

What Makes Sammy's Golf School Run

By JIM GREEN

One of the toughest jobs in pro golf is getting an indoor golf school on a profitable basis. An ex-GI with an intense interest in golf instruction and some background of pro work was steered into the golf school business by a Veterans' Administration psychiatrist, went broke quickly and bounced back into a profit by getting out of the school and soliciting students.

This sort of fixing up an indoor or outdoor school and smart canvassing for business will bring to most pros all the lesson business they can handle—and a lot of equipment sales. —Editor.

When you own your own business, have it on a paying basis, and are in crying need of expansion to handle the customers knocking on the door, you've got something. When that business is your hobby, the thing you'd rather do than eat, sleep or get a '48 car at list price, you've really got something.

Meet Sam Rauworth, owner, head instructor and general business manager of "The Golfers," Chicago's year-'round club-school. Sam is "The Golfers." And he's really got something.

Sam began to learn golf at eight when his Dad took up the game. By the time Sam finished high school, he had polished his game enough to join his brother, a golf instructor, as an assistant. He stayed with him for a year before moving to California

in 1939. After an unlucrative year instructing, he took the advice of a golf equipment supplier in California, and turned to selling as a source of income. He sold for two years before the draft board pulled his number.

He went in as a private and came out, three years later at Okinawa, a Captain.

Like so many vets, when he got out of the army he was handicapped by indecision; a lack of direction. More than anything he wanted to teach golf, but the insecurity of his pre-war instruction experience still haunted him. Finally resigned to the idea that selling offered a more stable future than did his love of teaching, he took a sales job in Chicago.

It was little better than two months later that things began to happen rapidly. On the 22nd of December, 1945, Sam attended a very important party. At the party he met Nancy. Her last name isn't important because in ten days it was Mrs. Samuel Rauworth.

Shortly after the wedding, Sam began to give serious thought to teaching. He wanted a school of his own, where success or failure depended entirely upon him. But indecision was still stronger than the desire for golf, and he continued to plug dissatisfiedly at selling.

His desire to teach grew in proportion to his distaste for the job he was doing. He swayed between a determination to teach in spite of its instability and the desire for security which he knew lay in



BEFORE—Fire scarred third floor quarters of former hotel which Sammy undertook to recondition after landlord offered year's free rent for his enterprise.



AFTER—Furnished and stocked, the same quarters provide Sammy with adequate space for his golf school and it's conveniently located for erstwhile students and golfers.

his present position. It wasn't long before he ran into trouble. He lost interest in his work, and realized that it wouldn't be long before he would be of little value either to himself or his job.

Psychiatrist Steers Sam Into Golf

Things went from bad to worse, and Nancy encouraged him to see a psychiatrist. Sam wasn't interested. He felt it was something he could lick in time. However, he finally reached a climax in his frustration and decided there was nothing to be lost in a visit with a doctor. He consulted the Veterans' Administration and was referred to a psychiatrist.

He met the doctor, talked himself out and received some sound advice. The doctor pointed out, quite logically, that a golf venture might not be successful. But, since he wasn't starting any fires in his present position, he might as well take a chance. It was that simple, and good enough for Sam.

He began to look for a location. He knew that he wanted a place that would serve as a year-round school, and he knew that in order to be successful he would need a central location. A look around Chicago's near-north side finally led him to a building just three blocks north of the loop, ideal in spite of its worn surroundings. The building was more than 50 years old, and unoccupied except for John's Kinzie Grill, a quiet, friendly combination bar and restaurant on the second floor. John had recently bought the building, and was interested in making use of the unoccupied floors.

Sam introduced himself and told John of his plan . . . a golf school on one floor of the building. John was immediately interested. The five story building had originally been a hotel, abandoned some years back after a fire which had ruined it internally. John had considered converting the other floors into apartments, but the cost of labor and materials had been prohibitive.

Sam's proposal was ideal. He required no major alterations and felt that he could handle the reconditioning at a reasonable price. As a result, he left his first meeting with John carrying high hopes and an agreement that the first six months rent should be free for the cost of renovating the third floor.

Renovating Cost High

That some complications should arise was to be expected. Sam had estimated the cost of renovation to be about \$400. The final toll, including labor, was better than \$1,200. Material and labor being a familiar story, it is not surprising that the club was opened to the first course of instruction on the 26th of November instead of October 20th, as originally planned.

The school opened with bare facilities. The walls had been plastered and painted, and the floors were reinforced and covered with crisp straw rugs. Clubs were lined against the wall, and some older wooden-shafted ones had been cut off to be used for instruction in the grip. They were cut off "so that vigorous beginners wouldn't punch holes in one another's heads." An old rug had been strung up in the "practice room," and students had been allowed to punch balls into it for practice.

