

# Pros and Clubs Profit from NY-Pa. League Schedule

By R. W. CORRIGAN

Probably the most beneficial shot in the arm which any sport could absorb has been administered to golf in the western New York-Pennsylvania area in the last two years. It has made money for the pros, which is their business, and has provided extra interest, practical instruction and more masterful golf for the amateurs. In addition, it has brought



Professionals Johnny Trish (left), Pennhills CC, Bradford, Pa., and Pat Burke, Smethport CC, organizers of the league that is giving golf a boost in the western New York-Pennsylvania area.

valuable publicity, many more members and good business to the clubs in the area.

Pro Johnny Trish of the Pennhills Club in Bradford, Pa., who introduced the idea, does not claim it as his own invention. The setup is similar to one he saw being operated in San Antonio, Texas,—but he says there is nothing like it anywhere else in the country.

Briefly, the system pulls in players and pros across an area a hundred miles wide to compete with each other for awards in a series of bi-weekly contests throughout the season. For that to work in Texas, where a hundred miles is nothing to speak of, is one thing; but to demonstrate that it will draw just as strongly over as wide a sector back East, where the idea of distances is different, is to prove that the method is sound and valuable.

Some of the clubs around Bradford were slow to lend themselves to the scheme at the start, although no cost was involved. Reluctance to try a new thing seems to come naturally to all of us, particularly in smaller communities.

Nevertheless, the first meet, held at Smethport Country Club in June, 1947, had 78 contestants registered, at least 60 per cent of them amateurs; and 90 per cent of those were players who had never before competed in any tournament.

As set up by Trish and Pat Burke of Smethport, Pa., the organization of the Bi-State League, built to carry out Trish's plan, is very simple. It has a President, Burke; a Golf Chairman for arrangements (originally Toby Lyons of Warren, Pa., C. C.); a Publicity Director, Trish (who later absorbed also the golf chairmanship); and a Secretary-Treasurer, Armand Burke of Wellsville, N. Y. These are all unsalaried posts, and the League collects no dues from either clubs or individual members.

The activity has been financed entirely out of 50-cent drags from the registration fees at the meets, and by means of these the organization has been able to pay all expenses and have a few dollars left in the treasury to start the next year's schedule. In 1948 this fund was sufficient to add a nice round sum to the prize money at the last tournament of the season, holding over only \$25 towards the office expenses of 1949.

## Bi-weekly Events

Last year there were 14 clubs in the association, which allowed for one date each at two-weeks' intervals across a 28-week season. There might, of course, be more clubs in the League with some skipped in a given year's schedule of meetings, or fewer clubs, with some taking more than one date annually. It is a perfectly flexible system.

The schedule having been made up, with courses known to dry out early, having early dates, and late assignments given to those which are physically better for them, the pros of member clubs get busy. The routine is usually a matter of each pro's getting together a group of his players to go along for the competition at each course in turn, every second Friday afternoon.

There have been up to 80 entrants, pro and amateur, at most of these events, and in the two years of operation no tournament has seen fewer than 40 registered

Any golfer who wishes to pay the \$3.00 entry fee, regardless of whether his club is in the League, or whether he belongs to any, is welcome to play the 18-hole competition round,—and this fact in itself helps to get publicity. Sports editors just as much as other newspaper men like to have a broad base for what they write up; and nothing fits that much better than a story of golf for everybody, in which Johnny-Come-Lately may top the pros and oldtimers.

Here is another special feature: the amateurs being rated Class A, B and C according to handicap, they are seeded one of each class plus one pro to every foursome as far as possible. This makes a great difference to the high-handicap man, breaking up any habitual groupings in the clubs, so that players get the practice of working out with inexperienced competitors. They also get the advantage of going around with a pro, for what points they may pick up by looking and listening,—or by asking.

Incidentally, the pros get the advantage of being able to recommend equip-

ment for obvious needs, and of "making hay by chopping grass" with their own members as well as strangers. It is very practical, and entirely different from the effects resulting from regional PGA meets. Those are good fun, and probably a professional necessity,—but they are no such direct producers of good business as these little open affairs.

Scores having been tabulated for one of these meets, the pot of two or three hundred dollars is split 50-50, half going in cash to the pro winners, and the other half in equipment from the pro shop to the amateurs. (Note that all have paid the same registration fee.) The furnishing of these golf goods, of course, means more business for the pro out of whose shop they come.

