

Markovich Shows How To Make an Open Pay

By RAY HAYWOOD



Patrick J. Markovich (left) Richmond GC pro-mgr., a man with a plan which worked and George Schneiter, PGA tournament committeeman, prior to the 1947 Richmond Open which netted \$4,500.

The Richmond (Calif.) GC, which stages its fourth annual open tournament January 15-16-17-18, is in a unique promotional position—it knows in advance that the affair will be a financial success.

This feeling of security surrounding the \$10,000 event, the only San Francisco Bay area stopping place on the winter tour, is due to Patrick J. Markovich, Richmond pro-manager and a man with a plan which worked and which he desires to share.

The story does not begin four years ago when the Richmond event went on the PGA schedule as a \$5000 competition, but eight years ago when Markovich first came to the Richmond club, then an organization perilously close to bankruptcy.

His plan, a long range affair depending on infinite attention to detail, included immediate improvement of the 6209-yard course, reorganization of the club's financial structure and scheduling of the annual Richmond City tournament—an amateur competition.

This amateur event, Markovich's first experience with tournament promotion and administration, was developed gradually until more than 200 of the area's top flight amateurs appeared each year. The mechanism of its planning and staging became the tentative blueprint on which the more complicated open tournament plan was built.

Markovich, who always argued that open tournaments could be successful if run on

a business basis, learned early that solvency depended on an alert, interested tournament chairman who would WORK and on dependable auxiliary chairmen to head the program, food, public information, tickets, advertising, advance sales, etc.

Because Markovich has found such men, Richmond's financial requirements will be met this year before the first shot is fired. Technical details will be solved. The PGA Tournament Committee will find itself in the happy position of having no problems beyond the usual ones of starting times and pairings, etc.

Learned From \$3600 Loss

All was not always prosperity and happiness with the Richmond Open, however, for in 1943, when the first was scheduled, the financial result was written in red ink to the total of \$3600.

This was due partly, Markovich admits, to administrative mistakes as well as the fact the Open was played the week before Christmas and between the San Francisco and Oakland Opens, each of which was sponsored by a junior chamber of commerce and each of which lost money.

What with three tournaments in as many weeks, gasoline rationing and the general war atmosphere, the first event, won by Sam Snead, was an artistic success although a financial failure. But Richmond members, who had anticipated this loss, were not disheartened as were the service club sponsors who abandoned the Oakland and San Francisco events.

Initial mistakes which cost money were eliminated the following year—including the date which was set for well after Christmas—and the tournament finished with a \$500 profit. This small triumph was indicative of what was to follow, especially after Markovich met Francis Watson, young Richmond bank executive, who also was an enthusiastic and proficient golfer.

Watson, always interested in events which would publicize the community, accepted the tournament chairmanship and the young businessman and golf professional sat down together and considered the things which had to be done.

480 Sponsors Participate

The first result was a concentrated effort to sell \$10 sponsors' tickets which en-

titled purchasers to two seasonal tickets. They were sold individually and to industries which in turn distributed them to employees. In all, 480 sponsorships were sold. This meant that approximately \$5000 was in the bank days before the tournament opened. Daily ticket sales, entrance fees, food and bar receipts etc. soon put the event over the financial hump.

The sponsorship plan was emphasized for two reasons: to obtain a pre-tournament nest egg and to whet tournament appetites by giving as many persons as desired a personal interest in the event and its success.

Markovich found that most persons with a love for the game and interest in those who play it well bought sponsorships readily. This confirmed his belief it was a worthwhile community plan to bring the nation's finest shotmakers to Richmond and thereby publicize the city and the club, promote golf generally and provide a truly big time athletic event in an area which enjoys fine amateur sport competition but doesn't see many pros whose names mean headlines.

With a good break in the weather—January is a gamble in the Bay area, another reason why it is wise to have the money raised before the tournament opens—the 1947 event netted \$4500.

Under the tournament committee's plan the \$4500 was deposited in a bank for use in the 1948 Open. In other words, if only the same amount of sponsorships were sold in 1948—and the total will be larger—the committee would have approximately \$10,000 on hand before a single general admission ticket, to mention only one revenue source, is offered for sale.

