

# Pro Golf Must Face Problem of Unqualified Job-Hunters

By JOHN BUDD

Professional, En-Joie Golf Club, Endicott, N. Y.

One of the great dangers in pro golf is the ease of turning pro. Qualified professionals are constantly facing disturbance and embarrassment as the result of the lack of generally recognized professional golfer standards, the casual manner in which pros are hired at some clubs, and the lack of qualifications for correctly handling jobs that are given to applicants whose major identification as a pro is the fact that they want money for playing golf and officially they can't take money and remain amateurs. There is absence of supervision over the newcomer who switches to pro ranks and before the new arrival learns that it's a rather exacting business he's entered he may injure his own chances for advancement and certainly do no good to the general reputation of pro golf.

When a personable young fellow with a good-looking follow-through, a pretty fair scoring ability and a liking to play golf, decides to turn pro he'll soon learn that he needs more than these qualifications. His members and employing board will learn of his lack of qualifications sooner than the young man appreciates.

Furthermore, many of these youngsters get on small jobs where some fairly expert nursing of golf interest, potential golf talent and general golf promotion is needed. The club can't afford the man who really is needed for the job but takes the newcomer thinking that he's a pro because he says he is.

But there are many such cases constantly coming up and there'll be an increase of them with the game growing rapidly in the smaller towns. The experienced pro golfers have to consider this situation for protection of the game and of their own professional status.

## What Are His Chances?

It is a sure thing that professional golf is not a closed shop. Young men without adequate preparation are going to continue to come into the pro ranks. The qualified professional should be glad to see that youngsters of proper qualifications enter the profession to contribute to its advance but the qualified pro also has to see that the true picture of pro golf is presented to the candidate for admission to pro ranks.

Seldom does the aspirant recognize what his needs and his chances are in a pro job. He's heard that a pro makes "good money." Usually there is great inflation to the stories of what the pro is supposed to earn. The aspiring young man fails to weigh the facts before him as he feels disposed to jump into pro golf. He should study all phases of the step he plans to take.

If he is a decent player he must give up his amateur status the minute he becomes a so-called pro. From that time until he is able to travel the long road back with the USGA he is a professional in standing. Though he may play in only three events a year or serve a club for only a short month of any season, he is a professional during all that time. He cannot turn his pro standing on and off. The USGA does not allow tampering with the amateur standing and pros of good reputation should help to guard the true amateur status. We know the price of lax standards in pro golf as well as in the amateur ranks.

Let's look at the way Sammy Byrd studied all angles of pro golf before he made his move into our business. Sam was a fine amateur golfer and a success in another field of sport, baseball. He also had a financial backlog that would help support him in lean times. Weighing all the angles, he talked to some of the best pros in the game before turning in his amateur card and donning the pro tag. Taking an assistant job under Ed Dudley at Philadelphia CC rather than accepting any number of jobs on his own, he recognized the value of good coaching and training and chose this path to success in the golf business. Further training with George Sayer at Merion and Sam was ready for his own spot at Plum Hollow, Detroit. Sam made the grade and is a credit to our profession in every way.

Not many of these fellows who have been bitten by the pro bug have sound jobs nor do they study the consequence of giving up what they do have for a shaky chance in an unknown business. Most of them sail serenely into pro standing without proper advice and with no real picture of what pro golf has to offer in pitfalls or in solid success. Many do not know that after five years as a professional one may not even



## FESSENDEN GETS GOLF'S TOP HONOR

Scotty Fessenden, Western Golf Assn. pres., recently named Golf's Man of the Year by the Golf Writers' Assn., receives the William D. Richardson memorial trophy, emblematic of the honor, from O. B. Keeler, past-pres. of the GWA and veteran golf writer of the Atlanta Constitution. Looking on are Gene Sarazen, Ed Dudley, Sam Snead, and Charley Bartlett, GWA sec'y.

apply for return to amateur status. That means pro for life to the fellow who has absent-mindedly drifted through five years of near failure as a pro and suddenly decided to get back his amateur standing.

All of us have seen young fellows who jumped into this business ill-prepared, thinking only of flashy sport coats and easy hours at fashionable clubs with no day-to-day responsibility. All this coupled with an easy flowing income. How abrupt was their awakening when they found that pro golf is hard work, sound business and top-notch diplomacy all rolled into one. Add this to the uncertainty that plagues too many golf jobs today and it is plain to see the sad plight of Willie, the would-be pro who has failed.

The tangled efforts to get back to amateur status at once, linked with outstanding golf bills in many cases, poses a sad picture that can be charged to:

1. A hazy dream of easy living,
2. Lack of knowledge of the golf business,
3. Poor preparation and training,
4. Lack of basic qualities to start,
5. Lack of good advice from a competent professional.

