
The ASSISTANTS' DEPARTMENT

An Old Pro Gives the Youngsters Some Valuable Advice

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IT'S hard to tell a youngster who is in his first or second year as an assistant professional that experience is the best teacher. When we're young we are sure we know almost everything.

When we get more years and experience we see that one of the major reasons for a big job turn-over in pro golf is lack of sound and adequate experience among men going into their first pro jobs. A lot of them don't hold these first jobs long—and that's against their record in getting a very desirable job later. Eventually some of them acquire the reputation of being able to get jobs better than to hold them.

The PGA policy of five years in a pro shop under a master professional preparatory to graduating into first class pro status is a pretty good one. But it must be said that two or three years as assistants to some professionals would be more valuable than 10 years of working for men who take only a casual interest in assistant training.

Has to Learn About Clubs

Training an assistant properly is a hard job and a responsibility not to be lightly regarded. The assistant now is not going to do any bench clubmaking and will miss that valuable training in the art and science of fitting clubs, and knowing why and how they are designed and made as they are. But the assistant has to learn enough about club craftsmanship to be able to make minor repairs and to know how to buy and fit clubs. The master pro may have to take or send his assistant to one or more factories several times to receive valuable training in details of club design and construction.

The assistant must be taught to teach—

not only the technicalities of golf, but the psychology that is so important in teaching. There have been tremendous advances made in teaching golf during the past eight or ten years and not the least of this progress has been achieved as the result of pros studying teaching methods in other fields of schooling and coaching.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

If you've got some question concerning assistants' training and progress, send them to GOLFDOM, 407 S. Dearborn, Chicago 5, Ill., and we will try to get the right answer from other pros and assistants.

Pro golf is showing a more scientific attitude toward instruction. The first-class pro now is open-minded and willing to investigate and test the other fellow's ideas.

The master professional has to teach his assistant how to teach the basic pattern the head pro has found most satisfactory at the club. Otherwise there'll be confusion that will cost the pro department customers on the lesson tee.

Retailing is Important

It is essential that the assistant pro learn a lot about all the phases of retailing under the conditions that apply at a pro shop. At most clubs the professional department has to make enough money in merchandising to support pro service to the club's members and to make a profit for the professional. The assistant may not realize it but he probably is getting paid a salary that's a great deal larger than his boss got up to a few years ago. In some cases, the clubs' guarantee to their pros now is about what the pro pays his assistant. It's not a logical situation, but it exists and makes it vital that the pro and his assistants do

enough business in the shop and on the lesson tee to show a profit that will warrant a man staying in professional golf.

The professional must select assistants who have attractive personalities in action, word, thought and appearance. He and his assistant are expected to reflect the spirit of the club and to be genuinely interested in having every golfer enjoy the game.

Carelessness or lack of judgment or untidiness can damn a man quickly at a golf club. The younger man may not be aware of it, but such a matter as soiled hands or clothing or dirty fingernails will be so glaring to customers in the golf shop or to pupils taking lessons (women especially) that the assistant will be talked about as one who doesn't fit at the club.

Assistant Has Selling Job

The assistant must sell himself and his professional to the members. The golfer who hears an assistant make an unfavorable comment about the head pro almost invariably thinks that the worst thing about the pro was his bad guess in hiring the assistant.

It's up to the boss professional to develop his assistant's confidence and the members' confidence in the younger fellow. If the members don't have that confidence, they'll not want to take any lessons from the assistant or buy clubs from him.

When a professional recommends an assistant for a master pro job the pro has to be sure that his candidate knows what he is in for and can handle the job with ability, tact and sound judgment. The pro's reputation goes with the boys he has trained.

The pro should play with his assistant as often as possible or supervise the assistant's practice so the two will have an understanding of common details of instruction.

I believe that the PGA is going to have to give considerable time and thought to getting a teaching program and a general pro business schooling made available to assistant professionals. We're doing something along that line in the Illinois section and think that eventually the schooling should be at Dunedin. The fact is that assistant training is so important and now so much of a job that it's sometimes more than a master pro has the time to handle.

I believe in paying an assistant a good salary, giving him a commission on what he sells and on his lesson tee and playing instruction. In a well-conducted business the employer makes a profit on the work of

Golf "Fever" Reading

Have You Caught the Fever?

Check your answer to the following questions. This is the peak of the "fever" season.

A Spoon

To stir coffee
To go necking
A golf club

Beautiful Bag

Somebody else's wife
A candy sack
Something to found at my pro shop

Sticks

Something on the lawn
Ugly legs
Beautiful new golf clubs to be found at my pro shop

Nassou

A place to go and sun
Where I first met Bridey
Murphy
Dollar - Dollar - Dollar

Birdie

A thing on the wing
The name of an old girl friend
One below par

A Lesson

Too many olives in too much liquid
Home work
Something to arrange with my golf pro

Strokes

A malady
What my dog likes
What I shall try to con my golf pals out of

New Equipment

What factories want
What my car needs
Golf balls and all new equipment at my pro shop

April 1st

April Fools Day
The first of the month
Dick Grout opens my pro shop

Check your "Fever" Score. If you answered even one right, I'm with you! Glad you got the fever! It'll be good to see you and serve you.

DICK GROUT

Butterfield Country Club
Hinsdale, Illinois

A clever, completely unique announcement of the season's opening of a pro shop was the above card sent out by Pro Dick Grout to members of the Butterfield CC in the Chicago district. The card got them talking and laughing and coming in to talk with Dick and his assistants. Then they bought!

the employee—or should, theoretically—and it's not any different in professional golf. If the assistant isn't valuable enough to be paid a good income and still show a profit to the pro, something is wrong somewhere; maybe the assistant isn't the right one; maybe the pro hasn't got the job well organized or the assistant properly trained.

One of the finest assistants I ever had—a man who now has a very good pro job of his own—was a lad who was always asking me questions. He was eager to learn for his own advancement and because he wanted me and the members to recognize him as a young man who knew his job.

The assistant should ask a lot of questions and the boss pro should be thorough and clear and pleasant in answering them for the assistant is the man who represents the pro. If that representation isn't pleasing and proper there's been a mistake made in selection of the assistant.