the pro time in explanation of the reason for difference in price and quality, which causes confusion, and enables the visitor to go right to his price range, and the pro to work from that point in fitting his customer to clubs or other merchandise.

Some resorts raise prices on merchandise. This should not be done. Keep within the catalogue, and the value of such practice will pay off in making your visitor feel more at home—as though he were at his own club—and less like he's being fleeced.

Visitors should always be given courtesy and course privileges over the regular or resident golfers at a resort, and the resident golfer should be made to realize the reason.

Here in Catalina we have a situation which is similar to that in most of our golfing resort districts—a private club within a public club.

The private club, of course, is comprised of residents of the area—but the course is open to the public, or the vacationing visitor.

Our members from the City of Avalon realize that much of their livelihood is dependent upon the treatment visitors receive when they are playing the course, and that the assurance of that visitor's return is coupled closely with that personal interest, courtesy and course privilege which we try to give them.

During the busy season, the resident members are most cooperative in giving way to the visitor, and even in filling out foursomes to aid in the sociability of the country club program.

The pro shop should be in a conspicuous spot, so that when people arrive for their golf, it's the first haven for information.

This gives the pro or pro-manager a chance to greet the visitor, show him through the shop, lounge and clubhouse, give him that necessary personal interest and attention, and then introduce him to the lockerroom attendant.

We are most fortunate here at Catalina in having with us a young man (he's only 62) who has been with the Santa Catalina Island Company for 21 years and he is proud to say he never forgets a face or a name. His name is Clarence Fullbright.

'Tis said that Clarence personally knows more sports, theatrical, business or social celebrities than any other Negro lad in this country. Therefore, he has acquired a certain refreshing philosophy which is something to be cogitated these days.

He has proved most helpful and gracious in my short span here in Catalina, since he can and does greet everyone who appears at the club by their names, knows their home towns and often even has something of personal interest to contribute to the conversation.

That's why my entire staff is working on "memory courses." We have seen how pleased people are merely to be remembered.

One way which I have devised toward fostering good memories is to keep a visitor's record, which is complete to address, home town and club—and then to study that record each evening in an effort to recall each visitor. This makes for accurate recollection the next day, and next week or next month.

I advise a distinctive uniform, with neat appearance a necessity, for all attendants.

This makes for orderly attire of the official staff at the club, and enables the visitor to know the people who are there to serve them.

There are more beginners playing golf at a vacation area than at the average club, and for this reason I suggest that wherever possible the pro work toward establishment of a driving range or a pitch and putt course.

This will aid materially in the golf pleasure and instruction of the beginner, and in some cases will relieve the play-pressure of a beginner on a crowded course.

However, there's still the situation of a beginner being more willing to try something new, like playing golf, since, when they are out for vacation fun, they more readily agree to attempting the sport. In front of friends at home, they feel embarrassed. During a vacation, many realize that others are in the same boat, and feel less conspicuous.

I carry two grades of rent sets, one for the beginner at 50c all day, and the other for more advanced golfers at a dollar.

In Catalina, we have an all-day green fee of \$1.50, the idea being that the visitor will play more golf if he can spend the day

at it, than if he had to dig deep every time around.

Lockerroom rental, also, should be reasonable, as near as possible to the average of the visitor's home club price.

All of which boils down to the simple suggestion that if you make your visitor feel at home, he'll want to come back; if you don't over-charge him, he'll be grateful, because in so many places that's common practice. If you give one and all the same personal attention and service, it makes him feel pleased and if he's pleased, you can rest assured, he'll come back again.

## RYDER CUP MATCHES NOV. 1 AND 2 AT PORTLAND (ORE.) GC

Ryder Cup matches between U. S. and British pros will be resumed Nov. 1 and 2 at Portland (Ore.) GC. Bob Hudson, Portland grocery magnate and golf official who promoted the highly successful 1946 PGA championship at the Portland GC and has been spark-plug of Portland open events on the tournament circuit got the event set after difficulty of U. S. and British pro officials in making mutually satisfactory arrangements.

The first postwar Ryder Cup matches will not have as team members the U. S. PGA champion, Jim Ferrier; or two of the top stars on the British pro summer circuit, Von Nida and Van Donck. Ferrier and Von Nida are Australians and Van Donck's a Belgian. Foreign-born players are ineligible to the U. S. and British teams.

Members of the U. S. team will be chosen on point system by PGA. This system awards points for performances in various tournaments on the circuit which appraises some of the competitions as second-rate affairs.

Method of British selection of customary team of 10 men of whom eight will play in the single and double matches has not yet been announced to the British or American golfing public. Up to the end of July Von Nida led British tournament players with an average of 72.28 for 36 rounds. Daly was second with 72.55, Cotton third with 72.75 and Dai Rees fourth with 73.09. Van Donck was fifth with 73.75.

The Ryder Cup matches will come in the gap between the end of the summer and start of the winter circuit. With the energetic, smart and liberal Hudson promoting the event will make money. British players who have good chances of making the team have signified their intention of staying in the U. S. after Ryder Cup play to get winter circuit experience and a crack at the purses.