

Junior Program Pays Off for Pros, Clubs and Kids

By REX McMORRIS

Any businessman who'd learn the extent to which pros have been conducting golf classes of juveniles, over a number of years would be impressed by the foresight and effectiveness of this marked development.

These kid classes have been held as an individual pro enterprise in some cases for more than 15 years. The pay-off in appreciation by parents and the children has been excellent in most instances. Now the long-term cash profit of the classes is beginning to show up. Recently Bobby Cruickshank told of young people he'd taught at the Country Club of Virginia sending their own children to him for instruction. And his earlier students who've grown up are sending to Cruicky at Gulf Stream to buy clubs they can afford to buy for themselves since their financial status has progressed.

It was far-seeing work with the kid classes that helped bring golf successfully through a period when the caddie picture was changing. It used to be that golf felt it could always be sure of a great army of young recruits as the caddie situation paid a lad for learning to be a golfer. But of late years clubs almost have had to send taxis after caddies. Had the kid class enterprise been neglected chances are the most desirable youngsters—those who are leaders—would not have acquired golf basic training and enthusiasm.

Kid Classes Not Easy Work

Sometimes the kid class idea doesn't go across. That need not be discouraging. Competing interests and other factors may thwart the pro's plans. It always must be remembered that organizing and effectively conducting kid's classes are not easy jobs. In the first

place most kids get their fill of class instruction in schools. The pro who remembers his own childhood can understand why a kid might be allergic to another class on Saturdays.

There are two ways of overcoming that objection. One of them is emphasis on the "making the team" angle. Many boys and girls don't get on school teams and appreciate the novelty of being considered members of the squad at a country club. The other answer is prevailing upon the parents of teen aged youngsters to have them take individual instruction. This is best handled by getting the kid warmed up first so he—or she—won't feel that the golf lessons are being administered by parental compulsion.

The veteran Bert Way of the Mayfield CC (Cleveland dist.) always has been adept at sparking golf interest among the young. The pay-off has been pleasant and profitable. Last year Bert had more younger people playing at Mayfield than at any other time during his 38 years at the club. They accounted for a large percent of shop sales. Bert's assistant, Pete McCombie, was kept busy every day continuing that accent on youth.

Foresight for the Club

It's that kind of performance in the pro department that has kept the older clubs in good, live membership condition. There are many instances of clubs that virtually died out because the younger folks weren't given early and strong applications of golf habit-forming treatment. The pro can protect against that. Officials usually are under pressure from the older members whose financial support is keeping the club going. Interests of the youngsters aren't especially considered unless the pro looks after them.



Mrs. Thomas instructs junior girls class for professional Frank Refner at Hillsdale CC (Michigan).

Harold Sampson at Burlingame (Calif.) CC points out another important phase of attention to the younger golfers in saying that they are most susceptible to instruction and provide the professional with opportunities to accurately appraise the fundamental features of his teaching. Most adult instruction must be expert, precise diagnosis of faults and the correction of those faults which can be most positively remedied. In the case of the older member it is impossible, usually, for him to give enough time and apply enough physical qualifications to have himself remade by his pro. It is a matter of the pro, like the doctor, treating for illnesses and establishing improved habits that will enable the older patient to do the best considering limitations of his possibilities.

Creating the Good Golfer

But with the youngsters, says Harold, the pro is practically a creator of a golfer and has the responsibility of establishing a golfing form that should last for a lifetime.

This whole subject of juvenile instruction is going to be spotlighted by the new USGA national junior championship. The Junior Chamber of Commerce national championship for boys already has begun to be recognized as a great event. The pro whose protege wins any of these events is bound to receive valuable advertising.

Unique and of considerable benefit to the club, its entire membership and the pro, is the 9-hole kids' course built at the Marquette (Mich.) G&CC by R. B. (Russ) Leonard, pro; Harold Hoff, greenkeeper; and Walter Johnson, green-chairman.

Marquette has its regulation 9-hole course with an active playing membership. Since Leonard went to the club three years ago membership increased from 60 to 250. Part of the increase was due to Leonard's attention to kids' classes which he has held every summer Wednesday morning from 9 to 10 a.m. The youngsters wanted to play but with the crowded condition of the Marquette layout didn't have a chance until the 9-hole kid course was built on a large practice field.