### Who Can Gamble?

Who can take this gamble in pro golf? How can they determine what their chances are? Once in a while we pros see a natural for our business. In such cases a little

guidance will make an outstanding success of such a man. Too often such a fellow is well situated in his own field and is not interested in anything else. Very often he has weighed the pro business and found that he is better off in his own line with a sound income, steady advancement, security, and time to play amateur golf in his leisure hours. Not a bad picture and one can't blame a man for choosing his future on such a basis.

Then we find the man who cares little for his amateur standing, is a sound golfer with promise, and has the qualities for the long haul into pro golf. Such a man needs to be free from family ties and heavy financial responsibility; or have an independent income to see him through the thin years. Many fellows in this class are the real golf bugs who want to live, eat, sleep, and play golf. With adequate natural qualities they can make good in a big way; after five to ten years in the business. The upswing is slow and tedious. Witness, Claude Harmon, Master Champion in 1948.

Claude stands near the top of his profession today, with two of the finest jobs in the country, plus a top tournament rating and with the wholesome respect of all who know him. How did he get that way?

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*(Continued on page 80)*

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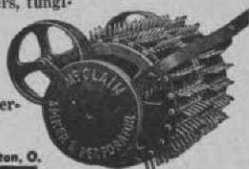
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## MUST FACE PROBLEMS

(Continued from page 41)

Ky Laffoon and was offered a job under Big Chief Ky at Northmoor, Chicago. Claude was given the facts of the golf business by the ever alert Laffoon, and the young Floridian learned fast. He was a worker from the start and never chose the easy road. I knew him well in those early days, and remember his winter as pro at Quincy, Fla. He made no secret of the fact that he saved every possible nickel so that he might play all the tournaments over a stretch of years and gain solid experience. He did just that.

Harry Cooper took over Northmoor when Ky decided to give more time to dogs and hunting and live on his backlogs of gilt edge stuff. Claude trudged right along as the assistant to Cooper. Craig Wood, ever alert to choose nothing but the best in assistants, signed Claude for Winged Foot, in the New York suburbs. During these grueling years of apprenticeship, Claude was doing his job and building a solid foundation. A short swing to Detroit as a full fledged pro preceded his return as head man to Mamaroneck's famed Winged Foot. He also holds Seminole's fine pro job. Claude has climbed the long way through years of hard work and close study of pro golf.

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Then we have also the tournament professional who feels he should gamble with his playing chances. He either makes the grade or is out in short order. The fellow who has accepted sound advice and walks in with his eyes open, is already past first base. And of course our assistants who are proving that they can do a job are the backbone of pro golf's future.

The past gives pros good reason to screen assistant material very carefully. Look at the fine pros today who came into golf under the watchful eye of a sound, clean cut professional. These present pros are the cream of the crop. How much thanks can the Turnesa boys give to John Inglis of Fairview for guidance in early years.

Pure inspiration was the keynote of Tommy Armour's influence on the Westchester caddies who have gone so far and proved so sound in pro golf; witness, Augie Nordone, Toney and Charley Penna, Herman Barron, the Creavy boys, and a host of others.

Craig Wood led Paul Runyan, Dick Metz, Clarence Clark, Claude Harmon and others into successful careers as professionals. Throughout our ranks we can find the good that was done by countless hundreds of sound pros who were careful what young man they put in their shops as a start to the top.

Our pro responsibility is to protect and build our profession to be ever alert for better pro material, to always strive for a future that is stronger than our past. We must make every effort to tell the proper story of pro golf to those who are considering this business. We must be quick to discourage those who look like failures from the start. We will learn to give good advice to the good prospects and try to lead them properly into pro golf. Our search for good assistant timber must be ceaseless. We must be alert and fearless in keeping the undesirables out. From them can easily come the greatest damage

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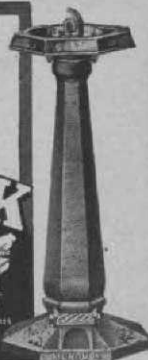
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to our entire business. We can and must stand firm against those who seek an easy path to the top of our profession.

Let's take a look at one case that is similar to hundreds more. Joe has a good pro job, he's sound, well situated and wants to stay right there. He works hard, keeps his mouth shut and does a bang-up job.