The club acting as host for the occasion gets numerous direct benefits from the activity, including dining room, bar, new membership and publicity over the whole area. Established custom provides for lunch before the play and a banquet after, with toasts and treats and local twists. As to advertising, many a club such as

---

## PLAY HERE FOR USGA JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

Youngsters aspiring for a niche among golfdom's great will play for the USGA Junior Championship at the beautiful Congressional CC located in Maryland just six and one-half miles out of Washington, D. C., July 25-30. Shown below is a birds-eye view of part of the layout that will greet the boys who will be out battling par (in this case, a 71 over a trek of 6,618 yds.). The number "25" on the hill between No. 18 and No. 10 fairways appearing in the lower left hand corner has been placed there in celebration of the Club's 25th anniversary being observed this year.

*Washington Aerial Survey photo*



Bolivar, N.Y., or Coudersport, Pa., for example, might never be mentioned in Buffalo or Erie newspapers in the regular course of events; but as host to a Bi-State meet it naturally rates a writeup in the account of players from those larger places and how they did in the competition. It is not just vanity which puts a value on such notices. For any club to be known outside its immediate vicinity is for it to have a potential in traveling golfers who represent future revenue, and to have some attraction for the better pros, whether as future employees or as permanent ambassadors. There is advantage either way.

An example of the building effect of the League tournaments can be found in the results to any of the member clubs. Enrollments are up, interest is keener, the back areas know more golf and more golf personalities, and the game is generally better off, all around. In Smethport, for instance, which is the very small seat of a very prosperous Pennsylvania county, a lot of new membership was pulled from nearby Bradford, where the sports department of the daily ERA has consistently given the Bi-State League good coverage.

Clubs in the Bi-State area which went in from the beginning on the plan have been so well satisfied, and so many others which were slow at first to see the advantages have since shown their desire to join, that the management of the League is now considering a small change in the arrangements. For 1949 it was proposed to have each club in turn, as it entertains the competitors, put up for them a \$50 prize. It will be well earned, because it will heighten still further the interest in the tournaments.

The originators of this scheme in the Pennsylvania-New York area have put it over with a permanent setup which they do not intend to change, — at least, not as long as it works. The officials named above expect to keep going until further notice. Naturally, there has been some crabbing: nothing human ever escapes it. At one of the later 1948 affairs a club member griped to John Trish:

"You pros are making a pretty nice thing for yourselves out of this Bi-State League. Why isn't it turned over to the clubs themselves, for the benefit of the amateurs?"

"Well," Trish answered, "most of the amateurs can see the benefits they get out of it; and if the pros can't make any money on it, you're welcome to take it over and change it to suit yourself. The only drawback is, that if you do, the pros will have to stay all the way out, from here on."

There has not been any more complaint from that quarter, and the organizers do

not expect any more for some time to come. The plan has proved itself, and practically everybody is very glad to join in as it is. That goes for Larry Dana of Pennhills, who catches all the amateur tournaments between Canada and Mexico and uses three or four sets of clubs a year, as well as for the newest beginner who came in with his first golf bag after reading all about it in the local paper.

It is a system which works with fine results in Texas, New York or Pennsylvania: and why would it not make an improvement in the golf picture anywhere in the country?

### **Junior Golf Week Promotion Needs Organization, Timing**

The far reaching benefit that accrues to professionals and the business of golf in general from active and consistent promotion of golf among the younger set is sufficiently important that every professional and organized group should make a concerted effort to carry out a schedule of events for junior promotion, whether it be for a week, a month or a season.

The designation of a special week for the purpose of launching a program of events for the junior element is excellent if a schedule is adopted to which interest can be developed and participation increased, but if the week is to serve only as a "shot in the arm," the effects of which are soon to wear off, then the observation of such a week falls short of the goal for which it was originally intended.

Building and maintaining interest in golf among the youngsters calls for leadership — leadership of a patient and persistent type — of a quality that an able professional with an eye to the future will do well to develop. Little of lasting importance can be done with boys and girls in a week, neither can one effectively demonstrate or exercise the necessary qualities of leadership in so short a time. Surely, then, it is evident that if there is to be just compensation for effort expended, any program launched to stimulate interest in golf among the junior group must be carried on until there is ample opportunity to in some way measure results.

GOLFDOM received an official announcement June 19th that the PGA National Junior Golf Week would be observed June 20-26. That timing is bad for allowing preparation of any detail of a program to focus strong interest on putting forth special effort in junior golf.

George Lake, Junior Golf Committee Chairman of the PGA is professional at