

## PGA Urged to Take Stock of Pro Golfer Situation

By LOUIS BERTOLONE

John Budd, professional at the En-Joie GC, Endicott, N.Y., brought important questions about pro golf into the open in his GOLF DOM article, "Pro Golf Must Face Problem of Unqualified Job-Hunters"; but he omitted reference to several puzzling phases. He also did not describe and classify the functions of modern pro golf.

In my opinion it is time — high time — that the position of pro golf be thoughtfully and thoroughly examined. Budd is primarily interested in the problems of the club professional. He is concerned about the competition coming from the person having "a good-looking follow through, a pretty fair scoring ability, and a liking to play golf." He has a legitimate cause for concern, because too many golf professionals have very little more to commend them for golf jobs as professionals. They retard the advance and job stability of properly qualified men. Even after a reputedly fully qualified pro, as attested by his membership in the PGA, gets a job at a club, he may not be adequately prepared to handle his duties and opportunities to the club.

This brings up another point that Mr. Budd failed to consider; namely, what does a club expect from its golf pro?

First, the club usually expects its pro to be a good teacher. There has been progress made in teaching but when a pro-greenkeeper compares the educational work he and his club benefit from in the greenkeeper association, agricultural school, manufacturer's research and USGA Green section, with what has been done to get golf instruction closer to a sound scientific basis, that man knows for sure that organized pro golf has not done the job expected of it in the highly important field of instruction.

Individually there has been a considerable improvement in the attitude of pros toward instruction methods of others in their class of jobs. But there still is far too much of a self-satisfied attitude and criticism instead of hopeful, open-minded, scientific inquiry into the methods of other teachers. The greenkeepers greatly advanced the results and standing of their profession when they abandoned that old attitude. Then, the club expects its pro to be a good businessman. It expects its pro to be a first-class merchandiser and promoter. Two former National Open champions lost their lucrative jobs this past year because their clubs decided these fine players were not up to requirements in these departments.

### Needed Help, It Didn't Come

It seems to me that the PGA could have come to the assistance of these men. The PGA knew that these boys were top-notch players but could stand development as businessmen. It should have sent a good merchandiser counselor to these clubs to straighten them out. The club and the pros both would have benefited from the expert help. At one of these clubs, the club itself took over the operation of the golf shop. Did it put another pro in charge? No. It hired a department store merchandiser. The pro at this exclusive club now gets a nominal salary and all he can make from giving lessons. He does not have the concession of selling golf merchandise. This club hired what it considered to be the very best of golf pros and still it became dissatisfied by the service it received from them. Naturally this club questions the status of pro golf; PGA pros or otherwise.

Merchandising means more than being able to keep a beautiful shop, well stocked with the latest merchandise appealingly

displayed. Merchandising means buying and selling right. This can be done only if the merchandiser has complete knowledge of the goods he handles, the sources he buys from, and the buyers to whom he sells. He must know the manufacturing and selling policies of the manufacturers and distributors. Does the manufacturer produce quality merchandise? Does he produce merchandise just for profit? Is he a fly-by-night operator, or is he well established with his line adequately advertised? Does he have a reputation to uphold? Similarly, is the distributor dependable? Will he stand behind his merchandise? Does he have a good credit rating? etc.

Merchandising means selling the customer what he needs. This is a difficult problem. Only a pro who knows his merchandise and his customers can do this. This man has made a study of his merchandise. He knows how it is made, what materials were used, and for what purpose it was made.

The pro must know equally well the playing ability, purchasing power and personalities of his customers. Clubs, bags, sweaters, socks, and shoes must also be sold so that they fit the purchaser.

### **Right Pricing in Merchandising**

Merchandising also means pricing. Every merchandiser is entitled to a profit. That is how he makes his living. But during my recent visit to three pro shops, I saw a set of identical clubs for sale at vastly divergent prices. In one shop the clubs sold for \$70.00, another for \$78.75, and the other one for \$90.00. Obviously, two of these pros could not figure their legitimate mark-up. How the pro got \$90.00 as a sales price is far beyond me. The PGA should begin to check up on some of the mathematical ability of their pros. All of these boys are class A members of the PGA.

