

How the Assistant Pro Can Really Assist

By JOE PATELLI

This is my 25th year as assistant to Tommy Harmon — Montclair (N. J.) GC, in the summers and Belleview Biltmore at Clearwater, Fla., in recent winters. It's been an interesting and profitable career for me. The year-around income as an assistant in this case has amounted to more net than a lot of pro jobs where the fellows spend in the winter most of what they are able to earn in the summer.

From Tommy I've learned how to handle a pro job and what is just as important I've learned that handling a pro department at a first class club or resort calls for the most complete and smoothest teamwork you could see in any business. Everybody in a pro department has to think of what the player may want before the player thinks of it. That's No. 1 among all the points about pro department management.

The assistant also has to think about what the pro may want done before the pro himself thinks of it. The pro on a big job has a lot of executive and public relations work to handle before he can get to his teaching and to details of the department. If the assistant has been properly trained, has business judgment himself and is on the ball, he takes care of a lot of the things that might otherwise eat up the pro's time and reduce his earning capacity.

Time certainly is money in a pro job and with many duties that haven't any direct profit and the weather often murdering a chance for lesson and sales income, the competent assistant has to see to it that he saves all of the pro's time that possibly can be saved. That's one of the most important ways an assistant can make money for the pro and for himself.

Assistant Must Show Profit

What the assistant has to know clearly is that he must do more than earn what he's paid. The assistant has to show a profit on himself just as much as the shop stock must show a net sales profit. Otherwise what would be good business in having an assistant around? The best employee of a company is the employee on which the company makes the most money. That condition isn't any different in golf pro business than it is in general business. The more the company makes, the more the pro makes as a definite result of the assistant's work, thinking and

alertness, the better the income of the employee. Do you think I would stay with Tommy Harmon for 25 years or that Tommy would have me for 25 years if the deal hadn't been mutually profitable?

I think Tommy's the best man I ever saw at handling a pro job and he's one of the finest all-around men I ever met, but admiration and loyalty, as pleasant and essential as they are, wouldn't be complete substitutes for cash.

Tommy got me thinking early that the profitable operation of a pro department depended a whole lot on me. He encouraged in me a sense of responsibility. I saw that I'd have to pattern exactly after Harmon in doing everything possible to make members more than satisfied. He taught me that my own brains had to be on the job instead of depending on Harmon for reminders and instruction on a lot of details.

The same thing goes with the shop manager, Mike Annese. There's never a time when Tommy has to let his eyes rest on something that's out of place or which may not make a favorable effect on the players. At Belleview Biltmore where the shop is small and bag storage space very limited, it's a difficult job to keep things orderly but that's done on an organized basis so no time is lost in supplying a player with his bag. Mike must have eyes in the back and side of his head because he sees guests walking toward the shop and has their bags out for them and caddies jumping.

The kids are very important to pro shop operation. You've got to pay attention to them and have them feeling that you are sincerely interested in having them become good golfers. And let us face it, a kid now and then may be just as much of a nuisance as we probably were when we were kids. But you get them on your team and they'll never be going elsewhere to buy anything they can get in a pro shop. They are old age insurance for a pro.

Teach the Pro's Way

What is absolutely necessary is that the assistant must learn to teach the same way, fundamentally, that his pro does. Tommy is a fine player and teacher so in my case I am lucky in having the best sort of a model. But in other cases of

pros and assistants I've seen the assistants teaching one way and the pros another, and the result is that the members have absolutely no confidence in the instruction of either one of them — or golf instruction in general.

When the assistant studies and learns exactly how his pro teaches then the assistant saves the pro a lot of headaches and builds up lesson business. A member may want to take a lesson from the pro whose lesson book is packed and when the member can't get time he may feel slightly miffed at something that's not the pro's fault. But when the assistant's instruction is as close a duplicate of the pro's as it's humanly possible to get the member is satisfied.

When the pro tells the assistant what lesson point should be watched with special care then the instruction coordination between pro and assistant gives the pupil a very good break. What most members need — and about all they can use in a lesson — is just a point or two straightened out, then some supervised practice without too much talking by the teacher.

Pro's Eyes and Ears

Where the assistant has to be the pro's eyes and ears many times is in club sales. At our shops we encourage players to take new clubs out and play test rounds with them. They don't damage the clubs any and Mike and I can quickly restore the clubs that have been used for the test rounds to absolutely new condition.

Once in a while we'll see cases where players should have thicker than standard grips. Well, it's no job at all to get such cases fitted exactly and if an assistant isn't able to handle that sort of a job properly he's not a fully qualified assistant.

The assistant has to be as discreet as the pro in giving plenty of helpful little tips to players. He can't get the players embarrassed at thinking the pro or assistant is watching everytime the players are swinging, but he has to keep the folks reminded that he's there as a helpful friend.

Watching the handicap cards to see who needs help, helping run the tournaments, helping make the shop look attractive and keeping it that way, helping with the caddy situation — helping everywhere — is the assistant's job. The pro generally is expected to be everywhere at once and when he can't be the assistant must be an acceptable fill-in for the pro. He'll have to get his own playing or practice time before the members start coming out or late in the evening, or — when it doesn't give the pupil the idea the assistant is out for attention to the assistant's own game — during a practice round.

But at all times the assistant has to

keep looking, listening, thinking and moving with one big idea in mind — an assistant's job is to assist. When the pro has to keep paying a lot of attention to seeing that the assistant is on the job, then the pro is the assistant to the assistant, and that's no way to successfully run a pro business.

Navy and Marine Course Gives Taxpayers a Break

Figures on 1951 operation of the Navy and Marine golf course at Pearl Harbor are additional evidence of how far the mark was missed by congressmen who rapped military golf courses.

Play at the 18-hole course was 73,987 rounds. Green fee income was \$42,886.25. Golf equipment sales out of ship stores and income from range ball use was \$42,856.65. Pro-only club and ball sales and lessons were additional to sales made out of ship stores. Cart rental was \$2,475.28. Club rental (50 cents a set all day) brought in \$5,793.

The course was built in 1947 when Adm. Hall, now in command of the 12th Naval district, was in charge. Construction costs were paid out of recreation fund (canteen and slot machine) profits. It didn't cost the taxpayers a dime. At low rates for use of facilities the course is one of the most popular recreation facilities for enlisted men and officers.

Its maintenance under management of Joe Mayo, formerly in charge of the famed Monterey peninsula courses, is financed by play at the course and money is available for improvement and expansion; again, without expense to taxpayers.

Mayo has the course in fine condition and has built a night-lighted golf range accommodating 60 players. There are four pitching practice greens, an iron practice area, and a 150 ft. sq. putting practice green.

Adm. Hall, a good golfer himself, ordered that officers and enlisted men be on the same club basis at the course and at locker room and bar accommodations. He also insisted that there be no preferred starting times for officers. No reservations can be made more than 48 hours in advance. Every fourth starting time is reserved for men from ships of the fleet that come in overnight.

The Navy and Marine course is an important and highly satisfactory answer to entertainment and exercise needs in the Pearl Harbor area and an admirable operation by military services.

With very few exceptions other golf courses at military installations also have been built and are operated at no cost to