

Being a Pro Means Being A Businessman

By EMIL BECK

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Any way you look at it, professional golf is a business. A fellow who gets into pro golf as a home club pro has to study and work to qualify himself so he can discover chances for improvement in every phase of his club's operation or he can't say that he is a success as a golf businessman.

By that I certainly don't mean that the pro should go around making it his business to find room for improvement in the course and house operations if there is a competent greenkeeper and an able manager on the job. But he can, tactfully and helpfully aid these other department heads by passing on to his team-mates such information as he picks up from members and observes in getting around to other clubs.

When the pro is in charge of the entire plant or of the outside operations of course maintenance and landscaping, as well as running the golf activities at the club, he must have business judgment and knowledge of a specialized nature as well as good general business training. All he has to do is to look at the figures of the club's investment and annual revenue and he will be reminded that the golf business is no place for an untrained amateur.

In my own case, 15 or 16 years ago I read in *GOLFDOM* advising the younger pro to make a serious study of course maintenance if he wanted to be qualified for a job that would pay enough to justify the full efforts of an ambitious youngster. I took that advice and now am pro and supt. of a club having 600 members. I am confident that the condition of our course and the efficiency of operation will compare very favorably with that of any similar club in the country. I know, too, that our pro shop operations and teachings have won the strong endorsement of satisfied members.

Combination Job is Exacting

There will continue to be controversy about the pro-greenkeeping set-up. While granting the merits of having one man exclusively for the greenkeeping job I would be willing to debate anybody on the capacity of a properly trained pro-greenkeeper to handle the combination job. How-

ever the combination job is not one that can be correctly handled unless the man has had enough course maintenance training to be able to know what the course needs and to train and supervise men for doing the work. The pro who tries to handle a combination job without knowing as much about greenkeeping as he does about teaching, playing and pro shop work, is exposing himself to risk of losing his job. Members are quick to note and complain about any defect in course condition that could be prevented or corrected promptly by a competent man.

In each detail of the strictly pro operations there is need of the same sort of study and supervision a successful man would have to give a manufacturing or retailing business. The pro can't let his brain loaf a minute at or away from his club.

As an example of how all time can mean money to the pro who keeps thinking of his business for the club I can cite our propaganda campaign at the club.

Due to an operation I found myself in the position of not being able to get around as much as usual so decided to make as much of my incapacity as possible by starting and keeping going an intensive and vigorous mailing and publicity campaign.

Regularly my staff would meet for the purpose of discussing and condensing the interesting happenings around the club. This material would be put into readable form and sent to all members regularly. Naturally we'd get a plug in for the pro shop and lessons. We've used this idea for years but hadn't worked it as intensively as this year. Got the idea out of *GOLFDOM* many years ago.

Although this is a private club we have a working arrangement with the director of athletics of the public school system whereby we give free golf instruction to any high school student who expresses a desire to enter these classes. We also make available to them the golf course facilities, free of charge, on certain days, to practice what they have learned. This arrangement serves a twofold purpose. It plays an important part in the development of future golfers and gives us a potential caddy sup-

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being a big spender who was tossing money around but it did identify him as one who was able and willing to pay his way in meeting the legitimate costs of club membership and operation.

Now nobody has any complaints to offer about the minimum house spending plan. It's just as much a recognized part of club membership expense as the dues—and it very definitely is accountable for keeping the dues down and assessments nil.

BEING A BUSINESSMAN

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ply. When we're short on caddies for a special event all we do is call our friend the director of athletics who is happy to cooperate.

For a good many years our club handicap system has been handled by a committee appointed by the club president. This committee depended entirely upon the individual to post his own score with the result that many scores were not posted either through negligence or other reasons. The final result was a generally unsatisfactory handicapping system.

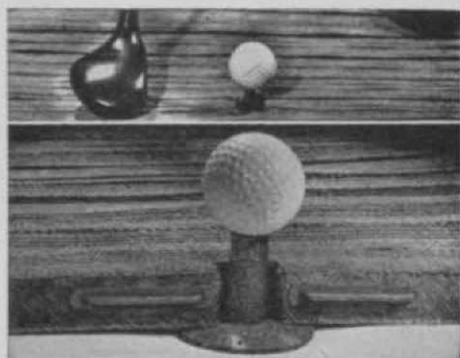
The solution to the handicapping problem was that the pro staff would undertake to establish equitable handicaps. Our big problem was to get every score made. This we did by making a special effort to meet all players as they came from the 18th green and discuss their score and game with them. It's a big job but it pays handsome dividends. You get the score and it gives the player the impression that the pro staff is genuinely interested in his game. We now have 238 handicaps posted and established and are making room for more.

I think we all know the importance of equitable handicaps. I would advise all pros who have much the same set-up as I

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had to take more of an active part in getting the handicaps on an equal basis. Surprising what it does both for the club and the pro shop.

PROS HELP POLICE

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Last year, at the suggestion of Commissioner Wallander, there was an inter-departmental competition held in which 26 divisions competed. The Detectives won with a team comprising Oleska, George Lunny, George Bailey, Frank Neuman and Bill Hanratty.

The NYCPGA is part of the vast Police Sports Association which embraces track, baseball, softball and other sports. Chief Inspector Martin Brown is president, Deputy Commissioner William Turk, secretary, and Commissioner Wallander, chairman of the board.

Clubs Welcome Police

President Poggi, whose name has become synonymous with the NYCPGA, was a guest at the annual meeting of the Metropolitan Chapter of the PGA and was lauded for his work in promoting golf among the municipal employees.

Al Ciuci, president of the Long Island PGA, who has become a close friend of Poggi, said the Long Island clubs actually compete for the privilege of acting as host to the NYCPGA.

"These police golfers are getting so good in a competitive way," cautioned Ciuci, "that they'll be challenging the PGA members after they knock off a few more of the leading clubs of the district. They really pack a wallop."

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