

"When the Divil is Nibblin' yer Niblick"

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**When the Divil is nibblin' yer niblick,
And yer mashie shots muddle amuck,
And yer daffy ole putter
G'es yer ball such a stutter
That it staggers away from the cup;
Hoot mon, gi'e a heed to yer pro shop.
Wi' new baffies and cleeks ye cud go'f!
Dinna' stay such a fogie,
Ye can better the bogie,
And ye'd look like a sportin' ole toff.*

H. and F. GORDON

I have been a golf pro for 30 years. As a boy apprentice, I learned the trade of club making in Scotland. For four years I stood at a bench squinting down the length of a hickory shaft to be sure that I had planed it straight, true and stiff, and worthy of the noble game of golf. Habit is so strong that even now I give every club the eye in the same way I was taught to do it, and so gain the name of "Ole Blinky" by the fresher caddies.

I received four shillings a week the first year I worked at the St. Andrews Golf Co. in Glasgow, and after three years I was so good they paid me eight. I wish I could get a shop man for that nowadays. With my fourth year I was called a journeyman and ready, at its completion, to be an assistant for some more fully qualified worker. After two more years my cautious countrymen were ready to risk me as pro and club maker at some club of my own.

My conscientious family had thought that they were helping me get a training by which I could earn a good living. I was told that really good club makers were scarce, and so there should always be a demand. They are so scarce nowadays that they are practically non-existent, and their demand would be only in a museum for the discarded arts.

For 30 years I have watched the golf pros come and go. Some become has-beens before their time. Drink, sickness, inability to take the gamble of big and little earnings, and the expect-a-miracle-to-make-me-a-champion attitude explain many of the departures from the golf pro ranks. And they are not all down and outers who end their days caddying while they "remember when" for the entertainment of some modern golf aspirant.

Some find the job of being a golf pro loses its charm after a time and go into other fields of work.

What Makes a Pro

Recently I went to the North and South Championship at Pinehurst to find some die-hard pros like myself among the big group of young contenders for the prize money. They brought to mind the never answered question of what qualifications a man should have to be a golf pro.

A certain champion is described as being able to "eat, sleep, and swing a club—period." Brains make the brawn more lasting in golf. Tests are supposed to show that dumber autoists drive better than the higher IQ boys. They don't get distracted by the worries the latter can boo up out of their brain cells. The same thing may be true in swinging a golf stick, but a big hunk of brawn gets in trouble in the golf pro ranks unless there is something on the ball on top of it to hold it in order.

I talked at Pinehurst with some of these pros who are settling in middle age to a comfortable income on jobs affording mutual satisfactions to club members and themselves. The personality traits they possess and the skills they have to offer are a good criterion for newcomers and for clubs selecting professionals, if the golf pro ranks are to be filled with stable workers who will be a credit to our Professional Golfers Association.

I'd put the five requirements of a good pro as spokes radiating out from a central core of personal integrity, and I'm not sure that any one spoke is more important than any other.

1. Golf teaching skill
2. Merchandising experience
3. Superior game of golf
4. Tournament enthusiasm
5. Greenkeeping knowledge

A golf pro must understand the mechanics of a well grooved swing so thoroughly that the knowledge of it is stuck deep inside his guts. He must always automatically play right whether or not his score is low. He wins major championships if he can, but his swing must go through the same motions as that of the best. Long shots hit with a poor

swing are never any good for a pro, if they stay good any length of time for anyone else.

Being able to play golf seems to run in families, across the grain rather than down it. That is, there are many families of golfing brothers, I belong to one myself, but there are few father and sons who are pros. That combination of traits of sportsman, small business man, and glad-hander for the club evidently doesn't look so good from the second generation.

Who is Good Teacher?

A teacher is a person who knows some subject so well that he can talk it in simple language, and pull it all apart and answer all the whys that any number of bright pupils can think up. A good golf teacher has watched all the mistakes in the swing some time or other, and has stopped to analyze each of them. That is the reason why a man who plays a great game is not necessarily a great teacher, unless the pupil is young enough to be a good imitator, and all his muscle cells gladly repeat, "Monkey see, monkey do."

To every golfer there is always the lure of other courses. Architects build greens with a particular shot in mind. The size of bunkers, contours, and the opening of the green are planned in relation to it. The golfer picks up this mental image as he views the course, and his fingers itch to get the right club and try his luck with that shot. A pro should be able to see whether each of the holes at his course has that come-hither look to golfers. He is not a golf architect, but he is the greenkeeping expert who can test the golf allure of each hole and say why it fails. And he knows enough about the game his club members play to help them, when they are planning a golfing trip, to find courses offering golf shots most challenging to them.

Keeping at Study

For the last two years I have lost my shop assistants because I have sent them to Amherst, Mass. to take the ten weeks greenkeeping course. A man should offer special skill to any job he makes his life work. Ability to play golf is not enough, and becoming a good teacher or merchandiser is a matter of observation and of applying the experience of others. Nowadays any boy who wants to be a golf pro should study greenkeeping in addition to dreaming of winning the National Championship. I study the notes the boys bring back, because, after 30 years, I can't face pretending to be a school boy again.

When Scotland told me after six years of training that I was now a qualified golf pro and club maker, I came to the United States where golf was new. Through the years I have watched the

word pro come to mean nothing but money in the hand. Don't think for a minute that any man from Scotland will belittle that, but the pro business has wallowed in a mess of uncertainties of aims and qualifications.

In 1919, I met with other young pros at the Copley Square Hotel in Boston to talk over the forming of our Professional Golfers Association. It is a satisfaction to remember that it was formed, not as a squabble over rights or a labor and capital battle, but to improve the standards of training of the pros themselves.

My brother George had preceded me to this country and settled at the Wanne-moisett CC in Providence, R.I., where he has stayed for 38 years. Glenna Collett was a skinny teen-ager there and a friend of my sister Elizabeth. We three Gordon boys had our turns at helping Glenna keep that left arm straight and her eyes on the ball, no matter what ours might be doing. My brother Jack went to Buffalo, N.Y. and I have wandered from the White Mountains to the Blue Ridge.

Anyone who started the game with wood shafted clubs may have used some made by MacDonald Smith, Freddie Martin, Harold Calloway and myself. Freddie Martin is now at White Sulphur and Harold Calloway is at Pinehurst. We four worked winters in New York at club making. We were always broke, always ready for any competitive match, and always sure that golf was the game in this game of life.

I have an old Glasgow newspaper clipping that describes me as the youngest pro in Scotland. Wait long enough and maybe I can shakily produce another one describing me as the oldest pro in the United States. But no, at that time I'll let them write has-been before my name and leave me to enjoy playing the game. I'll let them take their hooks and slices and dirty clubs to some one else.

Northwest Greenkeepers Plan Spring Meet

Greenkeepers Club of the Northwest met Feb. 20 at Seattle, planning the third annual turf conference which will be held at Washington State college, Pullman, March 29-30. Park supt. Brousseau of Spokane and John Harrison of Hayden Lake (Ida.) CC, met with Northwest Pres. Joe Greco, vp Howard Williams and sec.-treas. Glenn Proctor and fellow members in going over the conference program and arranging to have large attendance of greenkeepers and park officials in the Pacific Northwest.

The Northwest members looked around at Seattle courses, got in some play on the Foster course and were guests of Ivan W. Lee, equipment dealer, prior to their business meeting.