The windows were draped attractively with monk's cloth, and in front of the entrance stood a mahogany-stained desk which served as the office. Scattered through the club room was an assortment of new and used furniture picked up as quickly as possible at a minimum of cost. It took two months to get a telephone.

The Old, Old Story

The school's beginning was something less than astounding. "The Golfers" books show a gross of \$14 for the first month, and a startling increase of better than one hundred percent for the second month . . . \$35. However, he was on his own. The cost of renovation had come from his own savings, and the only outside help had been from the Veterans' Administration. Under the G.I. bill there is a provision guaranteeing a veteran's business an income of \$100 a month in its first year. Sam received this aid for two months.

On the first of the year, Sam's bank notified him that he was overdrawn \$2.39. So far, he hadn't even made expenses. When the school opened he had counted on a number of "very interested prospects," but the percentage of those who showed up wasn't encouraging. His savings and hope were about at an end.

He felt it was time to make another trip to the psychiatrist to talk things over. Again he received some sound advice . . . and a prescription. The advice: Few new businesses give their owners income tax worries in the first few months of operation. Since he had put his entire savings and five months of effort into "The Golfers," he would be foolish to give up without a determined struggle. The prescription: Hard work, in ample doses each day.

Sam returned to work with renewed vigor. John had extended the free rent to a full year because of the cost of reconditioning, and there were still some students straggling in for lessons. He began a program of door-to-door canvassing in the business district, seeking some students who hadn't heard of the club.

Selling Work Clicks

Leaning on his sales background for a start, he approached his canvassing with the old idea that enough calls would net at least one sale. For a starter he tackled the Recreation Office of the Treasury Depart-

ment in the Merchandise Mart. He was mildly shocked by his reception. Before he was well into a second breath in his sales talk, queries of "Who sent you?" "How did you know we were looking for a golf instructor?" stopped him cold. A number of golf enthusiasts had been looking for instruction for some time. Sam had stepped in at an opportune moment.

The call on the Treasury Department was the end of labor pains. "The Golfers" was officially—and financially—born.

Sam was able to arrange for groups of eight who would walk the few blocks to the school for lessons after work each evening. He handled 96 of them in a series of 12 classes. His canvassing days were over.

These groups kept him going until some of his early newspaper advertisements and personal contacts began to pay off. In time, some of the regulars from John's began to drop up for lessons, and the earlier "very interested prospects" came in for lessons.

A real step forward in the teaching facilities was the installation of an automatic tee. This called for a complete renovation of the practice room, so Sam pitched in spending evenings painting and covering the walls and floor. He set up heavy canvas nets in front of the tee, and in a few weeks students were able to try out their lessons on a full swing at a teed ball.

With the installation of the tee as a milestone, things moved steadily forward. During the early spring and summer, Sam was too busy to look for new students. At one time he even had to call in his brother, now an assistant professional at a Chicago district club, for extra help.

During the summer Sam spent as much time as possible on courses watching his students in action. He tried to get in at least one game or workout with each student. Combining his observations in these games with their own reports of further playing, he is able to analyze troubles that arise and take steps to correct them.

In order to insure his students as much time and help as possible, he arranged for advanced pupils to play with beginners on public and fee courses.

Assuming that "The Golfers" really got going in February of 1947, how did Sam's books look at the end of the year? In that time he's been continually busy, spending all spare time and considerable cash in improving the club. New students are coming in every day, and some former pupils drop back from time to time for "brush up" lessons. This, until he can get some more help and additional space, keeps him as busy as he wants to be.

The office now subscribes to a telephone answering service which Sam acclaims as

both valuable and necessary since he must be away from the school some of the time. The average enrollment is about 55 students in various stages of instruction (the figure varies with weather and the season, but has yet to fall below 30). Individual rather than group work is encouraged for the benefit of the student.

Sam now has a substantial bank account, owns better than \$500 worth of stock balls, clubs, bags and accessories sold at the school and he doesn't owe a cent.

Sam has expanded the club to include a second practice net. The interior, arrangement and furnishings are just about as he wants them for now. His bank account may be allowed to fatten a bit, and he may be able to realize a comfortable margin on his time and investment. He feels it was worth sweating out.

HOPES TO ROPE PRIZE \$\$\$



Fred Bolton, Pendleton (Ore.) CC pro, is playing tournament circuit in this rodeo winner outfit, barring the Hyer cowboy boots which he trades for spiked shoes on the course. Roy's sponsored by the Pendleton CC, Hamley and Co., famous makers of saddles and other leather goods, Pendleton Woolen Mills and Pendleton Chamber of Commerce. Bolton, 25-year-old protege of Wiffy Cox, was hired by the Pendleton club after returning from 4½ years with the Army. The cheerful big kid made good with members of the exceedingly lively 9-hole club in the Round-up City and they decided to finance him to some tournament experience in return for some smart publicity.