Plan for PGA in 1951

The Richmond pro and his members have still another phase to their plan, providing profits continue to mount. About 1951, when money again should be able to buy something, they hope to bid for the PGA championship, thereby bringing to Richmond an event of national importance. With this in mind the course is being lengthened to championship proportions

and improved, while plans for a \$100,000 clubhouse remodeling are being prepared.

Markovich, during the years the club has struggled with Open problems, has learned several pertinent facts which he believes will make it easier for others to promote tournaments on a profit basis—without the aid of an underwriting "angel" to take the financial risk, an admission of inability which the Richmond club has never made.

He advocates that everyone in the community be given a chance to participate, even if only through the purchase of sponsorship tickets.

Find and cherish as rare jewels, he says, alert committee chairmen whose idea of promoting an event is to sell it as a legitimate gate attraction which is able to rely on its own merit rather than on an appeal for donations.

Advertise the event in all possible ways, Markovich urges, including the type known as good will. For instance at Richmond all area newspapermen are guests at a pro-amateur tournament the month before the Open.

The day includes a stag dinner during which things that will be attempted in the Open are explained and discussed in a manner which causes the sportswriters to realize that they too are an important part of the event.

In connection with the press, during the tournament itself, all facilities, including a room, typewriters, paper, spotters, scorers and free meals are provided. This service may not account for the unusual amount of favorable publicity the Richmond Open has received but it certainly has not hurt.

Speakers Ballyhoo Tourney

During the weeks before the tournament speakers with a nice line of chatter abound in every golf club are sent to various social, civic and fraternal meetings where they spread the gospel of the monetary and publicity benefits the community will receive from the tournament which will give them the opportunity to witness rare feats of golfing legerdemain.

Don't forget the sponsors once the tournament is over, Markovich cautions. At

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The 18th green at the Richmond GC is popular spot for those who choose to wait and let the players come to them. This scene shows only a portion of the gallery which, coupled with business methods adopted, put tournament on profit side of the ledger.



for the pro organization if it would step out from behind the publicity iron curtain it raises at its convenience when a real story is popping. Considering the personalities of pro officials and their earnest, unpaid service, he believed the PGA publicity would be easily corrected if the association would put into effect a publicity policy as frank as that of the smart individual pro in his dealings with the press.

Managers Plan Minneapolis Convention Program

Upper Midwest chapter of the Club Managers Assn. of America is completing plans for the CMAA 20th annual convention, Minneapolis, March 14-17. Convention headquarters will be at the Radisson hotel. Reservations at the Radisson, Nicolle and Curtis, where conventioners will be housed, are going fast.

Much will be made this year of the inspection tours and affairs at country and city clubs in the Twin Cities. Richard H. Hirmke, mgr., Minikahda club and genl. chmn., convention committee, promises that the functions to be held at the various clubs will give the "furriners" an impressive demonstration of the advanced type of operations at the excellent clubs in this sector. Hirmke's club will be the scene of a special smorgasbord Monday evening, March 15, which Dick is confident will be a memorable presentation of the Scandinavian style of cuisine. The following day after a cocktail party at the Radisson there will be a dinner dance at the Minneapolis AC at which another competent endeavor will be made to exhibit the top achievement in a club affair.

Wives of the Upper Midwest chapter members have arranged an interesting program for women visitors including a luncheon and demonstration at the Betty Crocker kitchen, a style show and luncheon at Dayton Co. and a trip to the Lowell Inn at Stillwater.

Details of the educational program include authoritative speakers on all phases of clubhouse management. Information concerning convention reservations may be obtained from Hazel N. Baker, sec., Room 278, 816 2nd Ave., S., Minneapolis 2, Minn.

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Richmond each receives a complete financial accounting and a letter of thanks. Some of the \$10 sponsors of the 1947 so-called "Poor Man's Open" have framed these letters on a mantelpiece place of honor along with their high school diplomas.

