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Golf's Radio and TV Shows Need Fresh Showmanship

By STANLEY ANDERSON

Television now affords another opportunity for golf promotion and increasing professionals' earnings and extending the pros' rating as sports celebrities. Although there have been interesting TV golf programs presented and those of Johnny Farrell in New York and the productions of Joe Jemsek and Charley Nash for their Chicago fee courses are going into their third years, and have paid their ways, formula for a strikingly successful golf program still has to be discovered.

Local radio programs on golf have come and gone for years and with the exception of those which have made quite a feature of local golfers' gossip they pretty much follow the same instruction routine. We who are close to golf know how eager golfers are for anything about the game and we sense a vast field for getting into the game through radio and TV programs millions who are in a receptive mood but need some push to action. We've seen some results achieved locally but have to admit that the increase of golf play through radio and TV programs hasn't been up to what logically could be expected.

Accent Entertainment

I think I learned some of the reasons for golf's failure to score on radio and TV when I was putting on a radio golf program in California. Our first shows I thought were quite good but I was corrected by Bing Crosby who had heard them. He advised us to take off our show and start all over. We did that and in the new shows we accented entertainment value. This subtle reminder that golf itself is great entertainment rather than possibly arduous and disappointing instruction, put the show over.

People who specialize in radio and TV, even though they may be enthusiastic golfers, seldom are disposed to regard golf programs as magnetic material for the general public. The reason is that most all of the time we have designed our programs mainly for the golf enthusiast and for him and her alone. We

haven't used imagination and devised a new and broad formula.

"Every golf program ever tried on the air has flopped," so stated the Director of Programs at a studio conference in Chicago. As the originator of "The Golf Doctor," a transcribed radio program, I was naturally alarmed by the statement as we had just completed plans for the program to be heard over a number of stations in the spring. Despite what the Program Director said I believe that he will be proved wrong. Why? Because I believe that we have learned to avoid the obvious pitfalls.

It is strange that of all popular sports, golf should be the least glamorous to the listeners, when you consider that from an historical point of view it is by far the most entrancing. Consider the drama at the trial of Mary Queen of Scots. It is here for the first time that golf is mentioned in writing. The prosecutor used as evidence the fact that The Queen played golf the day after her husband, Lord Darnly, had been murdered. Mary was the first woman to play golf in public, and get away with it. Other women before her had been whipped for doing such an unwomanly thing in public. The drama of golf has seldom been put across on the air. Noted broadcasters at the National Open rarely seem to put the zest into their descriptions of the play that they do in other sports. Probably the most dramatic moment that golf has known on the radio was when a broadcaster was describing the final putt of Bobby Locke in a Tam O'Shanter tournament. Air time was up and the broadcaster was cut off right at the moment that Locke struck the putt and before the ball dropped. Thousands phoned the studio to know whether he dropped the putt or not. Or did they phone to know if he had won the \$11,000 first prize?

In a golf program there should be not more than a few minutes of actual instruction. More is too much for most peo-

ple to grasp, and in most cases would be boring to the listeners. Our Golf Doctor program has exactly one minute of instruction, and that is all. To produce a golf program successfully one must regard the matter as a theatrical venture in miniature. Good direction, script writing, and timing are essential. Add to that humor, drama, fact, and fiction, and you have a real little show. We of course have been lucky to have such outstanding stars of the theatre and radio as Jimmy Durante, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Danny Kaye, and many others. But as well as they we have Olin Dutra, Ben Hogan, Tommy Armour, and lots more.

Some people seem to have the idea that all you have to do to have a golf radio program is to have on the air Hogan, Snead, Mangrum, Nelson or some other headliners. That of course is nonsense, even if all had sparkling showmanship and vivid personalities. A radio program should be fit for all people to listen to whatever the subject.

As we made our program I began to learn why it was that the big names were the big names. To give you an idea of what I mean: it took Jimmy Durante two hours to cut 15 minutes for us. He would not give his O.K. till he had got it perfect. Linda Darnell made four records before she was satisfied.

I am told that there are in America nearly five million people who play or have played golf. From a commercial point of view that is a huge public to attack. But the point is that these people will not listen unless the program is entertainment as well as instruction, and that is why golf programs often miss fire. Even when Hollywood made the Bobby Jones movies they brought in film stars to add to the attraction, and so with television today golf will appeal to the public when it is wrapped in something besides golf.

Let some enterprising person take a camera to the strong room at St. Andrews and make a film of all the historic implements of play throughout the ages. You will see old golf balls, old golf clubs; all the ancient implements of play that introduced the game to the stubborn English, who refused to play the game at all until the king of Scotland forced them to. Let the same camera take a picture of the modern golf ball factory, then those who watch the television will wonder why they can't hit the ball further! They bounce so beautifully when they are being tested.

The vast range of personal interest in golf, its technicalities which are such that almost every golfer who can shoot 100 immediately appoints himself instructor for the 105 shooter, and the fact that it's for young and old, male and female, give golf a multitude of radio and television

program possibilities that are unworked.

We in golf need to make a fresh approach to the radio and TV possibilities and begin getting the customers into our act.

Golf Writers Name Tufts Their Man of the Year

Richard S. (Dick) Tufts, pres., Pinehurst, Inc., was elected by the Golf Writers Assn. as the man who did most for golf in 1950. Dick's nomination was by 618 votes from the 161 of the Writers' membership who voted. Writers were allowed to name four men with 5 points going to the first named. Mayor Jim Rhodes of Columbus, O., was second with 487.

Tufts's service through his USGA work as chmn. of championship, green, implements and ball, handicap and junior championship committees plainly identified him as a top working man for the good of golf. His understanding of the problems of the game, his wide acquaintance among amateurs, pros, greenkeepers and golf writers and his helpfulness to them all, should have made Dick one of the nation's leading candidates for ulcers but by virtue of a grand disposition, clean living and keeping regular hours — qualities highly rated by golf writers — he receives the Bill Richardson memorial award for the past year. Previous winners of the award are Bob Hudson, Scotty Fessenden and Bing Crosby.

1949 Golf Equipment Sales Over \$30 Million

Total sales of golf equipment for the year 1949 amounted to \$30,751,418, 34 per cent of the \$88,832,576 total sales of all athletic and sporting goods equipment, according to a census report recently completed by the Athletic Goods Manufacturing Assn.

A summary of golf equipment sales based on the factory selling price exclusive of excise tax shows:

1,919,560 irons	\$ 8,110,946
1,081,609 woods	6,633,704
3,001,169 golf clubs	14,744,650
2,248,745 dozen golf balls	12,695,061
457,703 golf bags	2,986,232
Other golf equipment	325,475

Total

\$30,751,418

Totals of other sporting goods sales were:

Baseball equipment	\$20,312,555
Inflated goods	7,556,147
Tennis equipment	4,015,970
Helmets, pads, etc.	2,548,452
Athletic shoes	12,803,214
Miscellaneous items	10,844,820

Total

\$88,832,576