

Harmon Helps Himself by Helping the Member Most

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

It certainly is no accident—and it certainly isn't luck—that Claude Harmon has two of the best pro jobs in the country. He's at Winged Foot in the summer and at Seminole in the winter. Both are clubs of wealthy and active golfers who are not adverse to spending money in enjoying golf. The members are successful businessmen who insist on having a successful pro and regard it as logical that a pro who handles their golf business with initiative, diligence and ability should earn an income warranted by superior performance.

With some knowledge of club figures and credit reports I'd say that Harmon comes about as close as anybody else in pro golf to earning the fancy figures that pros in good club jobs are reputed to earn—but don't, when their expenses of doing business are subtracted. You can be sure that Claude Harmon as a club pro has a larger net annual income than is earned by more than three tournament circuit pros during very good years. That, of course, accounts for the canny young Harmon passing up the tournament circuit grind notwithstanding his Masters' victory and other stellar demonstrations showing that he could take his show on the road with a profit.

Pleasant "Strictly Business" Policy

At Winged Foot during the Walker Cup matches I had a chance to talk about pro department business again with Claude. Sitting in his office in one corner of a compact, neat and judiciously stocked shop, I recalled to myself the first time I'd seen him operate as a kid assistant in a pro shop. As I remember it was at Northmoor in the Chicago district when Claude was an assistant to Ky Laffoon. The young man was going over some wood heads on display with a polishing cloth and shifting some clubs around. When I came into the shop he acted very pleased, although I don't think he'd ever seen me before, or I had seen him.

His manner was that of a fellow who's genuinely happy about somebody coming into the shop because the visitor is giving him a chance to be of some help. Claude still has that great asset, plus a quiet air of authority that gives the visitor to the shop confidence that he's in care of a man

who knows his business. And Claude does know his business. He knows how clubs and balls are designed and made and what every big buyer and salesman should know about all other merchandise in the shop. He knows teaching and he knows merchandising.

Craig Wood, a fine pro businessman himself, appraised the pro business qualities in Harmon when Claude was Craig's assistant, and recommended him as his successor at Winged Foot. Craig always has been a great one for carefully selecting and training assistants and Claude's an expert in that part of the job now with a well-balanced staff of experienced men and highly promising youngsters.

The Winged Foot pro shop is small, considering the volume of business done in it. But there is ingenious use made of space. One of the ideas that many pro shops can use is that of storage space behind the club displays on the walls. Back of the displayed clubs is a sliding panel which opens onto spaces for storage of clubs and other shop stock. Ball reserve stocks are kept in locked steel files in back of the shop.

Winged Foot members entertain their trade groups often and that means a large



Professional Claude Harmon makes careful check of new stock before putting in shop display. His ready knowledge of the fine points of club manufacture builds buyer confidence that leads to sales.

volume of pro shop merchandise as prizes. One stunt the boys in the Winged Foot shop use is frequent change of sets of woods and irons in one of the choice bags

in stock. This ensemble shows the latest in a complete golf outfit and people who might feel like buying a new set of woods or irons look over the whole outfit and buy woods, irons and bag.

In a small shop there has to be some circus display—otherwise it's just another small shop. Harmon spent \$300 for a lighted display of color photographs which are frequently changed. A member who is one of the famed commercial photographers supplies Claude with the photographs.

Innovation in Picture Teaching

So far as we know Harmon was the first pro to use the Polaroid-Land camera in instruction. That's the camera which delivers prints in about a minute after the trigger is pressed. It shoots fast enough to get action pictures of a golf swing.

Claude says it's amazing what these Polaroid-Land prints have done in helping him and his assistants show pupils exactly how their swings are and make corrections on the basis of clear appreciation of what actually is being done. Harmon also uses motion pictures extensively in his teaching. He has over \$1000 invested in Bell and Howell motion picture equipment. He's been using screen projection of pictures of the pupils' swings but believes that the small outfit described by Jules Platte in *GOLFDOM* enables the instructor to get sharper concentration from the pupil and by retaining any frame of the movie for careful study, represents an improvement on the screen showing. Anything that provides a possible improvement in methods you can bet Harmon tests without delay.

Study of the customer is the foundation of Harmon's successful operation. He was taught how to study his own game when he was under the direction of such able analysts as Wood, Laffoon and Harry Cooper. He sees to it that his assistants are thoroughly schooled in his own type of teaching the fundamentals but must understand the principles so clearly that they can make such adaptations as are sound to fit the sound basic elements to each individual. Harmon did that himself in arriving at his somewhat unique grip. He believes that experimentation with the typical golf pupil must be very cautious and limited, yet is necessary to make the most of the physical and temperamental qualifications of various pupils.

Keeps Reminding the Customers

Harmon is strong for attractive printed matter to keep his members reminded that he and his staff are on the job serving each individual who belongs to the club. His gift certificate is a neat job on

a green sheet. He sends out lesson reminder cards and a card advising that there is a pro shop merchandise credit, to winners on the weekly "kickers' handicap" event. When he has to order merchandise that isn't in stock he pushes delivery and immediately on receipt of the merchandise advises the buyer on an attractive card.

Harmon says that certainly in his own case teaching doesn't interfere with his playing, except to the extent that he needs to regain the "feel." With form sound he can get back his "feel" and his competitive attitude after a few rounds of play. He maintains that it would be far worse for a pro to lose the feel of wanting to be helpful to each member's game than for the pro to lose his own putting touch temporarily.

"Anything a pro can think of to help his members score better helps the pro's own game," according to Harmon. He says his experience has been that a pro gets a lot of confidence in himself by mastering the problems of fellows who come to him to be taught. The pupils get a lot of confidence in Harmon, too. When he makes their swings better he can tell them what clubs they ought to have to help them still more. The lesson tee is practically a part of his shop.

Betty Hicks Co-Author of New Teaching Manual

Betty Hicks, 1941 Women's National champion, and teacher of golf classes at Pomona college, University of Iowa and Iowa State university, together with Ellen J. Griffin, asst. prof. physical education, Women's college of the University of North Carolina, have written *A Golf Manual for Teachers*, published by C. V. Mosby Co., 3207 Washington blvd., St. Louis, Mo. The 312 page book sells for \$3.50.

The girls have done a good job on this book which is intended to help physical education teachers give their classes the rudiments of golf and then some. The Ernest Jones technique is basis of the instruction principle and nobody can go far wrong on that. Jones gets them into the swing simply and whether one advocates swing or hit, to get the pupils swinging the club is an achievement. And don't let anybody tell you that Betty isn't a pretty good teacher and a well qualified student of instruction methods. Numerous women physical educators and several men P.E. authorities advised in making the book.

The methods of class set-up and operation are particularly interesting and helpful. The physical educators' view of golf