

Service to Beginners Making Big Future for Pro Golf

By BILL GRADY

Golf ranges and public and semi-public courses are beginning to do a selling service job that will expand the golf market tremendously, says Walter Keller, who switched from a club pro job to become a highly successful operator of golf ranges in Chicago and Los Angeles. Before establishing Sunset Fields Fairways as a thriving golf enterprise in Los Angeles Keller had learned at his Chicago range that almost 25 per cent of his range's patrons never had been on golf courses. He adopted the policy of giving these people the same character of pro service they'd get if they were members of excellent private clubs.

The result was that after they'd been using the range's clubs they bought sets of their own from Keller. It was a logical development that they began buying golf wear from Keller too. He was their guide into golf. Hundreds who now are enthusiastic golfers at fee courses or are members of private clubs came into golf through the Keller nursery.

He maintains that the pay-as-you-play course or range that doesn't come close to giving its customers private club grade of pro service and pro shop merchandising is missing an obvious and growing opportunity and slipping behind the parade. Keller says that at fee courses and ranges players include a high percentage of newcomers and those who must watch their golf investments carefully, therefore they expect pro service in fitting them properly with clubs even more than do the members of private clubs who usually are pretty well grounded in the essentials of the game and have a fair idea of what they want and need in clubs.

Biggest Job for "Public"

"This necessity for expert pro guidance is bound to become recognized by public golf officials and demanded by the public to the degree that the biggest paying jobs in golf will be at the best managed public courses," Keller declares.

As operator of Sunset Fields Fairways in an area where there are numerous and popular ranges Keller makes profitable investment in expert pro services as a business magnet. His own staff of instructors are kept busy and he gets "name" pros from the tournament circuit and the fine private clubs to step in, now and then, as instructors.

This spotlighting of expert pro service at a range which is centrally located and surrounded by department and sports goods stores, has enabled Keller to more than balance competition for sales and to build up a large sales volume in his well stocked shop.

His own success with the policy of spotlighting expert pro service has given him the conviction that pros are not collectively selling themselves enough to the public. The public is more eager for first class pro service than the pros themselves often realize, according to Keller's observation.

"Most golf pros," remarks Keller, "do not accomplish all they would like to, not because they are unable to serve the public but because they have failed to make an impression with what they have to offer. We need to make this better understood."

To dramatize this idea Walter hit upon a new kind of clinic which is staged at Sunset Fields once a year, and the Southern California Section of the PGA has given its hearty support. Sixteen of the top-ranking professionals of Southern California show up for this event and constitute a panel of experts. One hundred and fifty golfers purchase tickets, they are all sold out several days beforehand, and the ticket holders furnish all the action. They hit the shots while the pros observe, make comments and suggestions. This is a radical departure from the usual clinic program under which the pros hit all the shots.

Equipment Is Checked

Each ticket holder is provided with a National Golf Foundation booklet to which some additions have been made for this special occasion. He is first directed to a station where his clubs are checked as to overall weight, swing weight, length, grip size, etc. and compared to the physical characteristics of the owner. After a few judicious questions about the player's game the pro makes a notation in the booklet as to the suitability of the clubs. This can be done in an approximate way and has been found to be a good starting point, as many show up with clubs which obviously are very far from being right for their owners and are at least one factor in their golf ailments.

After that the players fan out into

OVERALL WEIGHT	SWING WEIGHT		CLUB LENGTH	GRIP SIZE
	WOOD	IRON		

Reproduction of form used by clinic professionals to check suitability of player's clubs.

three different lines and are routed to stations on the tees where each tees up and hits a number of balls with his woods under the observation of one of the panel who checks his grip and his swing with the woods. After that he hits some long irons and his instructor makes some recommendations and notations in the booklet which serves as a permanent record.

The golfer passes on to the next station where another authority calls for some pitches and chips to a series of nearby practice greens and thus checks his short

pointers which should be distinctly helpful, but handling 150 people in one evening, even with careful planning, does not provide the extended time that a course of lessons gives an instructor to work on him as an individual and mold a correct swing. It does provide a special opportunity under favorable circumstances for him to meet some of the famous names of golf and have them take a little personal interest in his game and that in itself makes it a memorable occasion.



Bill and Don Bendix are two promising young L. A. golfers who are being backed by the assistance program recently inaugurated by Walter Keller, left, at Sunset Fields Fairways.

game. He finally arrives at the putting green where a pro awaits to discuss his putting. When he is through he has some sound advice from several top professionals. Some of these men have been winners of the U.S. Open, the British Open, the PGA and all are highly rated on the coast as fine players and outstanding instructors and Mr. Golfer goes home with personal notations of these men's suggestions on how to improve his game.

Certainly no golfer gets through this examination without receiving some

Fall Turf Field Day Schedule Heavy

National Turf Field day conducted by the USGA Green Section at Beltsville, Md., for the past several years will not be held this year. Green Section points out that state and regional conferences now are so numerous that Beltsville sessions aren't as necessary as they were prior to establishment of the Green Section's decentralized program.

The Green Section staff was kept busy at the Sixth International Grassland Congress, held at Pennsylvania State college, Aug. 17-23, showing visitors from the U.S. and other nations the American developments in fine turf.

Turf field days scheduled for the rest of the year, and chairmen of these affairs:

September 24: Field Day. Greater Cincinnati Golfers League and Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents. Taylor Boyd.

October 6-7: Turf Conference, University of California, Los Angeles, Cal. V. T. Stoutemyer.

October 9-10: Turf Conference, University of California, Berkeley, Cal. John J. McElroy.

October 13-14: Turf Conference, Washington State College, Pullman, Wash. Alvin G. Law.

October 22-24: Third Turf Conference, Central Plains Turf Foundation and Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kans. William F. Pickett and L. E. Lambert.

November 17-21: American Society of Agronomy Meetings, Netherland Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio. L. G. Monthey.

December 1-3: Texas Turf Conference, Texas A. & M. College, College, College Station, Texas. James R. Watson.