

How A Pro Found Profit Hunting for New Ideas

By "A Young Old Pro"

I've seen more than 30 seasons come and go as a golf professional in the United States. I've seen five lads I first observed as alert and pleasant caddies, then took under my wing and trained as fine assistants, graduate into very well paying pro jobs and serve their members so well I can boast about them as assets to my professional reputation.

In my own case I haven't equalled the income that I hear some pros talk about as their own earnings, but I've done well, raised a good American family, own a home, and have enough saved so unless inflation goes wild I'll be able to take my wife and myself comfortably to the end of the line. And, that's not doing bad as a retail merchant with a small market. It's a whole lot better than I'd probably have done staying at my trade in Scotland. I have the respect and friendship of my members, some of whom I knew first as children and started them in golf by cutting down old clubs for them. I belong to the American Legion, the Masonic order and a community service organization.

I get along with people. Sometimes I think that's as important in handling a club job well, as knowing golf. Hard-to-handle members, that every pro gets, now are some of my best friends, although I've always been careful not to have my club business relations and my own and my wife's social life become too closely involved with the social affairs of members.

Learning with Assistants

My assistants are for me, even these days when the kids seem to be more interested in playing careers than in golf business careers and have been misled, like many a pro, by hearing fancy fables about big money in pro golf. They know I want them to succeed in the business. If I didn't think they had it in them to do well I wouldn't have hired them.

I am not easy with them. Teaching and learning aren't easy. One time I heard two of my boys, who have become fine master professionals, talking about the work I had them doing and one kid said, "He acts like he's the Pope." I walked in then and said, "Boys, the Pope has the job of making you decent men and saving your souls from hell. I've got the job of making you both damn fine professionals and saving you from a lot of trouble you'd get into if you had to learn this business

by making mistakes that would cost you your jobs. The four of us all have very tough jobs, so let's get along with them."

As I look back at that and other cases of training assistants I realize that many times the assistants were training me. As I figured out what I had to teach them I became aware of what I should do in planning my own work.

In this business you grow every hour or you slide back. You see ideas that you can apply to the pro department. Some of them work others don't. But at least they all keep the members reminded that you are on the job and trying to do the best and the latest for them. The new ideas keep them awake to the pro instead of getting accustomed to just having the pro and his shop around, like the bar and the showers. One of the good ideas I picked up was from an article in GOLF-DOM in which a pro told about what he'd learned from a school teacher about teaching golf to youngsters. That led me into getting some very good ideas on teaching from a high school teacher who is a golf nut.

Don't Freeze on Learning

One of the risks of this business is that of getting our teaching pattern so set we may be slow in shifting it to the changing times. There are pros — and good ones, too — who are inclined to think that every new instruction idea is crazy. What we really need is more curious and exciting ideas that get our customers interested in golf instruction. They're all looking for magic and so are we. I want to have every man, woman and child in my club scoring around par, although I know it would be a miracle if some of them would break 100 four times in a row.

Remember when Alex Morrison came out with unorthodox ideas and a lot of the pros laughed or feared that Morrison would have the golfers so messed up they couldn't break 200 and would quit in disgust? I made money out of Morrison. When members mentioned him to me I said, "Well, I have read and thought about his book, too, so as soon as you have time for a lesson, we'll go out and see what there is in his system for you." Snead's, Nelson's, Hogan's and Novak's books all made money for me. They advertised golf instruction. Some of the ideas of these boys worked for my members. Others

didn't. There's no need of telling an experienced golf professional how the individual element of pupil and teacher is a critical factor in determining how successful golf instruction is going to be.

But the point is that the pro always has to keep informed on everything that's latest in golf instruction. The amateur golf enthusiasts are. They'll question the authoritative rating of the home club pro if he brushes off some other pro's instruction idea casually or contemptuously.

Besides — and it's the big point — the other ideas mean money for the pro. Frank Walsh's articles in *GOLFING* last year on the grip were worth a couple of hundred dollars at least to me, in lessons and in leading around to putting new grips on clubs of people to whom I couldn't sell new clubs.

Pro Profit from Greenkeeper

But of all the ideas I ever got the one that has meant the most profit to me came from our greenkeeper. Like many another older pro I was on a pro-greenkeeping job right after I landed in this country. There wasn't any such a thing as a budget. We tried to make the course playable and operated on whatever money we could get when the course needed it. Course maintenance has come a long way from those days.

Several years ago I was talking with our greenkeeper (he is called superintendent now) after he and our wives and I had had dinner together. He told me he had to get home and work on his budget and get his plans for winter and spring work ready for the green committee meeting a few nights away.

