

# Planning A Business Career in Professional Golf

By VICTOR EAST

(Address at Illinois PGA Spring Meeting)

This year is my silver anniversary in professional golf and to record some of the experiences I've had in this business so they may be helpful to others I'm writing a book on "A Half Century of Golf." Some of its material I want to present here in suggesting what the assistant professional might do to improve his status.

When a man looks at professional golf as a career he must consider:

The advantages and disadvantages of the game of golf.

The changed and ever-changing pattern of the golf profession.

The over-all purpose of professional golf.

The advantages of the game for the most part consist of an enjoyable recreation for the amateur and an enjoyable occupation for the professional, within a healthful environment for both.

How the professional can best capitalize and obtain a substantial reward for his part in this happy set-up requires much objective thinking. The fact should be recognized that golf is an all-absorbing and fascinating game and is apt to throw the professional-to-be off guard, in that, as the caddie of today, he all too frequently gets into the game without getting enough education to fit him for his chosen vocation and he thus has a continuing handicap to worthwhile advancement. Therefore, it is my suggestion to the assistant that he give serious consideration to taking extension courses of instruction embracing business training and English — both are of vital importance.

Actually, I could have put the subject of English first for, in an everyday way, here's how it more generally works: The probabilities are a youth gets started as a shop-boy. He keeps the place clean and helps in the arrangement of merchandise according to his employer's direction. He cleans the members' clubs and, in doing so, keeps track of their locations by the numerical and alphabetical storage charts and at intervals he is brought in contact with his boss' customers, the club members. It is right here where the pattern of his future takes shape, for, if he speaks well, the individual members become impressed, and more generally make comment to others of the impression.

The further probabilities are the young man, in spite of the long hours necessarily

used in his employment, will find the time to practice and from this he could probably develop into a good player. Provided the quality of his club-cleaning and shop work have been well done and he has shown ability in keeping track of such things as 'phone or other messages and his records have been well kept, he will unquestionably be put in the way of making sales of minor items, from where he, sooner or later, advances to becoming an assistant professional and, as such, will in all probability take on the overload of instruction at the club, included in which will more generally be the teaching of juniors.

This matter of prescribing and directing the efforts of others is the next important step — where his knowledge or lack of it will determine his prospects of becoming a graduate professional.

## Making Words Work

With the juniors he, for the most part, will rely more on demonstration than explanation, but with the adults it will be necessary to describe what is best to do any why it has to be done. Here's where words and their meaning will be of the utmost importance because, dependent upon them, the responses of the individual pupils will be either good or bad. Almost needless to state, if the words used do not produce the desired reactions from the respective pupils, their progress and attendant pleasure will suffer, as will the reputation of the teacher.

Hence, the suggestion made of being well schooled in English. In making this suggestion, kindly do not think I have any claim to being a paragon of good English. Perhaps the suggestion arises from knowledge of my shortcomings on the subject. In obtaining the fulfillment of possibilities in a professional golf career my counsel, particularly to the younger men, would be to avoid the disadvantages that can come from any neglect in becoming trained in good business principles and to make certain of becoming well schooled in the understanding of words.

At about the turn of the century, if one wanted the classification of a professional, it was first necessary to become a club-maker. To that end mention might be made of how lame my back became from sawing shafts from planks of hickory shortly after starting my apprenticeship,

and how another set of muscles ached following a subsequent change to a different kind of sawing and otherwise shaping wood heads from large knee-shaped blocks.

### Skill and Sweat in "Old Days"

Veteran pros, aside from remembering the necessary skill and work for the making of new clubs, will recall how adept one had to be to restore or repair the broken "heels" and "toes" of wood club faces, caused from the mishitting of the solid "gutty" balls of the era. It would indeed have been a rarity in those days, if there were not an accumulation of such jobs after every normal weekend of play; split and broken shafts were pretty much an every-day happening and wood heads snapped off at the neck were almost as common.

There's nothing of special importance and learning to come from a recital of things gone by, except it will serve to show the change that has taken place. Just how much of a change can perhaps be gathered by my telling of how long it took to reshaft an iron.

Starting with a one-inch square strip of hickory, the fitting, riveting, rasping, planing, filing, scraping and sandpapering to a finished shape, the staining, shellacing, gripping and final finishing were by actual time study all completed within 20 to 25 minutes. This will convey some idea of the tempo and general nature of the work prior to the advent of the rubber-cored ball.

With the coming later of the steel shaft and other synthetic controllable superior materials, as well as mechanization with mass production, there have been no end of changes, so that today an assistant professional need only to know the simpler things in being able to do the general line of relatively minor repairs. It is as well this is so, as time can be more profitably used for the learning and applying of the

best principles for merchandising and selling goods, as well as attending to the services that mean so much to the healthful pleasure of the amateurs, the sum total of which adds up to the means from which the whole profession derives its livelihood.

