

JANUARY • 1953

Youngsters Must Get High Rating in Pro Attention

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There are two problems that will demand a lot of attention from pros in 1953.

Number one is caddies.

The other problem is that of beating store competition.

Professionals in the south sometimes have an advantage in being able to get a fairly adequate number of Negro caddies and train them to become competent at their work. But generally in golf the problem of getting caddies must be solved by going to the parents of youngsters who are potentially club members and professionals and to the schools these youngsters attend.

The professionals in the Carolinas are striving to get juniors out to caddy and play and our efforts are meeting with very encouraging results. We not only are getting alert, responsible and ambitious lads in the pleasant and profitable work of caddying but we're developing young golf talent that we are hopeful will become amateur and professional stars of the future. What undoubtedly is most important, though, is that we are building an enthusiastic interest among these kids in the game that they can enjoy throughout their lives and are insuring the future of our clubs by qualifying for membership, in not many years to come, far more prospects than our clubs ever have had before.

Birth Rate Is the Cue

This discreetly planned tie-up of answering the caddie shortage problem and teaching the juniors a game that is certain to continue to grow greatly in popularity, is the sort of looking ahead that we in the Carolinas believe all PGA groups must make one of their most important duties. One does not have to go to the statistical information to be

aware that the birth rate has increased tremendously since the end of World War II and that in a few years hundreds of thousands of these children will be ready for golf instruction. Then—if they've been properly indoctrinated and taught by sincerely interested professionals—those kids will come into the market as buyers of the playing equipment the professionals have to sell.

Eventually these youngsters the pros brought into the game will be club members, city officials, and prominent in the civic, business and social affairs of their communities, and at that time they'll be about the most delightful substantial assets the pros can have.

Although PGA members in the Carolinas know that every bit of effort we devote to junior programs and the enlistment and training of fine boys as caddies will pay off materially to ourselves and our clubs, we get an ever bigger reward for our time and work in the appreciative attitude of the kids. There's nothing that can thrill a home club pro any more than having grand boys and girls come to him and tell about how well they're doing in golf and thank him for helping them. The man who doesn't get a great lift out of having that happen simply isn't qualified to handle a pro job properly.

What Club Must Provide

No small part of the pro's problem in getting enough desirable caddies at a club is solved when he gets club officials and members to realize that the kids must have attractions other than money. Caddie play facilities to be used when the boys are awaiting assignments, quarters that are clean and pleasant when bad weather keeps the boys inside, incentives for regular attendance and good perform-

ance, helpful transportation, clubs to play with when they are allowed to use the course, caddie golf competition in various classes, and an understanding and sympathetic attitude of those who engage the caddies, are as important to the successful caddie program as the training the pro or caddiemaster gives the boys.

The professional may have an excellent caddiemaster to handle most of the job but even with that able party on the job the pro can't for a moment forget that the caddies are high among his responsibilities. Between the two of them—the pro and the caddiemaster—they can work some minor miracles for the kids, the community, the golfers and the condition of the course. It's a difficult task to teach kids to pick up debris, smooth footprints in traps, and replace divots when adult players don't give them much of an example.

Much of the use of bag carts is not for economy reasons or because players prefer pulling a cart; it's simply because there haven't been enough properly recruited and properly trained caddies. That's something all golf, and especially the professionals, must correct because ge can't count on bag carts joining clubs or paying green fees or buying clubs, calls, bags and whatever else we have to sell (including bag carts) in our pro shops.

Clue to Competition's Answer

The store competition to many professionals is the most pressing and troublesome problem with the solution being a matter of education and thoughtful merchandising. We've got to look at this matter from the customer's viewpoint rather than our own.

About 85 out of a hundred golfers who buy at competitive establishments rather than the pro shop do so in the belief that they are saving money.

Possibly most of the other ten do not know that we have in our pro shops exactly what they bought at the stores, and at no higher price.

Now, can you blame the customers for these reason for not coming to us?

The conclusion is plain. We need a continuous, calculated campaign of education directed at the prospective buyers—and plenty of education ourselves in learning how to best select, display, advertise and sell our merchandise. Many times the pro does a very good job in buying but a poor job of selling, merchandise has to be bought and is bought from him merely because his shop is in a location most convenient for the purchaser or because the buyer can charge the purchase to his club account.

Every experienced professional has observed that six or seven times out of ten the store-bought clubs don't fit the player. I've often thought—and so have other professionals—that if tournament stars played with clubs as ill-fitted to them as many high-handicap golfers use the stars would be breaking 80 only if their putting was lucky.

And, let us be perfectly frank about this, many golfers who bought in pro shops when clubs became available after the war, were so eager to get new clubs that they wouldn't allow the pro to do what he knew he should do in taking more time to get the clubs by having them fitted to the buyer. Even now we see pro shop stocks that are selected more according to the professional's choice of something that he personally likes than because the clubs are exactly suited to the individual who's to buy and use them.

In meeting the store and "buy it wholesale" competition the well-qualified professional has to do a much better and much more persistent job of emphasizing his expert services as a fitter of clubs. It may take a little more time in getting the clubs with the right shafts and weights from the factories, or in a few cases the grips may have to be built up or thinned, but when the buyer does get the clubs they're wate the buyer can use to best advantage.

What the buyer seldom realizes is that the set of clubs is going to last him maybe five to ten years; and the difference in cost per year between clubs he should have and those that don't fit is much less per club than a round of drinks after a game.

Accent on correct fit as a part of the value of the clubs bought from the pro, and warning of the probable misfit in clubs picked out of store stocks, is going to mean plenty in increasing pro sales.

Heart of America Supts. Elect Day President

Annual meeting of The Heart of America Golf Course Supts. Assn. held at the Shawnee CC, Topeka, Kas., had Pres. Art Hall presiding for the first time in about ten months.

Due to the higher operating costs of the association, the members voted to increase the annual dues to \$10 per year.

Officers for the coming year elected: Pres.: Dudley Day, Blue Hills GC, Kansas City, Mo.; VP: Cecil Smith, Shawnee CC, Topeka, Kas.; Sec.-Treas.: L. E. Lambert, Oakwood CC, Dodson, Mo.

Directors, Howard Denny, Ed. J. Bruger, LeRoy Wilcox, and John Arrowood.