Then it struck me that I had no budget and no organized plans for the pro department. I knew that the way course maintenance is conducted now the job couldn't be handled properly without budgeting and planning. The more I thought about it the more I wondered if my own operating hadn't failed to keep step with the course end.

So that night I sat down and after almost 30 years in pro golf began, for the first time, getting a picture of my business in black and white. I had a general idea of what my expenses would be and how much income I could count on in a normal year. After getting interested to the point that I finally got out the copies of my income tax returns I saw that I was really shooting at a blind hole. I only knew the general direction of the cup.

What About Your Members?

There isn't a man who deserves to be called a first class businessman pro who won't find himself fascinated by a study of his business with specific figures instead of hazy generalities.

What's the condition of each member's equipment? How long have they had their clubs and bags? What's been their per season purchases at the shop? How much can they afford? Are they playing as many times a season as they should? What is their attitude toward the club, the pro department and playing? Do their wives or children play? Do the kids use the pool a lot but never play golf? How many old members are dropping out and how many new ones can we expect? Who is going in the club events and the sweepstakes and who is staying out? And why? Who takes lessons and how many? Who should be taking lessons but never has expressed any interest? Who is buying golf goods and golf apparel elsewhere and how much and why?

Those were only some of the questions I asked as I looked over our membership roster and made notes — pages and pages of notes.

I thought I knew my club members as well as any pro in the country but when I went over the list, name by name, I was shocked at discovering how much I didn't know specifically about them, and what I should know, not only to directly benefit my own business but to directly benefit the members and the club. I was surprised to find how little golf was played by some of the members who should be playing a lot and getting their money's worth out of what they spend to belong.

I went over my expenses the same way. My bookkeeping had improved on account of the income and sales tax pressure but it had been a matter of records more for the tax men than for my own study in tipping me off how to save money and how to do things that would increase the earnings of myself and my assistants.

The result of this work and study, which kept me very much interested winter evenings, was a budget that was pretty far off the marks on the next season's actual income and expenses, but it definitely steered me into more business, better and more complete service to the members, and it stopped leaks in my expenses. The budgeting turned out to be worth a whole lot more in cash to me than an equal amount of time spent in the summer on the lesson tee, and weather didn't interfere with the budget work.

But that wasn't all that came out of the idea from the greenkeeper.

Prepare in Advance

I sat down and began planning my work on paper. Usually when spring was just ahead I'd begun fixing up my shop. At that time everybody else was doing some early spring work and I had a tough time getting labor. When I saw what I'd have to do I got a lot of the work done in the

(Continued on page 94)

Now Available!
WESTALL
RUBBER FLOORING

- PROTECTS CLUBHOUSE FLOORS FOR YEARS!
- LONGER-WEARING, TOUGH, FIRM!
- SO SMOOTH, SAFE AND EASY TO CLEAN!
- NO CEMENTING TO UNDERFLOOR!
- DOES NOT BUCKLE OR CRAWL!
- SMART APPEARANCE!
- CHOICE OF COLORS: GREEN, BLACK, SAND AND TERRA-COTTA!
- COMES IN ROLLS 57 IN. WIDE, 5/16 IN. THICKNESS, 29 FT. LENGTHS!
- WE WILL CUT TO WIDTHS OF 2 FT., 2 1/2 FT. AND 3 FT.—NO EXTRA CHARGE!

Write for Samples and Details:

HENRY WESTALL COMPANY
 944-960 Merrimon Ave., Asheville, N. C.

isfactory results with several different materials.

As usual, the relaxing hours were hospitably and expertly handled. Breakfasts, lunches and dinners kept the crowd together for the reunions and informal discussions that often yield as many answers as the programmed talks.

Chicago chapter arranged a crowded program for women managers and wives of the men managers and put on a preview cocktail party. The entertainment schedule included other affairs given by Pabst Brewing Co., Swift & Co., Pfaelzer Bros., Shenango Pottery, Arthur Schiller & Sons, Peter Zapherio and F. Korbel.

HOW PRO FOUND PROFIT

(Continued from page 40)

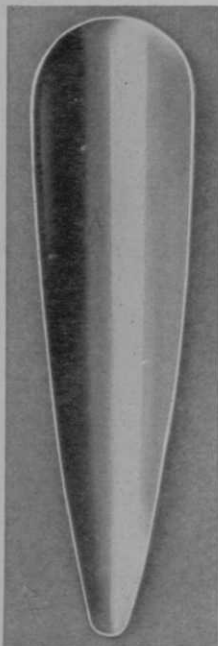
winter and was able to get some handy-men from the course force to do carpenter work, painting, repairing and general clean-up. As a result I got the shop in very good shape, carefully and for less than I had thought it would cost me.

