



From tightly packed halls to the wide-open spaces of Ft. Jay on Governor's Island with the spires of Manhattan looming in the background and at all stops between, Bud Geoghegan works as a golf missionary.

## Geoghegan Puts on Show That Recruits Golfers

By CHARLES PRICE

**J**AMES J. "Bud" Geoghegan, an affable pro with a perpetual pipe, a well-traveled station wagon, and bunker-sized optimism, has become well known in the North Jersey, Metropolitan sections as the "Ambassador of Golf."

With a unique combination of showmanship and promotion, Geoghegan, who is pro at the Crestmont CC in West Orange, N. J., doubles as an evangelist, preaching the gospel of golf to thousands of unbelievers. This procedure has placed him in front of a number of groups, ranging in variety from the International Harvester Co. to the Society of Holy Name. Their clamor for more has astounded Geoghegan, who expected to be paid off only in personal satisfaction but who admits to having received some handsome cash as well. In fact, public response has been so large that a good deal of the time Geoghegan spends, or would like to spend, in converting non-golfers to the fold is used in recruiting and training other pros to share his thunder.

Geoghegan neither wants, nor could handle, a monopoly in his field, which, if you want to place it in a category, would lie somewhere between that of the touring pro

and that of the club pro, combining the glamour of the former and the practicality of the latter. Instead, Geoghegan visualizes the day when what he is doing for golf will be on the scale of, and in the manner of, what Arthur Murray has done for dancing. Presumably, he hopes, too, that golf will do for him, financially, what dancing has done for Murray.

"Every day," Geoghegan says, "I get a call from someone who wants me to go to some unlikely place and give my show. I event went to Connecticut State Prison once. And you can imagine what the golf facilities are like up there. Why, not long ago I gave the show in downtown Jersey City. There isn't a golf course within miles of downtown Jersey City. But they ate it up."

### Simple Procedure

Geoghegan's procedure is surprisingly simple. Therein lies the secret of its success, he believes.

Geoghegan first approaches an organization of which he requires two things: (a) an auditorium, and (b) an unquestionable reputation. A YMCA would be typical. Geoghegan then simply states to whom-

ever is in charge that he wants to give a golf show, free of charge. In return, all he asks is use of the auditorium; he'll willing to pay for janitorial services, electricity, and heat, if necessary.

After this is assured, Geoghegan has hundreds of tickets printed at his own expense. He has them distributed through local stores and other such outlets. With the backing of an organization like the "Y," Geoghegan has found that local merchants are perfectly willing to cooperate.

Geoghegan then approaches the local newspaper for publicity. So far, the papers have been more than glad to supply this, with the "Y," once again, backing him up. To facilitate matters, Geoghegan keeps on hand a supply of "hand-outs" and pictures.

The purpose of the free show is to get as many people as possible into the auditorium. An admission fee, therefore, would destroy its purpose. "It's like a 'giveaway' show on TV," he explains. "Plenty of ballyhoo. Ballyhoo, that's all."

### Equipment for the Show

The trappings for Geoghegan's show consist of a portable driving net, a motion picture projector and screen, and, of course, plenty of golf clubs. He delivers a brief talk on what golf is like as a game and a sport. Then he shows movies of Ben Hogan and other stars in action. For a clincher, he invites someone from the audience to step on-stage for a free lesson, preferably a girl, the prettier the better.

It is imperative at this point, Geoghegan explains, not to embarrass the pupil. Put her at ease. If she is a rank novice, treat her sympathetically as such. While the lesson is being given, he takes it down on the tape recorder. After the lesson is concluded, he makes a cheap record of it, which he presents to the pupil to be played over again whenever she feels the need.

At the conclusion of the show, Geoghegan offers a group of ten lessons at a dollar apiece, all ten payable in advance. Clubs and other equipment, what little will be needed, will be supplied free of charge. Classes are limited to groups of 30, at which Geoghegan and an assistant will be present, the assistant being paid on an hourly basis.

From experience, Geoghegan has found that the response to the offer averages about 10 per cent of his audience. The gimmick, therefore, is to get as many people to the free show as possible. Geoghegan says that frequently 400 to 500 have shown when he expected less than half the number.

According to Geoghegan, there is "no new

way of teaching." System, he claims, is everything. As a result, Geoghegan relies upon a thoroughly thought-out procedure of imparting his knowledge of the game to each group.

The first three lessons are spent in acclimating the student to golf, teaching him that the game is a whole lot more than "hitting a little white ball around a field." Geoghegan tries to explain what the student should expect of the game and what he should not. One complete session is devoted to the rules and etiquette of the game.

### Awards Diplomas

From here on it is a case of building the best possible swing for each pupil, taking advantage of whatever natural ability he may happen to have. At the end of each lesson, Geoghegan gives each pupil a written summary of what has been said. At the end of the ten lessons, he presents each with a diploma.

Throughout all the lessons, Geoghegan believes, it is wise to make reference to the PGA whenever possible. "This impresses the student with the importance of continuing his lessons, if he should so decide, with a competent teacher," Geoghegan explains. "Besides, it's just — well, good policy."