Naturally a club expects its pro to be a capable instructor. Still, I have seen many top-notch golfers emphasize some obscure point of the golf swing to a person who did not have even the basic essentials under control. I recall the case of a championship player. He had won many tournaments and was enjoying wide publicity. Consequently, the members took many lessons from him. About all he told them was to "hit the ball solid." He was an excellent player but he was ineffective at instructing. He could not analyze the swing. He could not tell the member why he was not hitting the ball solidly.

Notwithstanding the broadening field of golfers, most of them—young and old—have been subjected to quite a good deal of expert teaching during their years of

schooling. Subconsciously they recognize competent teaching technique. Particularly the middle-aged or older pupils expect that there will be a special fitting of pro golf teaching technique to their individual conditions. Teaching that may be satisfactory in the case of the low-scoring young amateur or as "finishing school" instruction for a pro can be completely ineffectual in the case of the typical club member.

### **Teaming With Greenkeeper**

Then the club expects its pro to know something about golf course maintenance. It expects its pro to take continuous interest in improvement of the course. Oh, yes, I can hear some pros remark, "That's the greenkeeper's job." I agree with them that the maintenance of the golf course is the greenkeeper's job. It's a difficult one, too, and not many members come into contact with the greenkeeper to understand what he's up against. So it is to the pro that members register their approval or disapproval of the golf course. The pro should know enough about the greenkeeper's problems to be part of the club team with the greenkeeper. Further, the pro is at the course on Sundays and holidays when play is the heaviest. He can see where the bottle-necks are.

Not far from my home is a public course. This course was laid out by Dr. Alistair MacKenzie. In my estimation it is one of the best courses in the country. The greenkeeper has always had this course in tip-top condition. On the third hole the tee sets back of a finger of a lake. A drive with a carry of 15 yards will clear this water hazard. But public course players, being what they are, invariably manage to top their drives into this swamp. Before the ball is retrieved, the next foursome has reached the tee. By the time the day has advanced very much, players begin to jam this tee. The players naturally become disgruntled with this delay; especially the better players. The pro at this course could make the suggestion that a tee to be used only on busy days be placed on the other side of this swamp. The greenkeeper at this course would welcome and appreciate some cooperation from the pro.

### **All-around Knowledge Needed**

A club has many committees, house and grounds, green, handicap, entertainment, tournament. The members composing these committees are amateur golfers, but they want to make a success of the responsibilities thrust on their shoulders by the members of the board of directors. In order to do justice to their trusts, they read extensively, and seek advice from more experienced persons. The pro is the logical person for them to turn to. Yet

far too few pros take the trouble to gain all-around knowledge of golf club operation.

Keeping up with the latest methods of club operations will take considerable time. This time can be secured only at the sacrifice of some other aspects of golf. This time must be at the expense of practicing and playing. The club professional who really has the interest of his club and his members at heart will not bemoan this sacrifice. To most clubs a championship, tournament playing pro is of limited value to the average member. A short time ago a tournament pro changed positions. The president of the club which he had left told me, "We don't want another tournament player. We want someone who can give service to every member; someone who doesn't mind playing with the dubs. . . ."

### Neglect Assistant Training

This fellow is a class A member of the PGA. I believe Budd classified this man pretty well: "A good-looking fellow through, a pretty fair scoring ability." I'll add, "He had nothing else." I had the occasion to telephone his shop. His assistant answered the telephone with a curt "Hello." From the tone of his voice, I felt that I had interrupted his sleep. When I asked for the pro the assistant informed me that the pro was "incapacitated." What would you think was wrong with the pro? Drunk? Certainly sounded like it. I can assure you that this pro was not drunk. He never drank on the job, and very seldom drank off the job.

This assistant had worked for this pro for two years. In a few years more he will be eligible to become a member of the PGA. Still he does not know the simplest of things: how to answer a telephone. And he should not use words he doesn't understand. If an assistant wants to know how a telephone should be answered, let him call any successful business house.

Certainly in this case, as in most other first class clubs, the pro is expected to select, train and supervise assistants. In numerous instances that responsibility is not handled as well as it was when the beginner in the pro shop started at cleaning clubs, then graduated to the simpler details of clubmaking.

