

Teaching the Teachers Is Job Well Done at PGA

By HERB GRAFFIS

This is the longest news story GOLFDOM has run in any issue in its 28 years. The best and most progressive teaching pros will read every word of it. They will find it the most complete and concise survey of golf instruction activity that's ever appeared in print.

Pros who need to be informed and stimulated in their own thinking about teaching possibly will not have the time to learn of the significant points of the PGA annual meeting teaching program. That'll be their tough luck—ad that of their pupils.

The sessions represented an immense investment in teaching experience, and thousands of dollars of the PGA's money.

The program was well worth the heavy expense in the constructive influence it will have in speeding the advance in golf instruction.

THE PGA annual meeting's Teaching program, under the direction of PGA Teaching committee chairman Harold Sargent, kept 150 delegates and visitors deeply interested for six hours.

Pros pronounced it the best golf teaching conference ever held in the extent and clarity of advanced ideas in instruction.

Lester Bolstad, golf coach of the University of Minnesota, opened the session with a description of his group instruction methods and an outline of his effective methods in teaching women.

Bolstad, after doing very well in amateur golf competition, winning the Public Links championship in 1926, was a club and tournament pro for 10 years and the past eight years has been Minnesota golf coach.

He said group instruction at schools is producing fine golfers because the kids get into the game young and right. Facilities to provide for application of good instruction are essential, Les remarked, and told of the Minnesota equipment of 10

nets under football stands, two practice putting greens, a chipping area, and brush mats for wood and iron shots, as the indoor set-up.

His class lessons are an hour long. The first lesson is entirely talk, giving students a basic explanation of the pattern and objectives of the course.

After that there never is more than 15 minutes of talk during the hour. The students learn by doing under Bolstad supervision.

He is an advocate of learning and practice with the Sarazen heavy training club. He emphasizes that the swing is a matter of the muscles pulling, rather than pushing. He starts students in with a sequence that teaches them a routine of getting the correct grip, then an orderly method of properly standing to the ball. He is strong on the proper posture at address and rhythm in the swing.

Bolstad says that when the students get set right, understand about body control and then get their feet moving, excellent swings result.

Varsity Squad in Exercises

He had three of his university golf squad demonstrating his four exercises, one with the left hand, two with the right hand and one with both hands on the club.

He says his classes do better when they start indoors with full swings.

Bolstad said that nothing else helped straighten out his pupils as well as Frank Walsh's counterclockwise theory, presented in detail in Golfing. He pointed out that as the player moves into the ball the body opens the clubface and the last three fingers of the left hand must close it.

He also said that Joe Novak's ideas on balance during the swing (another Golfing feature), had been very helpful in instruction.

Bolstad's pupils are taught to observe closely. He said learning goes along with the power to observe.

Tells Women To Swing Hard

There isn't much about teaching women that's different from teaching men, Les declared. Women usually stand with their feet too close together, and are disposed to stand too close to the ball. Women's grips are inclined to be soft and weak so Les accents two-handed swinging by women while trying to build up their left hands. He also stresses swinging hard which he says doesn't have much risk in getting women to overdo it because most of them swing too easily.

He noted that elementary drills of girls' classes are highly effective as girls and women are more amenable to instruction than the male of the species.

Teaching Lags Behind Playing

Joe Novak reviewed his study of teaching which he said began in July, 1915 when he started teaching and which he wouldn't dare — or want to — stop. Joe doesn't think that teaching has kept pace with playing progress. Novak is of the opinion that teaching progress has been retarded by a conflict of theories and as there have been about as many theories as pros a lot of golfers have become confused and lost confidence in pro instruction.

He thinks the trend has changed. As a result of pros taking an investigative, unprejudiced and constructive view of each other's instruction ideas public confidence in pro instruction is rising rapidly and results are impressive.

One of Joe Mozel's automatic electric tees was on the stage. Novak and other pros hit shots in illustrating their talks.

Group Teaching Spurs Progress

In Novak's opinion the PGA Teaching committee headed by Harold Sargent and the Dunedin winter weekly conferences on teaching set up by Emil Beck and Irvin Schloss have tremendously advanced golf instruction. Joe also said that group instruction has spurred teaching progress.

He told that at UCLA he has half his class watching while the other half takes the lesson. He likes to have the next student for an individual lesson waiting on the bench while he's giving a lesson. He says this gives the pupils helpful warm-ups of their eyes and brains.

