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Guidance Points for Young Pros



Paul Scott

Wisdom from 42 years in the business is embodied in these tips for assistants . . . Old hands, too, may profit by reading what Paul Scott has to say

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About a year ago I was talking to two or three young fellows who were breaking into the golf business when one of them said, "Paul, did you ever sit down and prepare a list of things that a fellow should know or try to do in working his way up as a club professional?"

I was momentarily stumped. Even though I had developed a kind of philosophy over the years covering what a man should know in our business, I never had put it down on paper, let alone list its most important points. Anyway, I told these young fellows what I have long stressed in training an assistant and finally, about three or four months later, I got around to putting my thoughts down on paper. Since then, I have revised them a couple times and below is the result, or better, summary of these revisions.

DEDICATION TO THE GAME: Many of us try to be cynical about this, saying it's a way of making a living, or it beats working, or something similarly flippant, but I contend that nine out of ten professionals who have been around a while are dedicated to the game and to service to their players or members or they wouldn't be making a living out of golf.

INTEGRITY: If you're a con man at heart your sins will betray you sooner or later. I don't know of any other sport in which a man has to be any more honest with himself, with his members, with the fellow he works for and with his fellow pros than in golf.

CONGENIALITY: You're working in a recreation atmosphere, so why be glum? If you have to be reminded to smile, put a card with those five letters somewhere so you'll see it 50 times a day. You're in a position where you have to cheer up people. Don't economize with those encouraging words.

NO CHARGE FOR SMALL SERVICES: You can't nickel and dime your players with insignificant charges for small services. In a year's time you give away a lot of time, if nothing else, in a pro shop, but always remember you get it back with interest. Sometimes you may wonder if you are going to, but generally speaking, most golfers are appreciative of the small things you do for them and they repay you.

KEEP BUSY BETWEEN SALES: There are a thousand things to be done in a pro shop. There's also a great temptation to waste time. Learn to work while listening to the golfer's account of his game and don't entertain him with all the details of your last round. Keep looking for the housekeeping chores that have to be done.

LEARN THE RULES OF GOLF: By becoming an authority on these you can increase your prestige a thousandfold. It shouldn't be necessary to bring out the book every time you are asked for a decision on a rule. You'd be surprised how your rules knowledge or lack of it helps or hurts your business.

GAMBLING: Keep the stakes low—unless you own oil wells or something like that. When you play with members give them a fair handicap and insist on paying when you lose. As for gratuities, don't accept them in money. It may be all right to allow a member to buy your lunch occasionally or pay for your caddy, but this certainly shouldn't be overdone. Always remember you can't afford to get a reputation of being a moocher or a hustler or a chiseler.

PLAYING: In fairness to the man you work for or your own business after you become a head pro, you have to arrange your practicing or playing time so that it fits in with the schedule. There's nothing more annoying to a head pro than to have an assistant out on the clock or hitting balls during the busiest time of the day. This subject can be a touchy one and has resulted in the firing of quite a few assistants. It's important that you play golf reasonably well. The head pro realizes this and, in most cases, will meet you more than halfway in helping to arrange your playing and practice time.

TAKE AN INTEREST IN EVERY CUSTOMER: You can't play one off against another. One man's money, support and friendship are as good as the next. Don't cultivate just a few golfers to the exclusion of the majority. You'll be tested 10,000 times a year where members are involved and you have to remain fair all the way down the line. This is the toughest part of being a pro.

KEEP GOOD RECORDS: Daily bookkeeping or recordkeeping is a big thing in the operation of a shop. Order or develop the proper forms that will help you keep records accurately and easily.



To show a Junior class at Krefeld, Germany, the plane of the swing, Flory van Donck, winner of numerous European championships and the Canada Cup in 1960, swings inside a wood device that helps the kids learn to groove the swing.

Nothing irritates a member like bungled bookkeeping. Get in the habit of writing everything—items that have to be ordered from a supplier and complete information on your golfers' needs.

DON'T BECOME A SWELLHEAD: More aspiring pros have washed out because of an overgrown head than anything else. Being able to hit a ball with a stick better than the next fellow certainly doesn't make you superior. You should be able to hit a ball well—that's part of your business. When you get that inflated feeling, just start thinking about all the things you can't do or don't know.

The eleven points cited by Paul Scott for getting along as a professional are the outgrowth of 42 years of observation. He started his career as an assistant to Tommy Low at Altadena (Calif.) CC in 1919. All of his time in the game has been spent at clubs on the West Coast and in his more than four decades he has helped at least a score of young men get successfully launched in golf.