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# Assistant's Training Is Mark of A Good Pro

By JOE GRAFFIS

An interesting situation has developed in pro golf. This year, there has been no difficulty in getting numerous applications for fair to good pro jobs but there is a decided shortage of desirable assistants. The draft is taking some young men who are qualified as first class assistants, others are enlisting to get military service out of the way and be able to stay in golf careers when they return, and quite a few assistants who are World War II veterans have graduated into pro jobs.

Experienced club officials hiring young pros are learning to ask about what backgrounds the candidates have as assistants. Training as an assistant under capable master pros definitely outranks tournament performance as a factor in getting a pretty fair pro job at most clubs. The club officials put some weight on tournament performance but not too much; they wonder whether the lad with the tournament bug will be inclined to spend time at the club on his own game at the expense of the members' games. Pros who look for dependable assistants also have that matter of the youngsters' tournament ambitions in mind. The pros want assistants to work for the club, not primarily for tournament honors.

## Have to Work at Golf

There is no trouble in filling assistants' jobs with youngsters who want to play at golf. The trouble is in getting lads who are willing to work at golf. Work for the members and work on an assistant's own game can be successfully combined by a young fellow who has sound judgment and willingness to put in long hours. That has been plainly demonstrated by younger players who have done well on the tournament circuit the past two winters. But almost without exception these younger fellows worked for competent master pros who made certain that the assistants worked on their own games before and after they'd taken care of the members.

The late Bob Barnett had a policy that most successful professionals apply. Bob used to tell his assistants that they could give all the time they needed to their own games before 9 a.m. and after members'

play was over in the afternoon. That policy, reinforced by the top pro's presence in the morning helping his assistants with their golf, has contributed greatly to the development of some fine younger players and teachers.

Club officials seldom know much about hiring pros. They often settle their hiring problem by getting an experienced man away from another club, getting a youngster with a pleasing personality who happens to register favorably with several members of the hiring committee, or depending on the judgment of an impartial outsider who is expected to have a sound idea of what the club needs and who would be best qualified to fill that need. Ability, dependability, personality, credit rating and indications of business judgment are qualities considered but some of these qualities are difficult to appraise accurately.

## Who Taught the Pro?

In the case of the younger fellows who apply for jobs undoubtedly the strongest element in getting a job when knowing officials are doing the hiring is "who trained him as a pro?" During the past several months GOLFDOM has received numerous letters from club officials asking what sort of training young applicants for pro jobs may have received under pros whose names they gave as former employers. Obviously the club officials knew that if the young men had been well trained by competent professionals and had satisfied these professionals the youngsters were qualified to graduate into pro jobs of their own.

Assistant selection and training always has been one of the important parts of a good pro's job at a good club. You probably have heard tales about pros holding back on development of assistants for fear the assistants would become good enough to get the older pro's job. During 30 years I have seen comparatively few assistants forcing out the pros who hired them and have rather marvelled at there being so few cases considering the politics that often account for curious actions at golf clubs. There have been many cases

of assistants succeeding pros at jobs where the older men have moved to better jobs, retired or died.

In the vast majority of cases the better assistant a pro has the more secure he is in his job.

What club officials don't often realize, but every first class pro knows, is that a shop where's there's \$4000 to \$8000 worth of merchandise and the pro must spend a lot of time on the lesson tee a first class assistant and an alert and competent shop boy must be on the job. The pro wouldn't dare take a chance with help he couldn't trust to provide a satisfactory substitute for the expert personal attention he gives in making a profit out of his shop and serving his members satisfactorily.

### Being Taught to Teach

Then there's the essential of teaching. This exacting job requires much more pro training of assistants than members ever imagine is done in the well conducted pro department. Learning to teach golf properly is something that requires much time, the development of keen observation and mastery of practical psychology which quite often defeats the young pro or assistant who is trying to instruct an old, muscle-bound male member or a woman pupil who seems to be athletically almost hopeless. There is enough variation in teaching techniques to have average golfers confused and further confusion from a variation between a pro and his assistants is something that destroys the confidence pupils could be expected to have in golf instruction. The assistant who has been taught to teach by a man

who knows how always has an edge in applying for a job where informed officials are doing the hiring.

Some youngsters who want assistant jobs don't have the first requirements of neatness and initiative. They are careless about their own appearance, dress too sloppy to be around a shop where golf apparel is to be sold, hand out merchandise with their fingernails filthy, and have to be frequently reminded to keep the shop stock arranged attractively and the whole shop immaculately clean. When such assistants are in shops they reflect on the pros who hire them and keep them.

But the assistant who looks, thinks and acts like he is on his way to having a pro job of his own is one who mirrors the character of the successful pro who has hired him and is training him. He doesn't have to be taught everything about the business. He looks around him and learns by seeing where he can help without being told.

The pro has to direct and encourage this sort of interest by the assistant. The better the assistant turns out to be, the higher the pro who trained him is rated.

With the publicity accent on tournament golf the younger fellows sometimes may be inclined to think all there is to holding a pro job is to win a few tournaments. But they learn the hard way when they have to satisfy 300 members who are paying dues, not for the privilege of associating with the winner of tournament prize money but for getting their own money's worth out of the club.

## SCORECARDS TELL THE STORY



Left: Front of Richmond (Calif.) GC scorecard shows aerial photograph of course with holes diagrammed. This view aids outsiders who are allowed to play this private club at times during the week, and allows all players who are so disposed to point out exactly where their shots went. (In case anybody can be made to listen or gives a damn.) Right: A missed shot scorecard supplied by two Richmond (Calif.) merchants helps players determine just what are weak department of their games. Richmond pro Pat Markovich says this card tips off players when they need lessons and in what shots.