



Al Keeping (r), Gulph Mills pro, and his assistant, Ronnie Astle, discuss some of the fine points of a wood clubhead. Keeping never takes clubs out of manufacturers' display boxes (background) when he shows them in his sales room.

How Al Keeping sums up the Pro Operation

You Run Shop for Dough-Rewards Come in Teaching

By JOSEPH W. DRAGONETTI

Like golf, Albert George (Al) Keeping of the Gulph Mills GC, King of Prussia, Pa., one of the Philadelphia area's most popular pros, is an import from Scotland.

We spent the better part of a rainy day recently with Al Keeping talking about his 42 years in the game both in this country and his native land, how he runs his pro shop, how he teaches and other aspects of his long career.

A portrait emerges of a big, modest, warm-hearted man, one whom the Philadelphia Section of the Professional Golfers Association named Pro-of-the Year in 1963.

What roads did Al follow to achieve such recognition?

Al has been the pro at Gulph Mills for 20 years. That is the longest tenure of any person in that post in the history of the exclusive club, which has a membership of about 200.

Starting at the beginning, we talked about Keeping's early years. Al was born on July 5, 1908, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the son of an officer in the British Army. Being a Scot he naturally took to the game, but there were other influences. Two of his uncles, John and Jim Edmundson, were top pros of their time. Jim played at Royal Port Rush, one of Ireland's finest courses.

"Most women," says Al Keeping, "have a tremendous desire to play good golf." That's why they are a little easier to teach, according to the Philly pro. He is shown giving a lesson to Elfriede Schaefer. Terry Erhard, in background, absorbs a few tips.

Uncle Jim won the Irish Open Championship three years in a row, 1908, 1909 and 1910. He came to this country after the First World War to become the pro at the North Hills GC. While there he won the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Opens.

Uncle John was a noted pro at Huntingdon GC and at Llanerch CC. He was at the latter club for 27 years.

Best of Influences

Two other great golfers who had a strong influence on Keeping were George Duncan, who was the pro at Wentworth in Surrey, England, and his brother Alexander (Alec) Duncan, long-time pro at the Philadelphia Cricket Club.

Al went to work for George Duncan when he was 14. One of his first tasks was to make golf clubs under the supervision of some of the top specialists in the field. Even today Keeping can make clubs, but he says: "Manufacturers do a great job in making clubs, so I spend my time selling them or teaching." He does, however, maintain a repair section in his pro shop.

"George Duncan," Al says "was one of the greatest golfers Scotland ever produced. He taught me the fundamentals



of the game. We did not have practice areas at Wentworth. You went out and played a game with your teacher. Another special technique he used was to call in all his pro shop assistants after he won or lost a tournament and give us an analysis of what he did that was right or wrong.

Strict But Patient

"In some ways he was a stern taskmaster. He was strict about the appearance of his shop, just as he was strict, but patient, in teaching us how to improve our games. Even today it seems to me that the greatest asset a teaching pro can have is patience.

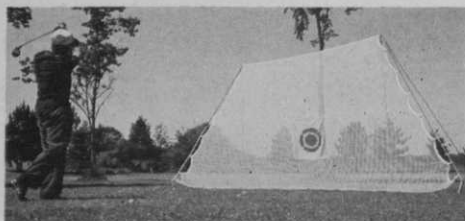
"Later, I watched George Duncan play exhibitions in the United States and was always grateful for what he taught me, including a fast-paced game. I copied him in that respect."

Duncan must have seen a lot of potential in the eager young man from Edinburgh because, in 1926, he recommended him for the position of assistant to

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A clubmaker for 42 years, Al shows his assistants a few things about filing a clubface. Keeping has been at Gulph Mills for 20 years, serving his apprenticeship under several famous shopmen.



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Further support for teenage credit plans comes from a survey made by Seventeen, a magazine for teenage girls, a few years ago. At that time, 31 per cent of the stores polled had teenage credit plans which were every bit as successful as those for adults. Only three out of every ten requested parental guarantees.

Limit the Account

Shops that extend credit to teenagers usually limit the account balance. Joseph A. White of the International Consumer Credit Association was asked for his recommendations for teenage accounts at pro shops. He suggests "a \$60 limit, payable \$20 monthly with no service charge. If the account is not paid promptly, add a 1½ per cent late charge and close the account."

The advantages of teenage credit to pro shop customers are many. His own account gives the teenager a sense of pride and responsibility that should encourage him to shop with you. It makes his purchases his business with no need to explain each and every item to his parents at the end of the month.

The question of teenage credit is one to be completely weighed. The final decision must be reached by the pro after consideration of the advantages and pitfalls of such sales, and the reliability of those to whom credit is extended.

Run Shop for Dough

(Continued from page 44)

brother, Alec, at the Philadelphia Cricket Club.