He observed that almost all good players have:

(1) Body motion that swings the club. This is based on live footwork that shifts weight to the right foot in the upswing and the left foot in the downswing. The forward press, in almost all cases, starts the weight shifting, with the relaxing right knee shifting the weight to the left foot and getting the body into motion.

(2) Hand action that manipulates the clubface into position and keeps it in correct position thruout the swing.

Joe remarked that too many golf pupils take a vise-like grip with the left hand instead of any easy controlling hold of the club with fingers and palm of the left hand which becomes firmer almost automatically and helps speed the club on the downswing.

Novak referred to nation-wide interest aroused by his Golfing magazine article on balance. Instructors and pupils alike told him of difficulties in preventing loss of balance in pivoting. His article, he said, boiled down to holding the left hip in correct position on the way up and the right hip in the correct position on the way down.

He added that failure to maintain correct balance accounted for about 3 out of 4 putts being missed to the left.

Joe spoke of the head as the center of swing and the seat of the pants as the center of weight.

Littler's Swing Simplest

There was a lively discussion following Novak's talk, with Bill Wotherspoon, Jim Fogertey, Les Bolstad and others giving clinical attention to Joe's ideas. This session brought out Joe's statement that Gene Littler had the simplest swing Novak ever had seen. Littler has no forward press, Joe said, but has his balance on his right foot about half-way into his swing when he starts. He gets a big body turn



STRONG SELLING DISPLAY IN LOU STRONG'S SHOP

Lou Strong in his pro shop at Park Ridge (Ill.) CC makes striking displays on a wall of his shop by using a "pin-up" board.

Many shops effectively use the display board in smaller areas but Strong gives it a big punch, changing displays often to keep the area fresh in its attractiveness.

with his left knee bent about as much on his backswing as his right knee is in coming at the ball.

The observation was made that most good golfers are slightly pigeon-toed, which undoubtedly controls their stance.

Question "One-Piece Swing"

Bolstad and Novak agreed that the "one-piece" swing was incorrectly named. The good swing has the pieces coordinated. There are balanced pushes and pulls in the feet, hands and body.

The customary subject of Hogan's "secret" came up with another guess being that the slight and controlled fade which set Ben on a phenomenal winning streak was, to a considerable measure, the result of clubs made slightly toed-out to get the fade result with Hogan's swing.

Putting Magic Shown

The most amazing putting demonstration pros ever saw was put on by John B. Hawley, jr., multi-millionaire president of the Northern Pump Co. As Bolstad testified in the Hawley introduction, the golfing executive has excelled many pro stars at putting on courses around the country.

Hawley demonstrated his putting method on a long aluminum-based putting strip covered with material simulating a keen grass green. On this device, he and fellow workers at Northern Pump putt

after lunch. He's so good at putting the ball into the hole he plugged up the hole and putted to a line marking the hole and stopped most of the balls exactly on the line.

Hawley figured out in his engineering brain the speed formula for a putt on an "inch-pound" basis determining how far a certain weight of putter would have to move in stroking the ball to get the required distance on greens of varying speed.

He said the flat arc of the putter was similar to that of a broom sweeping into a dustpan. His right arm is held close to his body and he putts with his arms precisely coordinated with his wrists. He has his right thumb on a flat place on the grip pointing straight down in line with the putter face. He putts with his right hand and arm mainly, and doesn't hold the club tightly in his fingers.

Keeps Weight on Left Foot

Hawley emphasized keeping the weight on the left foot during putting. He says a major fault in putting is weight going onto the right leg and that throws all balance and control out of gear.

When the putt is pushed instead of hit crisply it doesn't get or hold the line, Hawley noted. He said plenty of the stars who think they know how to putt damage

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their performances by bending over or stopping to line up a putt instead of standing up "like the Lord made you" to survey the line from the near and far sides of the hole. The alteration of head position from the upright, or any jerkiness in surveying the line, disturbs the inner ear mechanism and ruins precision.

Hawley also remarked that when anyone, regardless of temperament, takes more than 1½ or 2 seconds on a putt, freezing on the putt is unavoidable.

He made some astonishing putts cross-handed, backward between his legs and with his right leg on a chair, to demonstrate the validity of his theories.

