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The Professional Must Star at Public Relations Work

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Incidents involving tournament golfers in the past year have made thinking golf professionals consider, more than ever before, the proper and profitable relationship between all professionals and the public.

The tournament professional has been substantially encouraged and rewarded by golf manufacturers and the public as the "show window" of golf and in this position has definite responsibilities. He is supposed to be a prize exhibit of a game which grew into popularity partially because it is traditionally regarded as a gentleman's game. There is no denying that in this democracy the social status of most of the earlier American golfers had much to do with getting a socially aspiring multitude introduced to golf.

Conditions have changed and we've lost sight of that social factor in the earlier history of American golf but the changes haven't been so drastic as to eliminate from golf the unique feature of a written code of etiquette which implies other details of good sportsmanship and good manners which don't appear in type in the rule book.

Consequently any violation of the code of good manners inherent in golf is regarded by the public as an offense that might be excused if the offender were engaged in the sordid business of professional boxing, but as an offense unpardonable in golf. Hence the home club professionals as well as the admirable playing professions, have been aware lately of unwarranted and dangerous risk of the good will upon which all pro golf business is based.

And, to face the facts squarely, it's a good thing that bad publicity from the tournament circuit has had reactions that have been mentioned by amateurs to the home club pros, whether the home club pros are at private clubs, resort courses, public or semi-public courses. The inci-

dents have caused the home club pros to think about their own public relations.

There's little, if anything, a home club pro can do about the failure of a tournament player to have due regard for the public. The home club pro may not be disposed to encourage those who might think of holding a tournament at his club and risk embarrassment by the public relations neglect of some tournament artists, but other than that the home club professional is inclined to confine himself strictly to his homework.

Public Relations Above Criticism

Now, with bad tournament circuit publicity distressingly frequent, the home club pro must give complete and studious attention to making his own public relations absolutely immune to criticism. It's his own performance in public relations he's got to worry about, not the errors of a few tournament players.

For, in the last analysis, the public relations part of the home club professional's job is the most important part of his work.

Look at the professionals who have been in profitable jobs with good clubs for years.

Are they great players? Not always. Some of them have only local reputations as players and frequently those reputations are for play in years past.

Are they great teachers? Not always. Teaching golf is an art that's difficult to appraise. Let's say that quite a few of these men in excellent jobs are better than merely satisfactory teachers and have done what we in pro golf recognize as very good jobs in teaching a lot of members, who really are basically 100-shooters, to score in the high 80s.

Are they geniuses in maintaining golf courses? Very, very rarely. Golf course maintenance at a first class layout now is such a complex and exacting job it

requires the undivided attention of a specialist, just as the professional's job does.

Then, what is the common denominator of all the professionals who have held good jobs for years, and with high satisfaction to the members?

They are all first class practical men in public relations.

A professional may wonder why another pro got a job for which there were a couple of hundred applicants. The fellow who doesn't get the job is baffled by his failure and the other man's success, and often attributes the other fellow's success to having an "in" or being the personality kid and losing a couple of dollars in a pleasant way to the strongest politicians on the club board.

But, cold analysis of all the factors in the decision, if the facts ever were completely known, would show the man who got the job as having the best public relations program.

The professional is the public relations man of the club, on his job at the club—private or public—and away from it. If he doesn't—in every detail of appearance, conduct and talk—properly reflect the best aspect of his club's over-all character he isn't doing the sort of a public relations job that the club should demand of a qualified pro.

Can't Neglect Details

There are no details the professional can neglect in his public relations work. His personal grooming, first of all, must be such that every man, woman and child at the club can think well of him as their personal representative.

I sometimes wonder how professionals can neglect their hands when the pro's hands, in teaching, are so often in close evidence. The professional doesn't need to spend what Hagen used to spend for manicuring but at least can have his nails clean and trimmed, and his hands immaculate. That is just one little, but very important, point that goes among the many that must be considered in the pro's public relations program.

There is absolutely no phase of his relations with the public that he can neglect.

It may not be the most appropriate citation to make but I submit one of the most notable success stories in public relations as having possibility of application in some pro situations. A large oil company some years ago engaged a prominent public relations consultant to study its marketing. After months of field work and investigation the public relations expert advised the company to make the toilets at its service stations as clean as toilets are in good homes—and to keep the toilets that way. That one

suggestion, having nothing directly to do with marketing gas and oil, but plenty to do with public relations, meant millions of dollars in added business to the oil company and set a new standard in oil company service to motorists.

When you look at some pro shops you can see that the public relations lesson for which the oil company paid a very high price, can be applied. The shop needn't be large, but if it's to do its proper job in the pro's public relation's plan is must be absolutely immaculate, neat, bright and orderly.