The pro who is qualified to serve most clubs well teaches golf classes at the high school, promotes junior golf programs, and endeavors in other ways to stimulate golf. I can truthfully say that I do not know one golfer in our community who has taken up golf directly because of the tournament golfers, or the tournaments in which they play. But this is not a criticism of tournament golf. I

also do not know of any boy who took up baseball because of Joe DiMaggio or Babe Ruth, although the publicity given DiMaggio and Ruth must have made thousands of kids susceptible to baseball. The golf situation is somewhat different and is changing rapidly with the growing practice of substituting bag carts for caddies. The home club pro has the job of bringing kids into the game.

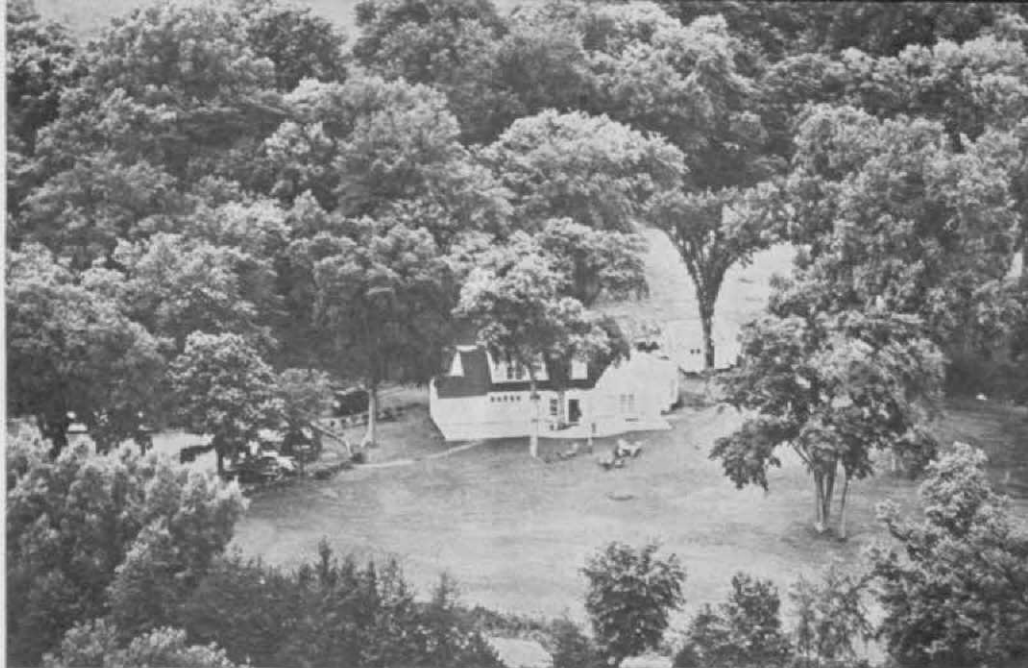
The home club pro pays part of his PGA dues to financing one of the best jobs in pro golf and although that job of arranging the show window is an essential part of the business, its budget is out of balance with other more intimate and urgent requirements of pro golf.

While we are at it, Mr. Budd, let us find out why some pros can hang on to their jobs for only a season, or six months, and then can get another job right away. Is it because the PGA wants a strictly union shop? I recently visited a big western city. While I was there I thought I would drop into one of the manufacturer's branches to see if there were any golf jobs open. The salesman who calls on the pros told me: "There are no jobs open." I knew of two, and so informed him. He came again, "You'd better clear with . . . before you try to get a job here." This riled me. It sounded like trying to boss a sport by restricting opportunities.

When I talked to the president of one of these two clubs, he told me that he had received a list of the names of the qualified PGA pros interested in getting this job. Along with the list were special recommendations for several of the pros, a partiality the other pros might question. The president of this club did not appreciate this practice, thinking the PGA demands a closed shop without demonstrating indispensability and having no investment in the going business.