Let's take a little further look into some of the details of today's requirements and see whether some simple pattern can be outlined for the advancement of the assistant professional, thereby for the profession as a whole, and beyond for all branches of the golf industry.

### Assistant's Training Course

I have mentioned the advisability of business training and study of English. In a combination of both these points, I have set down a list of items to which the assistant professional might well address himself; they are as follows:

Become versed in a suitable and simple method of bookkeeping, including inventory control.

Know all phases of caddy service.

Make a careful study of merchandise and merchandising.

Improve knowledge of the golf stroke.

Become proficient in fitting clubs to individuals.

Study the best methods of imparting instruction.

Become increasingly familiar with course construction and maintenance techniques.

Learn how to improve member, committee, community and human relations.

There are many other items that could be added, but it is a safe bet that any young man who becomes reasonably proficient in the foregoing will not only be able to do his employer an excellent service, but, in so doing, will advance his own interests within the common field of endeavor.

There is one other aspect of the change that has taken place in golf as it relates to the junior or assistant professional. This has to do with whether to concentrate on becoming a tournament player or not.

It is indeed gratifying to observe the PGA has at long last recognized the playing professional and has done something in the direction of changing the outmoded constitution and by-laws, to recognize the tournament activity as being a highly important part of the total golf picture. When one pauses to think about the five-year clause and remembers its original intention was to cover the average period for the apprentice to become qualified as a clubmaker in the olden days, which necessity no longer exists, it is reasonable to suppose the period of qualification will, under certain conditions, undergo a change.

I might touch on what an assistant professional might think about if he is of a mind to try to become a tournament player.

(Continued on page 64)



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Men of the press also had their innings at the two-day meeting with representatives of the Detroit News, The Detroit Free Press and the United Press addressing a session with full attendance in spite of the competitive attraction of the opening day of the baseball season.

Other features of the meeting included: Discussion of the USGA Handicapping System led by Ray Maguire, Rules discussion by Warren Orlick, a Sales Educational film with introductory remarks by Joe Devaney and reports by PGA secretary Horton Smith and other national delegates.

A specially designed Birthday card was signed by all members present and forwarded to Leo Diegel.

The section voted against permitting Class H members to participate in the Sectional Championship. Non-PGA members are permitted to play in Pro-Am and other events after they are passed on by the tournament committee.

The following candidates were submitted for office in the national PGA for 1952: Horton Smith for president, Harry Moffet, Treasurer and Harold Sargent, Secretary.

### PLANNING A CAREER

(Continued from page 41)

The first question he should put to himself is, "How well does my temperament

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measure up to the requirements?" If, as a result of study and comparison between his own make-up and those of the individual champions of the present and more recent past, the decision be that he does or can qualify by temperament, then the next question and the one beyond could well be, "Are the mechanics of my golf swing sound enough to stand up under stress of tournament play and, if not, what should be done to make them so?"

In 1921 I saw Bob Jones play golf for the first time. This was at St. Andrews, Scotland. He competed there in the British Open championship and, being the idealist that he surely was, he, under disappointment of something that went a bit wrong with a couple of shots, decided against returning his score card.

His form, together with the serious earnestness of his make-up, impressed me so greatly I there and then decided I would back him in every championship in which he subsequently started. Well, I lost money for a couple of years, but at no time was my confidence shaken in Bob's ability to win and so, as you may well know, my continued backing of him proved to be a good investment.

#### Jones Questioned His Swing

In telling you this, there is something other than the betting angle in mind, which, incidentally, I could have told you pretty



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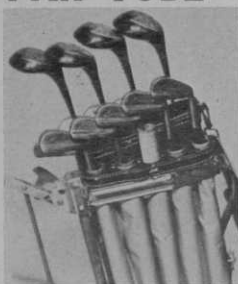
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much the same sort of thing about, in the backing of Walter Hagen and Gene Sarazen, for it was this same year of 1921 when I first saw these great players too. After getting back from Scotland to the States, the occasion developed for me to have what became a serious talk with Bob about his golf game. This was at the Columbus CC where he, Bob Macdonald, Joe Kirkwood and Jock Hutchison (Jock had won the 1921 British Open) were to play an exhibition match one Saturday afternoon. About 11 o'clock of that morning Bob, while we were sort of sunning ourselves in a comfortable spot near the clubhouse, proceeded to tell me how he was going to change his swing. Quite apart from the friendship that had normally sprung up between us, which in itself would have brought about an attentive listening, my earlier made intention to bet on him added to my keenness to take in the description he gave me of the proposed change. As he went along, I formed the opinion the change he contemplated would not be productive of as sound a swing as he already had, and I said that, being older and more experienced, I would, if he didn't mind, like to offer my viewpoint on the mechanics of the one and the other procedure, following which he could afterwards decide for himself the soundest method. I do not recall

all that he said, after my explanation, but it remains in my mind he started off by saying, "I guess you are right," and finished up with the statement to the effect he would leave his swing alone.

