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Business School Plan Is Need of Pro Golf

By HERB GRAFFIS

When the late "Doc" Treacy was national secretary of the PGA he and I got up the first professional business short course. It was put on at the Morrison hotel, Chicago, and drew about 100 pros and assistants for two days of intensive study of pro business.

Some pros who were there probably remember very well features of that program that contributed greatly to pro business progress. One was the lecture on the physical construction of the golfer, by the late Dr. Robert Dyer, a distinguished surgeon and lecturer at the University of Illinois medical school. Dr. Dyer was an enthusiastic golfer. He and Alex Cunningham who then was pro at North Shore CC (Chicago dist.) to which Dyer belonged, developed a putter grip so designed that it would co-ordinate the hands, wrists and forearms and keep the putter blade on the line.

The grip was illegal by later standards, but it worked. The flaw in practical application of the plan was the difficulty in determining the line. Nobody yet has gone into the factor of defective eyesight accounting for a lot of putting errors although I've talked with several eye specialists who are golfers and have heard them say the vision of some golfers made it impossible to get the right line to the cup, especially if there happened to be a delicate borrow on the green.

An oculist who followed Hagen during the National Open of 1935 at Oakmont, when Walter finished third (three strokes back of Parks and one back of Jimmy Thomson), said that if Walter had worn glasses and corrected his vision so his fine putting stroke would have been on the line, the championship would have gone to Hagen.

I've heard other oculists say that Hogan, Nelson and Sarazen appear to have eyes perfectly fitted to golf.

In Dyer's lecture he only touched on the matter of eyesight in golf but went rather intensively into an outline of bones, muscles and nerves in the mechanics of the

golfer. His charts and sketches gave pros a simple, though necessarily limited, explanation of the physical machinery they were handling in their own games and in the games of those they were teaching.

Application of the Science

There was another phase of that session that pros who attended will recall. That was Bob MacDonald's interpretation of the Dyer lecture as it applied to the lesson tee. Bob, then and now one of the great analysts and teachers in pro golf, took the ball from Dr. Dyer and showed how an understanding of the pupil's physical make-up could be used in making teaching more effective.

I recall that after that tie-up of the Dyer and MacDonald instruction, there were pros who remarked that Bob, in so quickly utilizing the techniques of another expert, showed how the alert and competent teaching professional must always catch helpful instruction ideas and not keep his mind closed because he thought he knew about all there was to be known in his business.

There was another historic stage in golf instruction I saw at a Minnesota PGA business session when Prof. John Anderson of the University of Minnesota spoke on the fundamental psychology of instruction. Prof. Anderson is such an authority he is hired by General Motors as an advisor in GM's programs for training of employees in manual operations.

Endorsement by Veterans

Tommy Armour and Willie Kidd, two who are rated by pros as being top men among experienced and effective instructors, declared that Prof. Anderson's address was a sound, scientific explanation of the most valuable points in their own years of teaching and brought into sharp focus some details of their own experience that they'd never vividly understood.

These incidents of acknowledged leaders in pro golf enthusiastically acknowledging the valuable cooperation and help of out-

side authorities were significant. In any business or profession the leaders are those who are constantly hunting for opportunities to make use of the brains of others in addition to their own.

The A-bomb is probably the most conspicuous case of the coordinated and focused use of many brains. There are many lesser cases, one of which is in golf. The greenkeepers in pooling their own brains with those of the USGA Green Section specialists, the turf research scientists of universities and manufacturers, and with state agricultural and Department of Ag-

CHEAPEST STUNT OF THE MONTH

In a Chicago district pro shop two characters who by some mistake were accepted as private club members were looking at a display of golf bags. One of them had a golf catalog in his hand.

The catalog carrier pointed to a bag, then to an illustration in the catalog. "It's the same bag," he said to the other fellow, then asked the price of the bag.

The assistant gave the price.

The two turned away and the catalog carrier said triumphantly to his companion: "It's a deal then; I'll get it for you wholesale."

riculture authorities have made tremendous progress in golf course maintenance standards. Without this organized interchange of knowledge and directed research, golf course condition would not come anywhere close to the general excellence of today's courses and the cost of maintaining a course in even fair condition by today's standards would be prohibitive.

Pros Need Greenkeepers' Plan

There still is nothing in pro golf approximating the numerous greenkeeping short courses. The sectional PGA meetings come much closer to these valuable educational affairs than the PGA annual national meeting ever has been able to get, although of recent years the PGA annual meeting has added business educational sessions after considerable prodding by GOLFDOM.

That neglect has cost pros heavily. It's being cured but not fast enough. Studious pros, old and young, plainly see that one factor speeding progress in pro instruction is association with the college physical educators. The pros who see how colleges plan and study physical education work and strive to go at the job on a thoroughly scientific basis clearly realize how much has to be done in organizing research and methods in golf instruction.

