

First Year As Pro Demands Careful Planning

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Among golf pros, it is generally acknowledged that the first year as the head pro is the most important one they ever have. This is the proving ground, the indoctrination to full responsibility, with its resultant pressures and strains. It is here that the young pro must immediately establish himself and lay the ground work for the career in golf which he hopes will ultimately lead to a lasting satisfaction and secure, prosperous future. The steps to be taken in gaining a permanent berth in golf are many and varied. There is no iron-clad, rigid method to follow. It varies with the individual, the club and the members whose actions and interests must be analyzed, before a tentative program may be charted.

With these things in mind I am reviewing here the conditions which lead to my being accepted as pro at the Skaneateles (N.Y.) CC and the subsequent period wherein I encountered certain basic problems which a pro must deal with, and the procedures used to cope with them.

In February, 1949, I learned that the Skaneateles job was open. I knew it to be a nine-hole course with about 300 members and from my past experiences as assistant I felt I was qualified to handle the job, so I applied for it and was accepted. I had been the assistant to my father at the Bellevue CC; also had been assistant at the Atlantic City CC and the Baltimore CC and from the teachings I received from each of these positions I hopefully went forward in my new job. I felt that the teachings I had received from my father gave me an advantage over most young pros, as it gave me a more complete knowledge of the numerous conditions to be met.

I was fortunate in getting off to an excellent start at the Skaneateles club. The pro shop was brand new and the club gave me a great deal of leeway in making suggestions for the development of the facilities. My first move upon taking over at the club shortly after before the season opened was to set up a complete summer tournament schedule, in conjunction with the tournament committee. This included sweepstakes each week-end, a member-guest tournament, a club championship, a handicap tournament and home-and-home

matches with clubs in the vicinity. The ladies had a similar schedule with exception of the week-end sweepstakes. I also instituted an A and B classification for the ladies forming a nine and an 18-hole division.

Studies Demand Carefully

In stocking my shop, I carried only premium quality merchandise, ordering in fairly small quantities until I could evaluate the strength of demand. The books were checked regularly to keep an accurate account of sales, and inventory was restricted to enable me to retain sufficient working capital and still provide a wide variety of merchandise for the members. A word of caution here to aspiring assistant pros who will soon become head professionals: care must be used in purchasing equipment, to avoid acquiring items which are short-time fads, and fail to move after the initial buying interest has lagged.

My bookkeeping system was very simple. I instituted a double set of books—one cash and the other charge. The latter was used to carry the charge account plan which I had arranged for the members. Each morning, to facilitate an exact account of my stock I put the same number of balls, tees, caps, socks, etc. in the showcase. In the evening I tallied these items, entering the number sold and their value. Floor merchandise, such as clubs, bags and umbrellas, was entered on a daily sales report and at each week's end, I computed the overall amount of merchandise sold. In this way, I was able to foretell accurately my replacement needs from one day to the next and to make a fluid adjustment as it became necessary. By checking my sales in this manner I was able to carry a small, but complete, stock.

I adhered to a rigid shop schedule. My assistant and I were at the shop at about 8 o'clock each morning. Our day lasted until the last player had left the course. Many of the shop duties were entrusted to my assistant who proved a capable aid. By careful detailing of our tasks we worked in close harmony with each other. Clubs were cleaned on the same day they were used. I made it a policy to remain in the shop until all the clubs used that day

were cleaned irrespective of how late it would be till the chore was completed. Clubs which were in need of repair were placed on the work-bench and we usually had all repairs completed by 11:00 the following day.

Sets Lesson Program

I usually gave lessons in the morning or evening. The afternoons were left open to make myself available to the particular needs of the members. I gave no lessons on Saturday or Sunday as I spent both of these days on the first tee starting the players. I remained there between 11:00 and 2:00 on Saturday and from 8:30 to 10:00 on Sunday as the concentration of players starting is the greatest at these hours. Concerning lesson promotion: I utilized several methods to stimulate interest. One program established involved children between eight and 14 years old. As part of a supervised children's program for athletic recreation, lessons were given three times a week free of charge to these children. This served as a strong attraction to many parents who ordinarily might have overlooked the advantages to be derived from personal instruction. After observing the rapid progress made by the youngsters, a large number of parents took lessons. I greatly encouraged the junior members from 18-22 to take a stronger interest in improving their games. At every opportunity I took an active part in helping these young people to develop their shot-making ability. This also seemed to attract the older people to the need for lessons.

I played very little golf, as I was busy

with lessons and course maintenance. However, when I did play, I made it a point to play with a different group of members each time. By doing this I was able to play at least one round of golf with each of the members before the season was over. Consequently I was successful in dividing my time with each of the club members in fairly equal amounts.

Week-end sweepstakes were one form of sales promotion which I used. A seasonal fee was charged each member and various merchandise was distributed as prizes. About once a month putting contests were held for the children and I would give the winners suitable prizes. This seemed to attract the older members to buy their golf supplies from the shop.

Since my duties as professional did not encompass greenkeeping, I was not responsible for the course maintenance. However, I worked in close contact with the green committee, offering suggestions when requested and doing whatever I could to help keep the course in the best possible playing conditions. I spent several hours each week with the greenkeeper discussing with him various improvements from the golfers' viewpoint, such as placing of cups, position of tee markers, trimming of branches, etc. By taking interest in course activities beyond his normal scope and availing himself of the friendly and expert help of the greenkeeper, the young pro builds a firm foundation of good will with the club members. Diligent attention to such details as I have cited is repaid ten-fold by the re-

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UNDER SHELTERING PALM



Sixteenth green at new Alondra Park CC with a palm as a hazard in the green. This new 18 in Los Angeles (Calif.) County was leased to private operators, Sims, Hollingsworth, Horell and Price who supplied money the county didn't have for constructing another course.

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compliance with his employment, when a sudden dip of a wheel into a rut or hole flung him from the machine, and caused him permanent injury.

His parents, in his behalf, sought compensation for the injury under the state Workman's Compensation Law. The club's employment of the boy was illegal under another state law; and since it is a general principle of law that parties to an illegal contract cannot benefit from it in the courts, the decision in this case denied the right of either the boy or his parents to obtain compensation at the expense of the golf club.

Officials of country clubs and other golf courses may note that the law does not compel them to come within the operation of Workmen's Compensation Laws. The general plan and procedure by which they subject themselves to such laws are outlined in detail by the statutes creating them. The chief feature is the consent of the management filed with the Commission or Board, accompanied by payment into the insurance fund of the amounts specified, or obtaining insurance policies, or giving bond, according to the requirements of the particular statutes of the respective states.

On the other side of the picture, if they do not bring themselves within the provisions of these laws, and happen to be sued by employees for accidental injuries arising out of the employment and as a consequence of it, the law will deprive them of their common law right to defend on the ground, either that the employee assumed the risk, was guilty of contributory negligence, or was barred under the fellow-servant doctrine. That is the penalty for not shielding themselves by complying with the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Laws.

FIRST YEAR AS PRO

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gard the new pro is held by those people whose opinions he values most, his club members and his associates in working for the club.

I wish to stress that though well coached by my father, I gained immeasurably from my experiences while at the Baltimore and the Atlantic City CC and if every young pro will, while he is still an assistant, work hard, study the business and learn to organize the pro shop, he will someday obtain and hold an excellent club job. As a final word, I wish to mention that young pros should have no intention of participating in other than regional tournaments during the season until well established at his club, unless by full understanding and consent of club officials regarding the National Open and the PGA.