Now, having seen other young men, in their eagerness to improve, spoil a good swing, and fearing Bob might get off on some other experimentation, it then occurred to me to take up another and highly important aspect of changing one's form. To bring this vividly to his attention, I said, "How old are you, Bob?" He said 21. "How long have you played?" I inquired. He replied, "Oh, I don't know about that except I've been hitting a ball around since I was four years old." "Well," said I, "let's, as a base, just suppose you have averaged 50 strokes a day for 17 years — what would that add up to?" Quick calculation was made, although the total figure of 300,000 then arrived at was not quite right, using it, I said to him, "Now, suppose the mechanics of your contemplated change had been better than your present method, what then? Isn't it reasonable to suppose you would have to repeat the performance of it at least 300,000 times or more for your muscles to acquire the habit so as to dominate the use of the new way over your present method?" He agreed this was a reasonable assumption.

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Not wanting anything to interfere with my chances of making a little money on Bob, I next decided to keep track of whether he was indulging in any new theories and, in this regard, arranged with one of the press service representatives to, at some later time, ask Bob Jones the question of what he particularly had in mind when hitting a ball and was delighted when an AP message later on reached me in Australia that went substantially like this:

"Replying to a question put to him regarding what he had in mind when making a golf shot, Bobby Jones simply said, 'Well, I guess I just try to hit the ball!'"

In my "Half Century of Golf" material, I, of course, elaborate upon this experience — not merely to show how far one will go in the selfish interest of making a little money, but more particularly to bring out the point that, at one time or another, every young golfer comes to the crossroads of his own game and I try to bring out how important it is that he make the right decisions. Never attempt any change without having some high speed moving pictures taken and, where any doubt develops, to take up the subject with a professional advisor.

We all know that technology has con-

tributed greatly to the production of material goods and, as a result, society is provided with its everyday needs in greater quantity and variety, with an ever decreasing number of man-hours required for the production of the goods. Along with this modern method of making more and more in less time, there automatically develops more time for leisure and recreation. In consequence, as I see it, there has been such a golden opportunity for the golf industry and, particularly, the golf profession to capitalize on the shortened work week. Of course, I am thinking more of normal rather than the abnormal times brought on by the war-preparedness program our nation is now engaged in, but, even with things as they are, the chances of expansion in the golf market have never been more advantageous.

One of the several ways in which the efforts of the assistant professionals can be directed to capitalize on the existing situation and at the same time provide themselves with opportunities of gaining valuable experience is within the ever-increasing field of industrial recreation.

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group instruction to office employees—one group is of a large insurance company. He does this during the winter months and, from the instruction angle, as well as from the equipment supplied to the pupils, it nets him a direct and satisfactory monetary return. What it particularly does, from the broader standpoint, however, is that it brings golf to the attention of people who otherwise might never consider taking up the game and there's little need for me to add that once started few ever give it up.

Particular reference was made of what is being done in Canada because there the outdoor golfing season is even shorter than in this vicinity, but what applies there obtains here and brings out in some relief one of the major problems of the assistant golf professional, which is that, being rarely able to make enough income in the regular season to maintain his yearly outgo, he has to seek supplementary employment and such is not always an easy thing to get. This matter of Industrial Golf and the assistant professionals' association with it is but one part of the over-all purpose of the golf profession, and I will tell you about one other aspect of the over-all picture.

This has to do with what might, at first, appear to be beyond the ordinary line of duty which the professional owes to his club. To describe the point, an actual experience will be related.

Before golf got to be a big business and become organized as such with the formation of the more recent golf or country club set-up, the more common practice was for a small group to get together to play the game. They would take themselves off to some place where land was available and, more often than otherwise, they would rent the land on which the links or course would be laid out.

Such a condition prevailed at Bondi, Australia. There litigation developed about the ownership of the piece of land on which the second green and the approach to it were located and the court decision resulted in the land being divided. This, in turn, resulted in a subdivision fence being erected so that it ran right through the green and diagonally cut off the approach.

The club committee and members were much exercised by the inconveniences and sought relief with plans to re-design the course—the taking in of another piece of rented property was part of the project.

The club professional took the view that too much uncertainty applied to the use of rented property and made the recommendation the club purchase a tract of land that, having been condemned for building purposes, would insure perpetuity of use for golf and which could be successfully used for the making of several courses.

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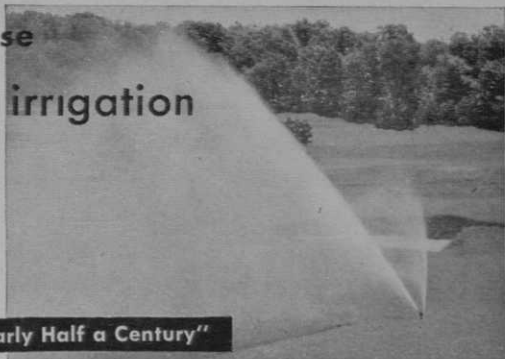
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### MAINTENANCE OF TEES

*(Continued from page 34)*

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