On an engineering basis Hawley figured out that the accuracy of putting varies as the square of the distance of the putt. He also pointed out that playing stars don't average as well as the older amateurs in putting because the stars have longer approach shots and don't get as near to the hole for putting as the shorter players do.

Cary Middlecoff and Jerry Barber demonstrated and described their shot-making techniques in the Mozel net, giving the pros examples of the difference between a tall and a short player, and providing fine basic material for adjusting the instruction to the individual.

Probes Golf's Tension Problem

Jackson Bradley, reading the paper of Dr. James Greenwood, Jr., of Houston, a neuro-surgical authority who's made a hobby for 17 years of golf psychology, relayed the expert's analysis that fear tension is the paramount psychological problem in golf.

In golf so much time is allowed for the development of tension that the problem becomes that of maintaining psychological equilibrium.

Total relaxation is as bad as severe tension, Dr. Greenwood asserted. He added "The bad shot is due to failure to do something right, not because something was done wrong."

This psychological analysis agrees with Tommy Armour's principle of instruction in concentrating on the positive.

Dr. Greenwood urged concentration on making the shot instead of on the results of the shot to properly direct the desirable tension and to reduce anxiety. He said the fast, medium or slow swing that fits a player is indicated by the way the player walks, talks or argues.

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An intense desire to win Dr. Greenwood said is the most common cause of destructive tension, although a subconscious fear of the responsibilities of winning probably would explain failures of some great players who hadn't won the big ones.

Furgol on Individuality

Ed Furgol's demonstration and talk on "How I Play Golf" gave ample evidence that Ed is no accidental winner of the National Open. He talked about his own experience teaching him the necessity of handling each pupil as a distinctive case.

He told of his exercise to strengthen his left hand so he could hold the club under control without freezing tension. He said that due to limitations of his left hand he'd had to have the butt ends of his grips built up decidedly bell-shaped.

He also told of skipping the rope to strengthen his legs. He's really made himself a strong golfer. His left arm he's made an asset in his swing by not having to worry about the radius of his swing changing. He said he is definitely a right-

CARNOUSTIE HOOSIER



Jim Soutar, 34 years away from Carnoustie, has been a Hoosier for 16 of those years, as pro at Bloomington (Ind.) CC and, with Owen Cochran, coach of the Indiana University golf team.

Soutar, with Indiana's co-ordinator of athletic expansion plan, laid out the 6,710 yd. par 71 now being built for the university at Bloomington. Fairway and greens watering system is in. Expect to open front 9 next September and the 18 in 1956.

Wisconsin and Michigan State, only Western Conference schools without golf courses, are planning to build.

handed golfer, partially because of physical limitations but mainly because he's convinced that's the power side.

Furgol forecast that tournament scores would improve because the players are getting better and working harder and smarter at practice, and the courses are improving constantly in condition.

Middlecoff and Barber in their talks also forecast better scoring with Littler and Holscher looking to them the best of the junior leaguers. Littler, they said, had a better swing than Bud Holscher, but Holscher now, in their opinion, being the smarter youngster in playing the course.

Progress Came with Upright Swing

Willie Kidd, veteran pro at Interlachen, and developer of many stars and fine club golfers, compared the old and new methods of teaching.

Kidd said that in the old days the flat swing retarded development. He used to watch the amateur experts Sandy Armour, Fred MacKenzie, Robt. Harris, Frank Struggie and Dick Whiterush and

the pros, Sayers, Auchterlonie, Simpson and Smiths on the other side and from them got the hunch that the flat swing was on its way out.

Willie said that in the pioneer days the pros learned from the pupils about as much as the pros taught. The first big change into better teaching came when the pros didn't have to spend so much time on clubmaking. Teaching later was given a great impetus by the super-slow motion pictures of Hagen, Vardon and Joyce Wethered made by George Sargent for the PGA when Alex Pirie was president and Jack Mackie was treasurer.

From those films pros began to get a clear idea of what happened in the swings of the great ones.

Kidd said much progress had been made in basing instruction on the physical characteristics of each pupil. The hands are the start of all golf learning and playing, Willie remarked. He teaches his pupils to get their hold of the club when the club is off the ground and they can get a rather sensitive feel of the club.

He maintains that the legs are the most important part of swinging, determining the correctness or flaws of body action.