Kids' Course Is Simple

The holes are short; most of them being about 125 yards long. Even at that some of Russ' younger members of his class of 25 or more have to use their woods. The course is ingeniously laid out to minimize risk to the kids. Leonard impresses upon his students the etiquette and consideration needed to assure safety.

Areas on the practice field are mowed close for the greens. The tee markers are changed now and then after the youngsters hack the teeing area (just as elders

do). Hoff believes that the kids' own course gives them good training in how to play a course with minimum of damage. The greens are about 20 ft. in diameter. Mrs. Leonard made the flags and Hoff repaired the cups that are in use.

This year a few improvements are being made in the youngsters' course. It has proved highly popular. After the class lesson Russ gives the children a few practice balls to hit. Then he starts out a threesome or foursome. After that pairing has played a hole or two Russ starts out another group of kids. The kids' course is gone over with a fairway mower twice a week. Greens are mowed with a lawn-mower set close.

Kids Classes Good Advertising

Frank Refner, the lively old-timer at Hillsdale (Mich.) G&CC says kid classes are hard to beat as publicity for the clubs. Frank last year had two classes of girl beginners and a group of boys. It surprises him, Refner declares, to see how some of the little girls go intensely at the job of playing so they can hold their own with the older lassies. A Mrs. Thomas assists Frank with the girls' classes.

One of his boys, a slight 11-year-old kid, goes around consistently in the low 40s in his first year at the game and looks like a real comer.

There are tournaments at Hillsdale for each of the kid classes and prizes for them. Frank emphasizes that the competitive program must be tied in with the class lessons.

Arnold Develops Champions

George Arnold, pro at Hinsdale (Ill.) GC long has been prominent in demonstrating what junior golf does for the youngsters, the club and the pro. During the 15 years George was at Kildeer CC, prior to being signed by Hinsdale, Arnold developed several district and collegiate junior stars, among them Pick Wagner and Fred Damaske. Kildeer members were highly gratified by what Arnold did with the juniors. That was made evident when George was elected an honorary member of the club. In his third year at Hinsdale Arnold's junior class instruction began to score in the newspapers for the club. His kids won the suburban and state high school individual and league championships. Last year one of his pupils, an 18-year-old, won the club championship after being a pupil of George for four years.

At Hinsdale any junior with a handicap qualifying him for A class is eligible to compete for the club championship. George has 12 boys under 18 who have handicaps of from 2 to 12.

(Continued on page 106)

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Sloppiness Grows As a Maintenance Problem

Greenkeepers and chairmen at many private clubs that are proud of the class of their membership are concerned with the problem of litter on finely-maintained courses. Papers, cellophane, bottles and other debris now are tossed around carelessly by members and caddies alike.

The result is to give first class courses somewhat the appearance of a park after a holiday swarm has "pigged up" the landscape. Greenkeepers say that some members are dirtier than the most untidy caddies who toss debris around the courses. But, of course, the greenkeepers and greens force don't say that to the offenders.

A nationally known metropolitan district club at which the debris problem was practically non-existent up to 3 or 4 years ago has tactfully gone after the problem with the following plea in its club bulletin:

"The Grounds and Greens committee ask that 300 men and 100 women (that's ALL of us) police the course by picking up tin foil, oil paper wrapping from candy bars, cigarette packages (empty), and all of the messy stuff that thoughtless people throw down on tees, fairways, rough and traps. Teach your caddie to do that, too."

The problem now seems to be almost as bad at some private clubs as at public courses and makes club officials wonder if the standard of membership is deteriorating. A member who strews his personal garbage around a well-groomed golf course to make his trail look like the backyard of a tenement doesn't identify himself as being much of a bargain to the club.

JUNIOR PROGRAM PAYS

(Continued from page 60)

Free classes are given weekly to the kids by Arnold. The club men and women of Hinsdale do a great job in cooperating with Arnold in the follow-up on the classes. There are competitions with

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prizes for all classes; among them being putting and driving competitions in the "midget" class. George himself gives an annual prize to "the year's most improved junior golfer." Last year it was won by a 10-year-old boy who reduced his handicap from 45 to 30 and frequently shoots 100.