Al came to America at the age of 18 on the British liner Berengaria. He landed in this country during the Golden Age of Sports when Bobby Jones and others were in their heyday. He was impressed by the skyscrapers of New York and other cities and the beauty of American courses, although he did somewhat miss the heath-er of his native Scotland.

He lived with his Uncle Jim near North Hills when he first went to work for Alec Duncan. He stayed at Philadelphia Cricket four years, then became assistant to George Sayers at Merion in Ardmore, Pa. This was a time when Joe Valentine, dean

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of course supts., was transforming Merion into one of the great courses of the world. Al was with Sayers for seven years prior to joining Buck Hill Falls GC in the Pocono resort area of Pennsylvania. He served four years in the Army Air Corps in World War II and came to Gulph Mills after his separation from service.

Prefers to Teach

Although he is busy running the pro shop, with his assistant, Ronnie Astle, and is especially active in the Philadelphia Section of the PGA, Al Keeping devotes as much time as he can to teaching. He says he especially enjoys this phase of the business.

"Of course," he says, "you can't make a good golfer out of all your students. My aim is to bring their game up to their natural potential. A golf teacher must have patience. He can never get angry at his pupils and never talk down to them. Common sense and human understanding go a long way."

Al says he places most emphasis on the grip and stance.

"Golfers," he says, "can trace 90 per cent of their troubles to one cause: they're moving their heads. The head must be kept still.

"I tell my players to take aim on a spot at the back of the ball," Keeping continues, "because that is where you'll hit it. Then keep your head still. Hold your chin in slightly, but don't hold your head tense.

"A line between your head and the ball forms an axis around which the swing revolves. Picture yourself inside a barrel when you swing, and then rotate your body without touching either side. You wind and unwind during a swing. This automatically takes care of your weight. There isn't such a thing as shifting your weight.

"If you learn to rotate your body correctly, then everything else in your swing will move naturally. You'll take the club away from the ball correctly, your wrists will cock and uncock correctly. You'll come into the ball without swaying and there won't be a drag anywhere on your swing.

"After impact, when the right shoulder



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comes under and through, then your head will move naturally to see the shot."

Easier to Teach

Al Keeping has enjoyed unique success in teaching women and as the result of this work, Gulph Mills can be proud of the accomplishments of five of its ladies' teams.

"Women are easier to teach," he says. "They have natural grace and balance. Women will work like hell to be good golfers. Moreover, they are not ashamed to ask questions and learn. A man is inclined to be more self-conscious."

One of the finest woman golfers he has taught at Gulph Mills is Jeane Slaymaker, who was a great hockey player before taking up golf.

Other pupils at his home club include Willis De La Cour, who is now president; the industrialist, Roger Firestone; William Van Allen, famous architect and also a great tennis player; Charles B. Grace, son of the steel magnate, Eugene Grace; and Jack Dorrance, head of the

Campbell Soup Co.

Keeping uses the traditional "soft-sell" approach in his pro shop. Emphasis is on good merchandise and display.

"We do not have a fancy shop," he says, "but we like to do things with display, keep a good inventory and never use high pressure. I know when people are about ready to buy, but I never push them. Members of the type we have would resent that."

Uses Boxes in Club Display

Keeping also tries to move his merchandise around as much as possible. He does not particularly care for the generally accepted techniques used in displaying clubs, but states that the boxes in which clubs are packed help to make good displays and he leaves the clubs in the boxes.

"The manufacturers," he says, "have spent a lot of time and money in creating attractive boxes for clubs. Why not make use of them? The coloring, the lettering and other aspects of the boxes, including

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Here is the clubhouse of the Mooring CC, opened in Naples, Fla., in recent weeks. It's a Par 63, 4,100 yards long with nine par 3 and nine par 4 holes. The clubhouse is done in colonial style with car garage to match. Naples, with a population of less than 10,000, boasts of five 18-hole courses.

information about the clubs and shafts, etc. help the prospective buyer decide what is best suited for him."

Al says the business his shop does with women is on the increase and both men and women are paying more attention than ever before to golf course attire.

After 42 years in the game, what are some of Al Keeping's lasting impressions:

"I have met very few people I haven't liked. You meet many fine people in this business — for example, my friend, Tommy Armour. We occasionally exchange teaching techniques. I think he has the greatest command of the English language of any pro I have known. I have played in tournaments with him and although we are at great distances from each other nowadays, we still correspond."

Likes To Teach Kids

To sum up: "I haven't made a fortune out of this business of golf but it has been good to me. One of the great satisfactions is to take a beginner or an average golfer and inspire the student to make the most of his potential.

"I especially like to teach the Juniors. We have a five-week course for about 40 of them, giving individual lessons two afternoons a week.

"We can't all be great golfers, but we can play the game like ladies and gentlemen. It adds to enjoyment of life. You can fairly well judge a man's character by the way he plays golf."