Somewhere between the first and the tenth lesson, Geoghegan's pupils approach him about buying equipment. Few of them can afford, or need, first-class clubs. Geoghegan keeps a supply of second-hand equipment on hand and listens to any reasonable offer. He tries to talk to each pupil separately about his or her financial ability to pay. He asks them bluntly what they can afford to pay each week, the answers being astonishingly low at times, often no more than a dollar or two per week.

Whatever the answer, however, Geoghegan accepts. And he takes them on their word to pay. "It would be amazing to a hard-bitten businessman," he says, "but I haven't been stuck yet. Everyone of them — and there have been hundreds — has paid me right on the barrelhead.

"You have to keep in mind that these are hard-working people. Some of them cannot afford any other kind of entertainment. They come to my first show simply because it is free. Some take the full course of lessons with no thought of ever playing on an actual golf course. Some will never get beyond the driving-range stage. Most will end up at municipal courses. But all of them — first and foremost — want to be entertained. You must keep the sessions light and uninvolved. These people do not want to be lectured after a full day in the office. Sure,

they want to learn. But while they're learning, they want to relax, to get away from their hum-drum lives for an hour or so."

To a pro beginning such a venture, Geoghegan advises him to make all the personal appearances possible. "Television," he says, "is the thing. Had it not been for TV, I would never have been able to sell myself to the public. And that's the problem—selling yourself. TV is simply the best way of doing this."

Because he knows that publicity is the keystone of promotion, Geoghegan makes himself available for any and all banquets and country club affairs. In this respect, he is the George Jessel of golf, master of the rare roast beef and the lively anecdote.

Considering the fact that Geoghegan's home club, Crestmont, has 250 active members, it seems logical that he is quite willing to help other pros steal his techniques in the showman-promotion field, extracurricular as it is. He employs 8 assistants. Geoghegan has been 8 years at Crestmont, having come from Wethersfield CC, near Hartford, Conn., and is now additionally golf coach at Seton Hall College.

Previous to his present tent-show variety of school, Geoghegan ran a Barnum-like clinic at Newark Airport driving range which was televised throughout the Metropolitan area.

In his present activity, Geoghegan finds that veterans groups comprise 75 per cent of his business time. He attempts to stress junior golf as much as possible. Some of the other diversified groups he has instructed include adult recreation programs, civic recreation departments, the YMCA, civic clubs, Knights of Columbus, Jewish Community Center, Bell Telephone, Chase Brass, the Masons, Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists Club, and Parent-Teachers associations.

### **Golf Club Manufacturers Report Sales for 1953**

Figures submitted to the member companies of the National Association of Golf Club Manufacturers show a total of 3,372,601 golf clubs sold during the period from November 1, 1952 to October 31, 1953. Of this total 2,340,645 were irons and 1,031,956 were woods.

This compares with a total of 3,067,470 clubs reported sold during the corresponding period in 1952 ending October 31.

Members of the Association anticipate a good year in 1954 and indicate that they are prepared to fill their customers' requirements promptly.

### **Senior Pros Have Biggest Meeting at Dunedin**

More than 400 professionals, the majority of them seniors, gathered at the PGA National Golf Course, Dunedin, Fla., late in January with the Seniors' championship being the main feature of the program.

A field of 150, including those qualified in PGA Senior sectional qualifying rounds and having expenses paid by Teacher's Scotch elixir, competed in the championship, played after this issue of *GOLFDOM* went to press. Details will appear in March *GOLFDOM*.

Hugh Bancroft, Tulsa, was elected PGA Senior pres., to succeed Otto Hardt. A curtain-raiser for the 54-hole championship included a pro-pro best ball event won by Col. Buffalo Bill Jelliffe, Denver; Elwin Nagell, Buffalo; Mike Murra, Wichita; and Harry Moffitt, Toledo, with 31-34, against 72 par. A stroke behind were Mortie Dutra, Los Angeles; Bill Lock, Dearborn, Mich.; Eddie McElligott, Great Bend, Ks., and Ernie Newnham, Portland, Me.

Numerous manufacturers and pro sales representatives exhibited during the conclave and a clinic including Betsy Rawls and Betty McKinnon was conducted among the other features.

The United States Rubber Co. put on its big annual dinner with a capacity crowd of almost 400 stoking themselves with man-sized tender steaks, seeing and hearing a movie review of Notre Dame's 1953 football season highlights presented by line coach Bob McBride, and getting the first view of the new U. S. diamond mesh ball. John Sproul, US Rubber executive gave an interesting explanation of the selling and performance features of the new ball, and George McCarthy, golf ball sales mgr. for U.S. reached oratorical heights with his concluding remark "Give me the tab."

Roland Teacher, head of the distilling firm which Fred Corcoran got to pay expenses for seniors who qualified sectionally for the championship, and who will pay expenses of the winner to meet the top man of British senior pros, flew in from Glasgow to attend the championship.

The PGA course was in fine condition and Leo O'Grady and his staff received many compliments for achieving an operating status of which the pros could be proud, and which certainly eased a tense, critical situation in the PGA.