Program at the Club

The professional's own staff, even if it's just one assistant who has to double as caddy-master, must be public relations conscious.

And certainly the pro can't do a good public relations job unless his relations with the course superintendent and the club manager are on the basis of genuinely cordial and understanding cooperation. Cooperation calls for giving, as well as receiving. We all see cases around clubs where some department head complains that he doesn't get cooperation from other department heads, and we know that the reason he doesn't get any cooperation is because he never has showed any enthusiasm in giving any.

This matter of public relations shines brightly before us at the Lakeside course which is operated in conjunction with the Grand Hotel at Point Clear, Ala., as an enterprise of the Waterman Steamship interests.

E. A. Roberts, chairman of the Waterman board, is a golf enthusiast as well as one of the foremost executives in international transportation. He sees, in every possible impression of the course, its personnel, and the entire operating picture, a chance to make the player subconsciously think well of everything the Waterman organization has anything to do with.

Ted Booterbaugh, the superintendent; Harry Peters, the Grand Hotel manager; and I, naturally absorb this policy and although we don't consciously realize it, we always are thinking of how we can make some fellow happy whether he's scoring par or a superb 105, and get that man in the mood of thinking that whenever he's got any sea shipping to do, the Waterman organization is the best one to take care of him. And, what's maybe just as important, get that man's wife advertising our organization to him, without either of them realizing what's being done.

Seeing how Ted and Harry and I all have our public relations details that blend into our whole public relations picture I've wondered how much better some

private clubs would be in public relations operations of their department heads if they had in mind that a player potentially might be worth thousands of dollars to the organization.

Our situation is unique, possibly, in its public relations operations in golf, but it certainly isn't unique in having a pro situation that calls for the professional overlooking no opportunity to think, work and talk so he will make friends for his club.

Every friend the pro makes for his club he makes for himself, whether the friend is a man or woman who belongs but who hasn't been getting full advantage of membership, or an outsider whose opinion indirectly contributes to the club's reputation. And in the cases of the public and semi-public courses where public opinion determines the club revenue the pro had better be a good public relations man or the place will have another pro who is.

Poa annua as A Companion to Warm Season Grasses

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One of the natural places for use of *Poa annua* appears to be in a combination with the warm-season perennial grasses in the southern (humid and irrigated) areas, and in northern humid areas where warm-season grasses are being used. In the latter region, some golf course superintendents use *Poa annua* to good advantage along with cool-season grasses. The normal life span of *Poa annua* nicely overlaps the period during which most warm-season grasses are dormant and off-color. Since *Poa* seeds profusely and volunteers each year in areas where conditions are favorable, it appears that this annual might well be incorporated into a program which will afford an excellent green turf during the entire year. Yet, such is not entirely the picture, as *Poa annua* has performed rather inconsistently to date, and many management problems remain which require research.

These problems are:

- I Warm-season grasses which appear to be best suited for combination turf.
 - A. An investigation of putting green and fairways strains of bermuda-grass.
 - B. An investigation of selected strains of *Zoysia*.
- II Establishment of combination turf—a two-phase problem.
 - A. Tests on putting greens and tees by overseeding for initial establishment.

1. Need for seed-investigation of *Poa* seed harvesting methods and sources of seed supply.
2. Tests to establish best methods of preparing warm-season grass for overseeding. Aerification machines, spike discs, and other types of equipment.
3. Time and rate of seeding *Poa annua*.
4. Soil moisture requirements at critical time of seed germination.
5. Problem of getting *Poa annua* to volunteer each subsequent year with a minimum of reseed-ing.
 - (a) Investigation of topdressing with reference to natural re-establishment of *Poa*.

B. On areas other than special purpose type (fairways, lawns, etc.).

1. Investigation of modifications in management to encourage *Poa* to volunteer.
 - (a) Height of cut tests.
 - (b) Fertility level tests—rate and date of fertilization.
 - (c) Aerification studies—time and number of aerification necessary.

III Management problems—Modifications necessary to allow combination turf to thrive.

A. On putting green and special purpose turf strains.

1. Investigations of factors involved in holding *Poa* uniformly during summer months. Fertility, air, water, and disease control requirements.
2. Transition period tests to determine best methods to cut-off *Poa* growth abruptly in years unfavorable for keeping it through summer.

B. On fairways, lawn, etc., strains of warm-season perennials.

1. Any measures determined as a result of tests conducted on putting greens which are practical for larger areas.

If these problems can be worked out practically and economically, then *Poa annua* would be an ideal cool-season companion to warm-season (and under some conditions to cool-season) perennial grasses.

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