

Pros Tell What Makes Good Shop Assistants

By BOB HALL

"I WOULD rate playing ability about fifth in the list of requirements when I interview anyone for a job as assistant in my golf shop!"

That was the terse statement from George Lake, National PGA vice-president and PGA chairman nationally for junior golf promotion.

"I wouldn't pay 5 cents an hour for an assistant who can shoot 68 every time out—and do nothing more," he continued, "but I certainly would give an opportunity to a youngster who was willing to work, who was neat in appearance, who had a sincere desire to make a career of golf, and who knew not only something about golf and its fundamentals, but who had an ability to meet my customers courteously and with a pleasant attitude of salesmanship."

These and other statements from leading golf pros, which will follow, were brought out recently when we asked a group of club pros of Southern California sector of the PGA what they would expect from or require of a young man when interviewing him for a job as a club or shop assistant.

"Times have changed," declared Joe Robinson, pro at Virginia CC, and a Southern California PGA vice-president. "Once we'd ask, 'What background have you in clubmaking? . . . And what kind of golf do you play?'"

"Now a club professional's job is more in 'selling' the public—the golf customer—just as it is in the downtown stores. And much of that responsibility falls upon the assistant.

"I'd rate neatness in appearance, pleasing personality and an ability to meet the public and serve players correctly with shop merchandise, above ability to play subpar golf.

"Of course," Robinson continued, "a sound knowledge of the game is important—but like George, I'd rate 'ability to play' down the list in my interview with a prospective assistant."

Harry Bassler, president of the Southern California PGA, rated personality and appearance high on the scale.

"An assistant must be alert, clear-headed and neat," he said. "I also take into consideration the marital status of my applicant. If he's married, has some children—if he has some home responsibilities, he's a much better risk than a single man."

"On the other hand, Vic Baker, pro at Lakewood CC, near Long Beach, has the opinion, that:

"Very few young golfers these days can afford to follow the tournament tour, but there's plenty of opportunity in golf for them as club professionals if they want to apply themselves.

"Golf is not over-crowded. Touring pros are seldom good men in a shop, and thus today a youngster who wants to learn the business, who will give time and thought to club repairing, cleaning, storage, shop selling, and to learning to teach can always find a job.

"Since we're in direct competition with the downtown stores for equipment and general sports merchandise, salesmanship plays an important part in the golf shop."

Assistants Advance

It's interesting to note the many top "shop men" who have gone from Long Beach, Calif., as pupils of Lake, Robinson, Baker and Bassler (the latter with a shop at Fox Hills CC in Culver City during the past few years) to their own Class A jobs.

For instance, three of Lake's more recent "boys" have progressed to bigger jobs: Walter (Boots) Porterfield at Milwaukee (Wis.) CC; Bobby Judson at St. Andrews CC, near Chicago, and Jimmy Clark, when not following the tournament tour, is at his shop at Laguna Beach CC, Calif.

Baker has several students in the field—Jackson Bradley at River Oaks CC, Houston, Tex.; Paul Jopes at Greeley, Colo.; Roy Beardon at Santa Anita (Calif.) CC; Jimmy Thompson, once at Provo, Utah, now at Stockdale (Calif.) CC, and Eddie Nowak, manager of a range at Bakersfield.

Bassler has placed four of his assistants in Class A club jobs during the past year. Eddie Joseph is at Fairfax (Calif.) CC; Dick Boggs has Willowick GC, Santa Ana,



TOURNAMENT CHAMPS, LOVER BOYS AT HEART

"The Object of My Affections" is more than a song title to (L) PGA Seniors Champion Harry Schwab and PGA Champ Walter Burkemo who, consumed with a burning love for their newly won honors, demonstrate the same great form that made them champions on the fairways.

Calif.; Chuck McCool is now at El Canto CC, Arizona, and Bill Martin has assumed chores at Rio Hondo GC, Downey, Calif.

Robinson, after six years as pro at Virginia CC, retains the same crew he signed in 1947.

But during his years previously at Brentwood CC, he had such assistants as: Eric Monti, now pro at Hillcrest CC, Los Angeles; Al Lape, Morro Bay, Calif.; Guy Bellitte, Altadena; Al Demaret, Ojai CC, and Ewing Richardson, Los Angeles CC.

"If a youngster wants to make a career of golf, what should he do in preparation?" we asked them.

Bud Oakley, pro at Palos Verdes, was of the opinion that a youth just out of high school should get a job in a shop "learning the game from the bottom up."

"There he can learn something about club design and construction, and about the players' use and needs of clubs and other equipment just by being alert when he's cleaning clubs, making minor repairs, and handling bags to and from rack storage. He will get a good close-up of the market there. He will see what he has to learn about the equipment of the business and what to talk over with the pro in learning.

"He will handle shop routine and if he has a head and is ambitious and observing

he will apply to the shop what he sees and hears at every good retailing establishment he needs. If he has initiative he will pick up good ideas and use them in his work of serving the golfers."

Lake, Robinson and Bassler had slightly different suggestions to the youth who wants to make good in pro golf business. Almost in-chorus they stated:

"He should take at least two years of college, after finishing high school, and pay particular attention to study of psychology, bookkeeping and accounting, salesmanship and public speaking."

Robinson added one more to the list: general business administration.

Prepare for Leadership

"If a golf pro in any community is going to make himself felt," said Lake, "he must take an active part in civic affairs. And in so doing, he must join several luncheon clubs and fraternal organizations with businessmen of the community.