Kidd also declared that the college professionals have a big advantage over club pros in having younger pupils, under discipline, on routine, and in an atmosphere of study. He said club and range teaching is going to progress by adapting and developing more of the college golf teaching attitude.

Several during the instruction sessions mentioned the probability of considerable improvement in scoring averages with more group lessons at clubs.

Willie voiced the sentiments of the steadily progressing older pro teachers in referring to the description of golf as "a science of a lifetime," written by the American banker, David R. Forgan, son of a Carnoustie clubmaker.

Golf A "Complex Motor Skill"

Dr. John Anderson of the University of Minnesota, adviser to several large corporations on training of employees in fine manual work, spoke to the pros as "fellow teachers," whose job is to teach "a quite complex motor skill."

Dr. Anderson made the first of his talks to pros in 1939 before the Minnesota PGA. He's probably had more influence on golf instruction than any other educator not closely connected with golf, teaching or tournament playing.

He said that too much stress on perfection of responses frequently defeats the purpose of instruction.

Every learning is a matter of organization and the effective pro teacher's task is to appraise the body make-up of the pupil and his background of motor skills, then teach in such a way that the pupil can organize the instruction received and work it into his own game, Dr. Anderson asserted. With enough interest and reward a pupil can teach himself almost anything, Anderson reminded the pros.

Measure of the Teacher

Formalized instruction gives a standard from which the individual can depart or to which he can conform and the value of the pro is measured by his competent direction about the deviation, said the Minnesota professor. He said the younger pupils should have a good general pattern rather than details but that too much emphasis on a strict pattern is self-defeating.

He emphasized that a sound plan for teaching golf would be to have the pupils learn about the game prior to taking up the grip, swing and other details. It is Dr. Anderson's belief that too much pressure in the early stages of golf accounts for many merely sampling golf, then quitting the game.

Three Levels of Learning

The three levels of learning he said called for different treatment. The beginner needs a good example clearly in mind, encouragement, and an opportunity to work out some development for himself.

The pupil who has advanced to some degree and wants to improve, should have constructive, detailed advice, particularly with a simple, understandable demonstration.

This medium-scoring class of pupil should be guided to be alive in all senses to recognize the sensation of properly hitting a shot. "Motor control" isn't too difficult when the pupil has acquired the necessary feel. Anderson said that one way to cure hooking, slicing or other bad golf habits is to deliberately practice them so the feel in muscles and skin of these faults can be distinguished from the feel of a well hit shot.

He stressed teaching proper sequence of major elements, and developing rhythm, at this stage of learning.

Breaking Bad Habits

In teaching the rather expert golfer Anderson advised breaking up the bad habit that is causing the fault, even by

teaching a compensating error for a relatively short period. Then, when the erroneous routine is disturbed, get the fellow on a new start.

Experts' Feelings Vary

The fundamental difference between the novice and the advanced pupil, from the teacher's viewpoint, is that the novice doesn't know what to do, while the advanced pupil whose feelings and responses vary from time to time doesn't become aware of variations in his methods but can correct himself when he learns what deviations from his normally sound routine have occurred.

Anderson, looking at golf from a scientist's viewpoint, pronounced it a game requiring extraordinarily complicated skill for low scoring. The teaching problem is "extraordinarily complicated" too because it demands building up in the pupil "sensitivity and perceptivity of what's going on."

Urges Scientific Attitude

The day-long teaching session concluded with an address by David Lilly, chmn., Golf committee, Somerset CC, St. Paul, director of the Western GA, and pres., Toro Mfg. Co. Lilly spoke on "The Amateur Viewpoint of Professional Teaching."

He urged that the scientific attitude in evidence at the teaching session be made paramount in pro golf instruction. He told what development of the scientific attitude had done in promoting the interests of golf course superintendents and in improving golf courses.

The Lilly talk, by an adept amateur golfer who's taken many lessons and been around in golf, amounted to pretty nearly a statement of policy for the progressive golf instructors.

It will appear in full in a later issue of *GOLFDOM*.

American Society of Golf Course Architects to Meet

American Society of Golf Course Architects will hold its annual meeting at the Belleview-Biltmore hotel, Belleair, Fla., during the week of Jan. 10.

Annual Southeastern Turf Conference will be held April 5-6 at Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station, Tifton, Ga. Masters' tournament at Augusta is April 7, 8, 9, so both events may be fitted into schedules.