The back of my shop never had been the way I wanted it, and it was getting more unsatisfactory with an increasing number of bag carts. We overhauled that.

Some showcases that were relics were taken out and an old man who had been working on the course in the summer built

STOP BALL MARKS ON GREENS

with this handy DIVOT-FIXER



ACTUAL SIZE

Green Chairmen:

Keep greens unmarked by giving these inexpensive Divot-Fixers to your golfers. Save on topdressings and extra labor costs.

Endorsed by leading turf experts and golf course superintendents. Experience has proven that given a good tool, golfers will do their part in maintaining our beautiful greens. A delay of ten minutes will often be too late for the recovery of the injured turf.

Was first introduced and very well received at the G.C.S.A. 23rd Annual Convention at Columbus in Feb. '52.

First time in the history of golf that a tool has been made for this specific purpose.

This tool can be used as a shoe horn, to clean dirt from spikes and upper soles of shoes; also to clean scoring on clubheads and serve as a light screwdriver and finger nail cleaner.

Prices: for nickel plated, F.O.B. Des Moines, Ia.:

1000 — \$65; 500 — \$35; 250 — \$20;

Chrome plated 4 for \$1 postpaid

Ten dollars per order extra for imprinting names of clubs or firms.

WOODSIDE GOLF & PARK SUPPLY CO.

Des Moines 13, Iowa

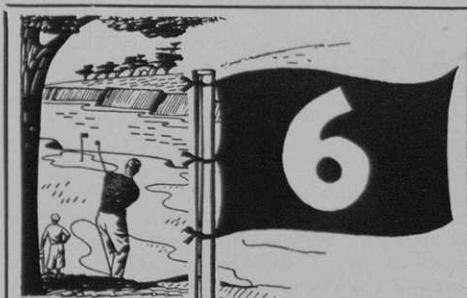
Golfdom

me some counters, tables and shelving that made the shop much better looking, much more convenient and much easier to keep clean.

I was able to get some flooring repaired and dyed but had to order some new stuff and was able to get it without having to wait almost to mid-season like a lot of the fellows do. They don't realize that shipments these days are slow, although they should when they think of how long it takes them to get some staple merchandise.

The result of that planning and work was that I was able to spend a part of January and all of February in the south, after taking care of Christmas business, and came back on the job ready to go in high gear.

The members got talking about the "new" shop. They came out to look it over when spring rains made the course a swamp over weekends. I did the biggest spring business I'd ever had. Since that time I've continued to write notes of what I see should be changed and improved in the shop as I notice these things during the season. The notes are filed away and I go over them in November and get the work planned. Each spring the members see new life in the shop and it reminds them that I'm not just content to sit around and get by.



Better...

because it's vinyl

Fast replacing other flags because vinyl can't be beat for durability, weather-resistance, color-permanence. Ask us about our whole line of

FINE VINYL PLASTIC FILM

- special flags
- shower curtains
- draperies and curtains, which may be silk-screened with club monogram
- locker equipment
- mower covers

WRITE FOR NAME OF NEAREST DISTRIBUTOR

PLASTIC FILM PRODUCTS CORP.
58 W. EXCHANGE ST. AKRON, OHIO

Club Managers!

IDENTIFY CADDIES MEMBERS & GUESTS ON SIGHT

It's easy and inexpensive when you have these new, colorful and durable plastic items. They're designed specifically for and accepted by leading country clubs everywhere.



MULTI-PURPOSE BADGE

Waterproof, strong. Use for players or caddies. Write wearer's name directly on plastic.

- 50 25¢ ea.
- 100 16¢ ea.
- 500 12¢ ea.
- 1000 10½¢ ea.

SPOT YOUR CADDIES

With metal back, plastic face badges. Heavy duty pin fastener. Serially numbered.

- 100 16¢ ea.
- 250 14½¢ ea.
- 500 12½¢ ea.
- 1000 10½¢ ea.



END GOLF BAG MIX-UPS

NEW! Identification tag with chain. Unique simulated plastic golf ball. Identification space on reverse side.



- 100 15¢ ea.
- 250 13¢ ea.
- 500 12¢ ea.
- 1000 10½¢ ea.

Philadelphia Badge Company, Inc.

1007 Filbert Street
Philadelphia 7, Pa.

Please send samples of Caddie Button () Identification Tag () Pennant Badge (). Our order is enclosed ().

NAME _____
 CLUB _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____