

# Educational Tasks for Pros

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This business of hiring and training an assistant has become quite a problem. The greatest stumbling block is the rule regarding the amateur status of boys who have reached their 18th birthday. In order to retain their amateur standing they have to sever all connections with a golf shop.

The days when the boy graduated from the caddy ranks to caddy master, etc., up the line are gone, along with the days of haphazard pro shop operation. The average boy today wants more than a high school education, and indeed higher education is just as valuable to the boy going into the golf business as one going into any other business. Yet he is deprived of very essential golf shop experience that he cannot get anywhere else while he is furthering his education by not being able to work in a shop during vacations etc. If he is a better than average golfer, he wants to play golf in college and he should—he needs that experience too—but even more so he needs to learn how to fit golf clubs, repair clubs, sell merchandise and learn the fundamentals of teaching the game.

The results are that a good many young men who might make fine professionals turn to other lines of work when they get out of college because they are not willing and can't afford to spend a couple or three more years getting this training after they get out of college. If they do have nothing to offer the club except have nothing to offer the college except their golf game and the net result is both the pro and the club who hired him are dissatisfied.

I think this rule should be amended so that the boy can retain his amateur standing while he is in school and still work in a golf shop. Any other student looks for summer work in his field and in some cases I think is even given school credit for some of this work.

I think golf would benefit greatly by having better trained, better qualified golf professionals, if this rule were amended. Golf is no longer small business and our future golf pros are going to need to be better trained to successfully handle the increased volume of business and keep the golf business in the golf shops.

A boy can play football all through school and not be regarded as a pro yet he is being expertly trained by a highly paid professional and often receives more

compensation than the boy working in a golf shop.

The problem of educating the golfing public to appreciate the value of expert "pro service" lies squarely with the golf professional, I believe. The average pro should spend more time on golf promotion. If it is for the good of golf it will eventually be good for the golf professional. A great many pros overlook a bet by not spending more time on junior golf, giving free lessons to high school teams, taking an interest in junior tournaments, and encouraging the kids to ask advice. Don't always expect them to pay you for a lesson when five minutes of your time will straighten out their drives. Most parents appreciate any interest shown in their children and it is only a few short years until the kids themselves are your customers.

At a semi-public course such as mine, we have lots of beginners as well as people who think the pro shop is the place where you pay the green fee. We are more apt to find a customer coming out with the little "bargain number" in golf clubs, than the average pro at a private club, something he has picked out of a catalog. He has a friend who has a friend, etc. who can buy some off-brand clubs at what he thinks is 20% off or wholesale. Whenever these clubs show up at my shop, and I am always on the look-out for them, I take the time to look them over, put them on the swing-weight scale and very pleasantly and casually tell him why the clubs he bought are not right for him. I often check his grip and give him a pointer or two to let him know I am interested in his game.

I have already lost that sale it is true, but I have also planted seeds of dissatisfaction in his mind. He can't help but feel his clubs are to blame for his poor golf game. Chances are while I am making my little speech there are other people in the shop and I am selling them the idea at the same time. I don't think the pro can talk too much about this. No one else is going to educate the people to pro shop buying, that's for sure. "Word of mouth" is still the best advertising, in my opinion.

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