### Correct Instead of Complain

This article undoubtedly will raise a bit of comment. I know that it will. But none of this yelling will come from the hundreds of PGA pros who have done their job well. In our area we have many competent PGA pros. None of these pros are top flight players, but they are the backbone of golf. They have made golf their life's work—not play. They know how to teach, how to run tournaments, how to figure handicaps. They know about golf course maintenance. They are merchandisers. They know the problems of the committee members and cooperate with them in trying to find a solution to these problems. They know that budgets must be considered, and adhered to. They know that they set examples for their



## LE SUEUR, MINN., OPENS NEW "GOLFINGEST TOWN" COURSE

Le Sueur, Minn., population about 2,800, claims to have 1,400 golfers. Minnesota Valley Canning Co. president Edward B. Cosgrave observing that residents of the town were in need of golf facilities commensurate with their lively interest, and with foresighted concern for community recreation facilities that assured sound business development, took the lead in establishing a new 9-hole course which was opened June 2. All civic groups cooperated energetically in getting the new club under way.

Family membership in the club is \$30 a year. The clubhouse is claimed to be one of the most beautiful and well appointed of any small town in the world.

Group instruction is being featured to further increase Le Sueur's high ration of golfers and to produce a big crop of low handicap men, women and children players.

The new course was formally opened with an exhibition in which Joe Corie, Len Mattson, Gunnard Johnson and Willie Kidd played.

assistants, for the caddies. They know that they must have the respect of their members, and act accordingly. Who are these men? Among them are Willie Nicol at Peninsula CC, San Mateo; Harold Sampson at Burlingame (Calif.) CC; Earl Fry at Alameda Municipal course, Dewey Longworth of the Claremont CC, and Al Sais at Berkeley CC. All of these men have been on their respective jobs for over 25 years. All of them are situated in the San Francisco Bay area. Not more than twenty-five miles separates one from the other. These, and men like them, are the backbone of the PGA and of pro golf itself. These are the men that will be glad to have this article published.

Now, Mr. Budd, to dismiss some of your anxiety, and to call some of the committees who are charged with selecting a new pro for their club to account. These committees generally invite prospective candidates out for a round of golf; and if he has a "good-looking follow through, a pretty fair scoring ability, and a liking to play golf" he gets the job.

What is the matter with these committees? Are they lazy? Or don't they know any better? Many a caddy has a beautiful swing, and can knock hell out of par. Dress him up in slick sports clothes, and the committee hires him as a pro. But a pro must know something about accounting, merchandising, instructing, greenkeeping. He must be able to speak at luncheons. He must be able to entertain at stags. He must be courteous, and have a degree of refinement. He must be somewhat of a conversationalist. He must be able to mingle with the select of society, and yet remain in his place.

Is par golf all that is necessary to fulfill these requirements? Why, then, does not the selection committee prepare a questionnaire of some 100 to 200 questions; questions that cover every phase of golf, but with the emphasis on the phase of golf in which they want their pro to be a specialist. If committees have difficulties in preparing such a

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## PGA URGED TO TAKE STOCK

(Continued from page 29)

questionnaire, I will be glad to make up  
sample questionnaires for them.

Obviously, serving as assistant to a  
PGA pro for three or five years should  
not admit a man into organized golf. He  
should first be forced to pass a rigid  
examination. There are many aspiring  
to be pros who could never pass a reason-  
able examination even in ten years; but  
there are others who could do it in a  
year or two. These men, if they really  
know their stuff and have the character,

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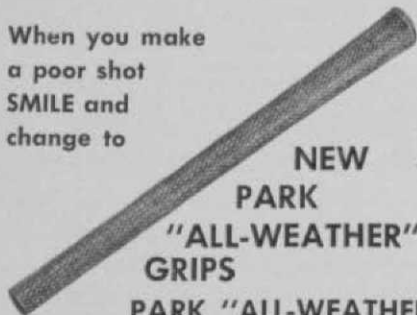
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should not be barred from membership in the PGA, or from pro golf just because they have not put in the "time" in a "recognized" pro shop. The primary requisite for a pro is ability, all-around ability. Budd has no need for concern about clubs hiring unqualified pros if the clubs are informed as to the type of man they need, and what they can expect from the man they hire. If this man cannot deliver the services as specified by the PGA, he should be suspended from membership, and the club employing this pro should be so informed. **BUT**, before this action is taken, the PGA should cooperate with the unqualified pro in teaching him and helping him to become the pro that the club thought it was hiring. While this man is learning, the PGA should place its knowledge, without cost, at the disposal of the unfortunate club. Pro golf would soon win the respect that it justly deserves and must have for the good of the game, and the club would soon have a real golf professional at its service.

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