"Naturally, he is going to be called upon for a sports program now and then. He's going to be asked to give opinions 'on the floor' — and a good public speaker at such gatherings can sell a lot of shop merchandise even though he does not have it along in a trailer."

Lake added another factor for young

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defray the expenses of this year's Ryder Cup Team.

This 8th annual National Caddie Tournament is a joint project of the National Caddie Association and the Professional Golfers' Association of America.

Boys who come to the tournament are qualified locally by more than 30 newspapers and PGA sections throughout the nation. While in Columbus they will be quartered at the Ohio State University Tower Club, located in the southwest corner of Ohio Stadium.

James A. Rhodes, former Mayor of Columbus and now Ohio's Auditor of State, is founder and president of the National Caddie Assn. Assisting him locally will be Kenneth Hoag, as chairman of the "celebrities" tournament and Sam Nicola as chairman of the caddie event.

GOOD SHOP ASSISTANTS

(Continued from page 46)

aspirants to consider:

"Before, or even after, I hire an assistant, I expect him to visit club-making and ball-making factories — and to study thoroughly the methods of producing golf's merchandise.

"If you know how it's made, it's much easier to sell it properly, understand what you're selling and to make simple repairs."

Since Southern California is very strong in the Junior PRO-motion of golf, with Lake, now National chairman for the fifth straight year, and Robinson heading a new Southern California Junior Association, with Oakley and Bassler staunch supporters, it was unanimous that much of the future of pro golf business lies in junior golf — but that all pros should strive toward impressing upon the kids that a well-balanced education **MUST** come first.

"Too many kids," Oakley remarked, "think that just because they can whale the daylights out of a golf ball they're good material for the PGA, or for a job as a shop assistant."

"Sure, they must have sound ideas on club swinging if they ever expect to teach, but before they ever get to that teaching stage they've a shop apprenticeship in work, and much business knowledge to assimilate."

Vic Baker thought, too, that an assistant who wanted either to get a job, or wanted to better himself after getting one, should "get around, associate with golfers not only of his own club but others as well.

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"But at his own club, he must remember at all times to address club members as MR. Jones—NOT 'Hiya, Joe.' He must remember that he's an employee."

That there's an opportunity in the field of golf for ambitious men, is shown in the fact that there are 5,026 golf courses, and many topflight golf ranges, in the United States—but slightly less than 3,000 accredited members of the PGA.

"The golf field is wide open for wide-awake youth," the pros agreed, "—but they've got to learn the trade right, and apply themselves, or they'll not be able to meet the competition."

Robinson and Lake summed up the interesting session with three well-put opinions:

Robinson said: "I believe that a Class A pro, once his assistant has mastered the problems of the shop, should begin aiding his protege in the mechanics of teaching.

"I find it most helpful and advisable to allow my assistants to aid in the instruction of my junior classes, which are held the year around. This gives them practical experience, and I'm on hand not only to supervise the development, both of my assistant and the juniors of my members."

Lake had two suggestions:

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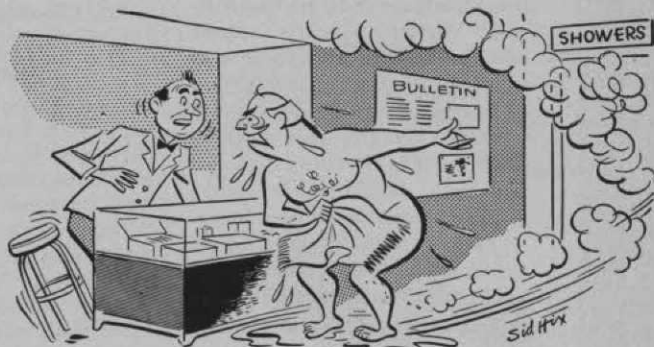
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"First," he said, "I do not want a club-maker or player as an assistant to the extent that playing golf comes first with him. I want an assistant to aid me in my business, and I'll give him every opportunity to gain that experience which will prime him for a club job of his own.

"Second, I feel that in time a man should be given two years' credit towards PGA membership if two years are spent in school studying salesmanship, bookkeeping and accounting, psychology and public speaking. Then the PGA candidate has the foundation for not only properly learning and teaching golf but for mastering all other phases of the golf business, and there certainly are many of them other than the knack of hitting a ball into a hole.

"In golf, as in every other business, the customer is of supreme importance and an assistant who learns how to serve the customer best is working in the best possible way for the pro who employs him.

"Pro golf is exacting but satisfying and rewarding work. It requires considerably more training, study and diligence than many a young man who seeks an assistant's job realizes. The kid may think that an assistant's job consists of having a lot of time for playing golf. What he has in mind amounts to getting paid for being a member of a club.

"Sad to relate, such jobs don't exist."

SUPT'S. "DAY OFF"

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myself, I bow to the inevitable, but it certainly is running up our labor costs and handicapping our efforts to get work done on time.

"And what some of the women will kick about makes you want to bust out crying. We had a heavy rain one night and women morning golfers who got started later than some others complained loudly about dirty tee towels.

"Oh, well, I guess if I didn't like it I wouldn't be in this business."

Among other subjects discussed by these superintendents on their days off were how Merion blue and zoysia are doing in the midwest. So far, consensus is that they're doing O.K. when put in bare spots where there is no competitive grass but not so well when introduced among other grasses. Experience has been rather satisfactory with zoysia taking hold and spreading when introduced as stolons, but getting practically nowhere when introduced as plugs. The fellows are not sure