It has dawned upon many pros who have become acquainted with physical education

in colleges and universities that the pro has the most difficult job in physical education. His pupils usually are older, muscularly inept and taking lessons and practice on no set schedule. The P.E. instructor at schools has a cinch compared with the job the pro is expected to do.

Thoughtful pros comment on the beneficial effect of junior instruction. The obvious problem of getting a lot of kids interested, the necessity of wisely organizing the class work, and the opportunity of closely comparing results with different types of pupils has caused several pros to remark that teaching the kids has taught them something about getting better results in the instruction of the kids' parents.

It must be obvious to any pro that all possible junior instruction is insurance for the future of pro golf, now that the bag carts and a changed attitude of kids has diminished the caddy factor in providing new golfers. Pros are simply making payments on a job insurance policy with junior instruction.

A bright thing about junior instruction is the great improvement in junior scoring. That's probably the plainest available evidence of the value of pro instruction. Compare the scores of caddy tournaments 15 years ago with the scores of junior tournaments this year and you'll see a much greater average of improvement than there has been in tournament golf.

This improvement in junior scoring is a very hopeful sign for the future of pro business. Each pro knows that with few exceptions the better an amateur scores, the more he or she plays. Shop business is in direct ratio to the amount of play.

Shop Schooling Is Needed

Shop business also could stand a vast amount of organized and regular education. Pros complain about the difficulty of getting the right sort of shop assistants but when they do get youngsters who are potentially good, the assistants' training is pretty much a hit-and-miss affair. Something in pro golf on the order of the greenkeeping short courses is greatly needed for the assistants, as well as for the pros, who are smart enough to know there always is plenty more worth knowing about golf merchandising.

At a lot of pro shops there is a surplus inventory and the season is drawing toward a close in the north and central states. But have you seen signs of clearance sales on the general plan in other seasonal businesses? The only thing of this kind ever done on an extensive basis in pro golf was the "Birdie" sales campaign offered to pros by GOLFDOM some years ago and which, after strenuous campaigning, was fairly well used by pros in converting inventory into a profit.

The problem of moving merchandise late in the season is as perennial with pros as

turf disease problems are with course superintendents. Some lucky years may be trouble-free and preventive treatment or revision of maintenance practices may enable the superintendent to escape trouble but the escape has been bought at the price of years of organized study by the superintendents and associated turf scientists.

No similar coordinated work has been applied to the pro over-stock problem. In some sections surplus merchandise is moved from shop to shop and pros can pay suppliers' accounts instead of shipping the merchandise back to have it eventually unloaded through competitive and cut-price retail outlets and upset the pro market.

Much has to be done in this direction and much can be done under the leadership of many pros who are remarkably capable retailers. Fellows such as Spencer Murphy, Harry Bassler, Al Sargent, Willie Hunter, Al Ciuci, Willie Klein, Harry Obitz, Bill Gordon, Pat Markovich, Al Watrous — to name only a few of the smart pro merchants — rate alongside almost any first class retailers in specialty lines.

The PGA effort to get the merchandising educational problems solved has improved since Eddie Duino took over chairmanship of the association's educational committee, but it's still a 30-handicap operation because of lack of a required budget. Even a

quarter as much money as is allotted to tournament operations, if allotted to work on the pro merchandising problems, would mean a great increase in pro profits and a decided reduction in pro merchandising difficulties.

The tournament bureau investment has paid off in the development of a big prize money schedule. Now, as the PGA has the urgent problem of revising its budget and raising dues to meet increased operating costs, the matter of devoting more organized, constructive effort to improvement of business of home club pros must be headlined.

That problem of self-reliance in financing, instead of depending on rich, generous and enthusiastic amateur angels kicking in has been tough for PGA treasurers by an organization policy of not supplying all members with detailed financial statements. Until that's done the PGA is not setting much of an example for thorough study of pro golf business financial phases.

The individual performances of numerous home club professionals as businessmen has set a high standard and eventually that will be the general standard. The job to be done now is to quicken progress toward that general standard. Such a job requires a well financed plan of organized schooling.

MAIDEN TOUR OF AMERICAN PROS



American girl pros who won European trip from Alvin Handmacher for performance in Weathervane trophy have amazed British with showings against men pros and amateurs and European women amateur stars. Tour may result in British girl stars turning pro. The Yankee tourists, L to R: Betty Bush, Peggy Kirk, Betty Jameson, Babe Zaharias, Patty Berg (winner of Weathervane U.S. cross-country tournament) and Betty Rawls. Fred Corcoran managed the tour and Specs Hammond attended to travel details.