Along comes Konnie, the would-be pro, who has met Mr. Fatko, the chairman of the Green Committee. Konnie and Fatko met during a game at a nearby public course and Konnie did the expert bootlicking that has Mr. Fatko eating out of his hand. This pair meet often for golf dates and there is a lot of idle talking about Joe's job. Konnie is very interested, while Mr. Fatko paints a fine picture of the ease of the job, the big income, and how he can swing the job to whomever he chooses. Then one day over a few drinks Fatko tells Konnie that "he is the very man for the pro to take Joe's place." The fat is then in the fire. Konnie builds up his dreams and begins to count days and imaginary incomes. His future looks bright for him. Late fall days give way to winter snows and Mr. Fatko engineers to bring up his proposition to the Board. All the spade work has been done, Joe knows nothing, suspects nothing but a happy season to follow. Happy to relate, Joe's president is a hard digging executive who believes that a good job is a good job. He knows Joe has done a good job. Well, it was a hard fight, but Mr. President proved why he is top dog in his field and firmly squelched the schemes of Konnie and Fatko. Alas, in too many instances we do not have that firm and able president to hew to the proper line;

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result, a good pro starts looking for a new job and too often an ill-prepared would-be pro steps into a job and ruins it.

Many men jump into pro golf and make good on their own from the start. These are the boys who have what it takes. Their story would be success in almost any field. I have known many, but here are a few who worked their way up from a standing start of their own: Gene Cook, Johnnie Morris, Otey Crisman, Pete Cooper, Chick Ridley, Jack Mitchell, and a host of others. Where one succeeded, ten failed!

But today we hear too many weak squawks from unqualified would-be pros who say, "I can't get a good job. Everybody is down on me. The PGA won't let me in. I want to get in the PGA and then they can get me a job." How cozy; "I want in without the long months and years of training and seasoning and shaping to a successful pro golf pattern." He asks for the gravy, but with no thought of the responsibility on his part to prove his ability, think out his course or draft his plans.

The USGA has a professional rating that simply denotes that the person in question is not an amateur. On the other hand, the PGA has a professional standard that says this man has completed five years of proving and training under some other qualified professional or under the tougher assignment of making his own way at his own pro job. There is a great difference in these ratings. A careless amateur who takes money at the wrong time and place will certainly be branded professional by the USGA but the PGA will as certainly turn

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thumbs down on application for membership from that applicant. Reason: he is not qualified.

In our Central N.Y. Section of the PGA, of which I am a member and officer, the applicant must have five years of experience as an assistant or as a professional and he must have 30 months total work during these five years. He must also appear as a candidate before an examining committee of two Class "A" members of our Section. Then his application starts the usual journey through the 30 day routine of the National PGA. Maybe this is not tough enough. Some say not.

Some venture the opinion that a full history of the applicant should be taken and checked carefully. They maintain that the new member should then be placed on one year's probation before he enters full membership. We should lean toward the tough standards; of that I am sure. When a member goes wrong, it becomes the duty of the sectional PGA officers to get that fellow on the carpet and iron out the trouble. If he can be led to the correct solution, well and good; if not, there is the sword of suspension to cut him free from our Assn. and that should cut him free from pro golf entirely.

Now what about the pseudo pro? He worked as a caddy-master, somewhere, sometime, for two months. He then declared himself a professional and started looking for a job. He was allowed to play in three open pro-amateur events and finally he registered for his area open championship. He tried an assistant's job one summer, but thought his boss didn't give him a break, and anyhow he wanted to play golf. He ambled along looking for a pro job, calling himself a pro wherever he went and developing as much support along the way as he could. He was hopeful that a fine pro job would come to him somehow. He is one of our biggest problems today. There are hundreds of his kind, and we who see them are saddened by their plight and their drifting.

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Can a would-be dentist or lawyer hang out his sign and go to work? Can a person enter any solid profession most any Wednesday morning? Definitely not. Why then should we continue to allow an easy-ride into golf? Can we start the long haul of legislation that will provide examination and licensing of all golf professionals before they are recognized as such? Alex Cunningham, head of the PGA National Golf Club, Dunedin, Fla., has always said "yes" in a loud voice. Alex thinks all should be licensed and controlled. There is much to recommend such a course.

The other alternative is whether or not our PGA and the various Sections can control the influx of candidates for the pro business. If the PGA does a bang-up job it will have to have a tight system of registration of all golfers of this type in the country. An up-to-date record will have to be kept of the good marks and the bad marks of all pro-minded golfers and proper supervision will have to be given. Quite a job, all will agree, but maybe the final solution to one of our pressing problems of today.

We cannot shirk our job with this problem. We must choose our timbers carefully. We must find a solution. We must by our conduct and the training of our staffs of assistants exemplify all that is best in pro golf. We must set an example that will be impossible to follow except by the highest type of candidate. We must through our own solid efforts raise the entire standard of pro golf so that our very success will spell discouragement to those who are weak or indecisive.

Golf professionals can and must guard the portals of their business against fly-by-night boys who are seeking a life of ease in golf rather than a competent job. An over-dressed caddy with a nice follow-through pose to his swing can and sometimes does charm gullible club officials into a pro job switch that may spell disaster to a good pro, hurt club standing and golf generally.

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