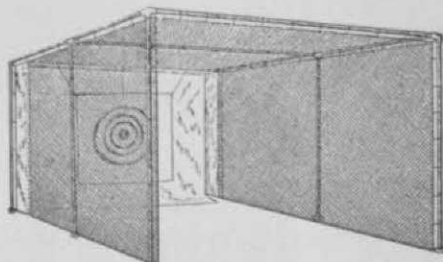
It also is important to recognize the fact the public demands something spectacular

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in a non-contact sport, Markovich says. With this in mind the players are given the breaks in cup and tee marker placement—the result being sensationally low scores and large galleries. For instance the first and second Richmond Opens went to Snead and Toney Penna with 278 and 280, respectively. In 1947, however, neither Snead nor Nelson, the principal gate attractions, were available, so Markovich deliberately manipulated conditions to facilitate low scoring.

As a result of this premeditation, George Schoux, the then relatively unknown eventual winner, came in with a 268—a scoring spree unprecedented at Richmond which, while no Pebble Beach or Pine Valley, is far from easy. The gallery, which increased day by day as word of the scoring spread, loved it. The fact that Schoux was a San Francisco boy did not hurt the box office either.

Financial Details

This year's event also has had excellent preliminary help in advertising and ticket sales promotion from showing of the colored motion picture taken of the 1947 Richmond tourney. The financial side of the 1947 tournament in main detail:

Balance on hand 9/1/46	\$ 121.39
Receipts	
Sponsors' badges sold	9,950.00
Entry fees	2,230.00
Tickets daily	6,725.80
Program sales	314.60
Advertising, including radio rights and miscellaneous	802.35
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	\$20,144.14
Expenses	
Professional prizes	\$ 9,999.93
Amateur prizes	375.00
Announcer	150.00
Policing	165.00
Meals for press, scorers and police	394.70
Ticket takers, gardeners, steno and extra help on golf course	413.65
Federal tax on admissions	1,465.00
Colored movie of tournament	458.79
Telephone	101.74
Program	706.38
Printing tickets, badges, etc.	381.01
Sales expenses	150.00
Stakes, ropes and supplies	467.58
Pro amateur tournament	300.00
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	\$15,528.78
Balance on hand	\$ 4,615.36

In reporting to the sponsors of the 1947 event Watson said it is the feeling of the committee that with "proper" handling more income could be secured from radio rights, program advertising, private clubs

in the area and Calcutta pool. Gross expense of the tournament this year will be increased \$1500 for the pro clinic demonstration the day prior to opening of medal play. A charge of \$1 plus tax will be made for attendance at the clinic when the spectator hasn't got a sponsor's ticket which will admit him free to the demonstration.

Markovich has applied the organizing and business conduct ability that revived the Richmond GC in great shape to establishing a pattern of profit that's all too rare in big money golf tournament promotions. The turnover on the tournament schedule is heavy among clubs that haven't got "angels" that are willing to take a financial licking in return for personal or business publicity that can be charged off on income tax statements.

He, as a home club pro and manager, has prepared for the tournament players a sound business platform that can be used in presenting an Open tournament to a prospective sponsor who doesn't want to lose money in filling gaps between the too few spots on the tournament calendar that are consistently profitable to their sponsors. Markovich and his associates have given the answer to those who hesitate to run tournaments because tournaments mean a lot more work to the sponsors than to the contestants and often a direct financial loss in addition to the cost of time away from business.

Pro golf owes a bow to Pat Markovich.

Joe Devaney, Michigan PGA New President By JOEL BENNETT

Veteran Joe Devaney was elected pres., Michigan PGA, succeeding Frank Sprogell who'd served 8 terms. Emil Beck was elected sec.-treas., succeeding Tommy Shannon who'd served 4 terms. Maurie Wells was elected vp and Sam Byrd was named tournament committee chmn.

Michigan pros competed for \$14,500 state pro and pro-amateur prize money in 1947. Money was divided among 31 prize winners. Buck White won the state open title; state PGA was won by Chick Herbert; Asst. pro was won by Walter Burkemo, Al Watrous' asst. at Oakland Hills; and the veteran Al, teamed with Tommy Sheehan, won the state pro-am. Tom Kawalczak of Grand Rapids won the state PGA caddie senior championship and Al Case of Jackson, the junior title.

New event on 1948 Michigan program will be \$15,000 Motor City Invitation to be played at Meadowbrook. Michigan will be strongly represented with pros on the winter tour, among them being some youngsters who look to be likely candidates for prize money as well as the post-graduate playing training.