

There's Pro Profit In Good Assistants

By JOHN M. BRENNAN

Spencer Murphy, pro at Glen Oaks GC, Great Neck, L.I., had just signed Jay Hebert, one of the many promising Southerners playing the winter circuit, and his friendly rival at nearby Fresh Meadow CC, formerly Lakeville, Al Ciuci, was lauding Murphy's action.

"Hebert is an up-and-coming kid and will be an asset to the pro staff at Glen Oaks," declared Ciuci, the LPGA president and MPGA tournament chairman for the past decade. "What golf needs most, in my opinion is more young blood in the pro ranks. Older professionals, instead of worrying too much about their own security should take on one or two younger fellows, teach them the game and help them to make good in the tournament world."

Murphy, who signed Hebert, a 25-year-old Bayou Frenchman from Louisiana, to augment his already impressive teaching and playing staff at swank Glen Oaks, is high on the potentials of the former Marine captain. "We needed another young pro and I picked Hebert as the fellow with the most promise," suggested Murphy. "My staff of teachers includes Pete Burke, brother of Bill, the former national open

champion; Eddie ("Senator") Murphy, my brother, and Whitey Open. With 500 active members, we can use them all, with Jay and Pete wearing the Glen Oaks tag in the tournaments."

Getting back to Ciuci, who was one of the first pros to sing the praises of Hebert, then an assistant to Lew Worsham at Oakmont (Pa.) CC, several years ago, Al insists that the head pro at a club must take into consideration the fact that golf is a business, just like a department store.

"Just observe the operation of any department store," said Ciuci, "and the one with the most number of sales people is the one that is most likely doing the most business. That's logical. In my opinion, it is good business for the pro and club to keep as big a pro staff as can be afforded and kept busy. I started with Sarazen when Gene showed promise up in Bridgeport, Conn. While at old Fresh Meadow in Flushing, I took on Leon Pettigrew when he came east from Indiana, where he won the amateur title and looked like a comer. Right now I carry three assistants and do a lot of the teaching myself."

Encouragement Pays Off

Ciuci pointed out that in the New York Metropolitan district, the more successful pros have been the ones who have encouraged the younger fellows in their shops. The first name mentioned, of course, was Craig Wood, long pro at Deal, N.J., CC and later associated with Winged Foot GC at Mamaroneck, N.Y.

"Like the late Al Smith, whose great political accomplishments were realized through his ability to choose the right assistants, Craig added to his fame by introducing the right fellows in his pro shops," asserted Ciuci. "It's the same with his Winged Foot successor, Claude Harmon, who was encouraged by Wood; Jack Burke at Metropolis, a product of the Harmon school and the veteran George Jacobus at Ridgewood (N.J.) CC, where he turned out Byron Nelson as a splendid example. These fellows are smart to encourage our youth. They help themselves financially and at the same time are helping golf, generally."

Wood, whose golfing exploits helped etch records for two decades, always advocated the policy that young talent should be encouraged. Craig insisted on top-flight as-



Jay Hebert, rated one of the most promising young pros in the country, is seen with Spencer Murphy and the rest of the Glen Oaks Golf Club staff at Little Neck, L.I. Pictured, l. to r., are Spencer Murphy, Frank (Whitey) Open, Ed (Senator) Murphy and Hebert.

sistants, starting at Deal, where he took on Dick Metz. When he moved over to Forest Hills Field Club in Bloomfield, N.J., the Blond Bomber signed Paul Runyan, later to become one of the nation's greats in spite of an unorthodox swing.

Winged Foot, Stars' Cradle

Craig, when he moved across the Hudson to Winged Foot, with its more than 750 members, added Harmon, then, a virtual unknown but tremendously popular and promising lad, to his staff. Chick Rutan, Ray Hill, Jimmy McHale, Shelly Mayfield, and Jack Burke, son of the great Jack of yesteryear, also served as Winged Foot playing and teaching assistants.

Wood often used to tell the members at Winged Foot, before he retired to be succeeded by Harmon, that he wouldn't consider employing an assistant who couldn't "take him" out on the course. That also was the credo of the veteran Bill Green, retired Rumson pro and a pal of Wood's for many years in New Jersey. That's the way Vic Ghezzi got his start—by beating Green one day.

Burke, a protege of Harmon at Winged Foot, took over at Metropolis GC in White Plains, where Runyan worked for so many years. Burke, like Wood and Harmon, feels that promising assistants prove a boon in the pro shop.

Another one of the Winged Foot graduates, Shelly Mayfield, Texan of considerable promise, has been signed as top pro at the Rockaway Hunt Club at Cedarhurst, L.I., where Jack West retired after serving 35 years.

Burke announced on the winter tour from St. Petersburg, Fla., after winning the Open there, that Bobby Watson, another lad from the Lone Star state and Stan Dudas, have been signed to become his associates at Metropolis.

In the meantime, Buck Luce, who has been a Man Friday to Harmon at Winged Foot, and later worked with Burke at Metropolis, has landed a lucrative job as head pro—at Pelham CC, a spot once filled by Long Jim Barnes.

Ciuci contrasted the financial setup at such places at Glen Oaks, his own Fresh Meadow, Metropolis, Winged Foot and Ridgewood with some of the other clubs of the district where pros function on a more conservative basis.

"The average golf club member looks to the golf pro for inspiration and advice," reasoned Ciuci. "If the member reads that Joe So-and-So wins a tournament, he rightfully reasons the fellow must know something about the sport. He seeks out the fellows for advice and is quite satisfied if the fellow can help him improve his own game. It's like life generally, we all look up to some idol. In golf a player with

talent can cash in by making members, who are eager and willing, pay for advice. It all gets down to the fundamental principles of running a retail store. If one has the right product, the customer who wants it is willing to pay and good pro management sees that the product is presented."

According to Ciuci, who knows the answers in a golfing sense, a master professional should be eager to bring into his employ a young player showing talent. He should encourage the boy, for the sake of golf—and his own sake. The members will respect him more for the move.

It is short-sighted on the part of any pro to try to handle whatever teaching business there is at a golf club, especially any of the bigger ones, when smart pro management can build more interest and his own profits with a bigger live staff. The majority of progressive pros feel as Ciuci does, that pro golf needs more young blood and the only way to bring it into the business is via the pro shop as assistants.

Spencer Murphy, probably the outstanding pro of the country when it comes to moving merchandise, believes that by professionals carrying several promising young pros as teachers and players they are making matters easier for the USGA.

"It's only fair to the kids to help them along," said Murphy. "Everybody needs a lift in business and what is golf if not big business? We know there are hundreds of amateur golfers parading, or masquerading as simon-pures who would be better off if they were to take jobs as assistant pros. The USGA apparently feels along the same line, for they have been threatening for years to crack down on so-called semi-pros in the game. If the pros, the older ones I mean, want to do golf a great service, let them absorb these border-line 'amateurs' who should be assistant pros in the first place. Teach them the business and direct them so they will add to the service and earnings of a department that is the head pro's heavy responsibility."

Five Bids for 1951 Jaycee National Junior Tourney

Bids for the 1951 National Junior Championship of the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce have been received from Ojai, Calif.; Coral Gables, Fla.; Great Falls, Mont.; Durham, N.C., and Virginia Beach, Va. Each of the organizations has given evidence of having facilities, finances and ability to stage this championship which has the largest entry list of any golf championship in the world.

Peddlers' Set July 31

Golf Peddlers' annual tournament for the Bill Hoyt memorial trophy will be played at Elyria (O.) CC, July 3. Arnold Minkley of Acushnet will defend his title.