

How An Advisory Staff Works As A Testing Laboratory

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AROUND this time of the year manufacturers' salesmen get their first views of the clubs that will be in the 1956 lines. Then, a few weeks later the new clubs will be presented for the inspection of the club professionals whose approval of the lines and orders is the expert O.K. of a long, expensive and thoroughly careful program of development.

The program, as we see it, almost invariably starts with the home club professionals. Their intimate experience with the problems of teaching and supplying clubs to improve the games of their customers yields observations and ideas that our salesmen eagerly receive and pass along to the factory.

Then we at the factory take the next steps in weighing the suggestions. In that procedure our professional advisory staff (of stars) practically becomes the expert field testing force of the club professionals.

The advisory staff players are specialists whose earning power depends to a great extent on their equipment.

There are big differences in aptitude, physique and opportunities for practice and play between the advisory staff members and the great multitude of men and women golfers whose satisfied buying keeps the makers of good clubs and the pros who sell those clubs prospering and progressing. But the stars and the other golfers are alike in one respect:

They all want clubs and balls that make it easier to play good golf.

And at that point the advisory staff becomes our experimental laboratory.

Stars Differ As Do Members

The variations in the physical and temperamental make-ups of the playing stars are about as broad on their high playing level as the differences between the types of members the club pro serves. When we can get club design and construction, or ball construction and performance that please the exacting experts we know we've got something to help the club pro and his equipment buyers.

Some of the club professionals' custom-

ers are primarily responsive to the sales appeal of a club that simply feels good. They can't define the sensation of playing with a club that feels so well they have confidence in every shot they play with that club. And we know that Sam Snead who has an acute sense of feel can't describe exactly the feeling of handling and playing with a club that feels exactly right to him, or a ball that feels perfect when he hits it. But his keen feel will discover merits—or the need of corrections—in equipment that he is testing.

Sam pays no attention to swingweight. How the club feels is what interests him. And as clubs are sold to and used by humans rather than scales the human element is paramount in the experimental work. The club pro knows that a driver can be 12 oz. and a brassie 14 oz. and have the same or different swingweights. The home club pro also knows that moving the hands an eighth of an inch on the grip will account for a difference of a point in swingweight.

So the home club pro who has long and successful experience in fitting clubs realizes the limitations of mechanics and the necessity of the human element in very important phases of the experimental and testing work done by staff playing experts.

Cary Middlecoff is another with remarkably sensitive feel but along with that quality he has an investigative and analytical nature. He is technically-minded and wants to know the "why" of everything. "Doc" will come into the plant and ask questions of men working on each detail of a club. His professional background in dentistry possibly accounts for his attitude of wanting to know clearly the reason behind the work.

Betsy Rawls, like Middlecoff, is tremendously interested in the technicalities. Babe Zaharias and Patty Berg are more the Snead type in appraising design and construction. Sam, Babe and Patty look at clubs like Ted Williams looks at a baseball bat; as something made by one genius for another genius to use. But, being exceed-

ingly practical people, Sam, Babe and Patty want to know what has to be done to adapt equipment to the use of those who are not geniuses.

Every Golfer's Game Is First

Naturally an advisory staff member is interested in his or her own game first. What golfer isn't? But in discovering what works well for them they are reminded of problems common to most golfers. Gene Sarazen in searching for the answer to his own grip problem found the answer for himself and many more golfers in the "Reminder" grip.

The tournament professional who turns home club pro is a valuable adviser in clubmaking and on golf balls. With bench clubmaking now virtually extinct as training in club fitting, the younger pros substitute their own playing problems and experience as groundwork for fitting clubs to their members.

Club Pros' Viewpoint

Jim Ferrier and Skip Alexander are two who are especially scholarly in this middle spot, and take the home club pros' viewpoint in trying to get clubs to fit the big market. Skip comes into the factory and works around so much as a student and teammate of the clubmakers they've given him a dummy timecard.

Ferrier applies his wealth of experience to trying to figure out what will make good golf easier for his members whose scores now are as important to Jim as his own tournament scores used to be to him. Jim came up with a very helpful idea about the design of the leading edge on pitching clubs that would be effective in sandy soil. He and Dutch Harrison, among the older staff members, figured prominently in getting the shafts of the 7-, 8-, and 9-irons a bit softer and lighter so there'd be more feel in these clubs.

Harrison played a lot of his best golf in the period before he retired as a steady hand on the tournament circuit to become a club pro, and I suspect it was because he went to softer shafts in his clubs. The strongest trend in clubmaking the past few years has been to get shafts to do more work in putting zing into the shot. The strong young bucks, fellows such as Fred Hawkins, Earl Stewart and Skee Riegel, have favored poker-stiff shafts but when they got on club jobs and had to worry about their members' games they began taking an intense interest in shaft research.

Clubhead design fluctuates. The woods have more loft to them than they used to have. The improvement in golf course turf

and the increase in fairway watering are factors that get a lot of consideration. Refinements that promote easier, more effective use of the clubs, make them look better and which will fit into the manufacturing picture and the pros' and manufacturers' inventory requirements are being sought constantly.

The advisory staff, through the study of its individual conditions and explorations among the club professionals who are in the front line of teaching and selling, qualifies itself as a research and testing force. Its value to the manufacturer is based on what the staff can do to help the club pro and those who buy clubs and balls from the club pro.

Jaycees Plan US Tour for Scotch Boys' Team

JERRY Brennan, sports director of the US Junior Chamber of Commerce, is planning the U. S. trip of the Scotch team of six boys who will be in the U. S. from Sept. 20 thru Sept. 28.

Officials of New York Metropolitan, Washington and Chicago District golf associations, the USGA, Life magazine and the National Golf Fund are cooperating enthusiastically with Brennan to show the visiting lads a grand time and return the courtesies generously extended when a U. S. junior team visited Scotland last year.

Matches will be played in New York, Washington and Chicago. George S. May has offered his Tam O'Shanter for the Chicago matches.

Sam Bunton and John Stiratt will escort the Scotch junior team.

The U. S. team will consist of one boy from the Jaycee junior, one from the USGA junior and one from the Western Golf Assn. junior championships and three juniors from each area in which the matches are to be played.

Bonavita Heads Virginia Tidewater Turf Group

Mike Bonavita, Franklin, Va., was elected pres., Virginia Tidewater Turf-grass Assn. at the organization's annual meeting, held at the Little Creek (Va.) Amphibious Base course.

Harry McSloy of Oceana, Va., was named honorary pres. Other officers elected: VP Hurley Savage, Warwick, Va.; Sec.-treas. Wes Barham, Planters' Chemical Co.; and directors Russ Jernigan of Little Creek, John T. Kelley of Norfolk, Fred Sappenfield of Portsmouth and Fred Bingham of Ocean View.