Arnold's pronounced success in this field shows that quite a little of the job consists of getting the adults interested in the program so they'll give it every possible encouragement.

Jim Noonan, widely known pro who looked to be one of the tournament circuit's potential stars until he dropped out of competition to concentrate on club pro duties, has been doing a notable job of junior promotion at the Mt. Hawley CC, Peoria, Ill. Mt. Hawley is an active golfing club and Noonan's kid program has contributed a great deal to making golfing interest high and thorough around the establishment.

Jim tells briefly of the development of junior golf at his club:

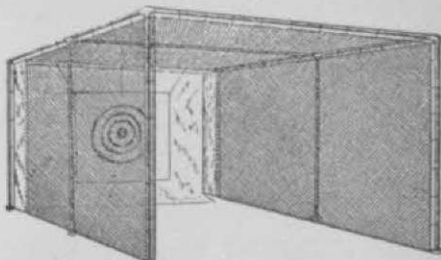
"I have promoted interest in junior golf ever since I have been at Mount Hawley. This was done primarily by giving free group lessons to the children on Tuesdays—Ladies Day—when mothers who played golf brought their children to the club with them.

"Each season there has been a junior club championship tournament for the boys, but there was never any specific organized play for the girls until last year. Much of the credit for this venture is due Mrs. DeForest Wead, Ladies chairman and champion, who started the girls' junior class. The third week in June the girls had an opening luncheon, paid for out of the Women's sports and pastimes fund. Fifty girls, ranging in age from 11 to 20 years, attended. I gave a talk on the rules and etiquette of the game; they appointed a girls' chairman, and drew up a schedule similar to that of

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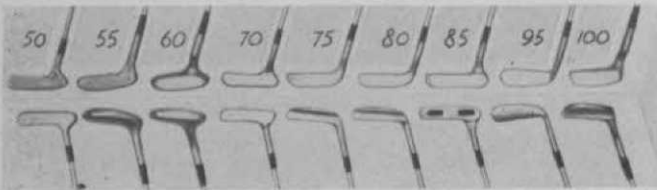
the women. Later in the day, there was a putting contest on the practice green with prizes for the winners.

"They played every Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. Some played nine holes but many of the older girls played 18. The events, however, were all for nine holes and there were prizes every Wednesday. Some of the events were as follows: low net; most 4's, 5's, and 6's; closest to the pin on short par 3 holes; longest drive on certain hole; fewest putts.

"Before the juniors started their play on Wednesday I gave them a free group lesson, and also checked each one's grip. This stimulated a great deal of interest in private lessons, and I gave individual instruction to many of the girls after the group lessons were finished. The group fell off gradually to about 20 girls. This I expected but they all had a decided interest in the game and two or three of them looked like future champions. During the extremely hot weather around August 15 and also the fact that many of the girls were away on vacations, the group dwindled considerably around that time. However, I was not discouraged and we plan to continue this project every year.

"Promoting junior golf has caused more favorable comment around the club than any other function since I have been at

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Mt. Hawley. There is a swimming pool at Mt. Hawley that is a favorite rendezvous for the younger set, and we were rather skeptical as to whether they would forsake its cool waters for the lure of the links.

"The first day they played I ran out of small size gloves. I sold quite a bit of equipment to them, including a few golf balls as Mt. Hawley has a lake and deep gulley. I also found the parents patronized the shop more and were brought closer to the pro.

"This same idea could be used in a junior boys' class. Be it either boys or girls, any time the pro is thinking of the "Janies" and "Johnnies" in the club, he is definitely pleasing the adult membership.

"The National Junior Boys' Golf Tournament, sponsored by the National Junior Chamber of Commerce, took place at Mt. Hawley last summer. There were more than 90 entrants among this impressive group of golfers. The way they have mastered the game at such an early age is truly amazing, and I am sure the junior girls, who were faithful followers in the gallery, were happy to observe the technique of youngsters of their own age. This tournament was won for the second consecutive year by Al Mengert of Spokane, Washington."

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