

*Many golfers ask for help in interpreting what they read*

## **Will: Instruction Materials Help the Pros' Teaching Business**

**A** professional who stands up and casts his vote in favor of golf instruction books and newspaper and magazine articles runs the risk of alienating a large percentage of the members of his fraternity, but this doesn't dismay Harlan Will of Overbrook GC, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

"Ouimet, Jones, Hagen, Hogan, Snead and Palmer," says Will, "have glamorized the game. Steel shafts and improvements in club design and construction have enabled people to play golf better. But those instruction articles that you see in the papers and magazines plus all the instruction books that have come off the press, have caused more people to become immersed in the technicalities of playing the game than any other factors. It is lucky for pros that so much has been written about hitting a golf ball."

The Overbrook professional, a veteran of 30 years in the golf business in which he has given an average of 350 lessons annually, clarifies the above statement by pointing out that as much as 50 per cent of his lesson business stems from articles that players have read in a newspaper or from the tips and explanations they have picked out of an instruction book.

### **Some Want It Explained**

"Golf lessons that appear in newspapers or books," says Will, "can't help but have limitations. At best, they are a guide. If the person who reads them can't fully

interpret their meaning or take the idea that is suggested and incorporate it in his game, the pro has or should have a cus-



Harlan Will, Overbrook pro, and John Fickinger, associate pro, get set up for a swing demonstration.

tomor. It annoys me when I hear some pros say that the publishers are trying to take some of our business away from us. What they're doing is throwing it in our direction."

Will keeps numerous instruction books on hand in his shop at Overbrook. Sports pages, in which instruction articles appear, are kept on file for several weeks

because golfers have long memories. It isn't uncommon for one of Will's members to come in a month or so after he has seen a piece by Arnold Palmer that has discussed the weakening of the right hand and ask that it be fully explained. Half of the time a verbal explanation doesn't satisfy the person. So, it's out to the lesson tee to have it demonstrated. This means lesson revenue for Will, who is quick to point out that, in the final analysis, teaching golf is the salvation of the professional.

### Hogan's Book Helped

"We're in a curious business," Will says. "Maybe some of us are shortsighted. A few years ago, when Ben Hogan's book, *The Modern Fundamentals of Golf* was published, many pros were alarmed. They were afraid that because the book went so thoroughly into the swing, they were going to lose most of their lesson business. Nothing supposedly had been left unsaid. But what happened? Different parts of Hogan's book, clear as they were, had to be interpreted for at least four out of five golfers. I don't know how it was with other pros, but the book gave my lesson business a big shot in the arm. I'd like to see Ben write another one."

Going into his thoughts on teaching, Will feels that instruction books and articles have one great failing. They make golfers too position conscious, undoubtedly because the illustrations that accompany books and articles can't be other than static. It is impossible for an illustrator to show how a clubhead is swung. Unless flip-type illustrations are used, the reader can't see the swing in its entirety. "The swing," says Will, "is a procession of motions. It's not going from one position to the next. Only a pro can teach or explain the coordination that gets a person moving smoothly through the many positions of the swing. That is, unless the person is endowed with this coordination. Few are."

### Success Can Come Too Fast

The Overbrook professional is completely candid with his pupils. To a woman player he says: "I don't guarantee to make you much of a golfer in less than three years." For men, the incubation

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## Original Concave-Face Wedge Given to USGA Museum

The original concave-face sand wedge, invented by the late Edwin Kerr MacClain and popularized by Horton Smith in 1930, has been given to the USGA museum in New York City. Along with the club were photocopies of papers granting the patent to MacClain on Dec. 18, 1928. The USGA ruled the club illegal in 1931, but the general principle of this wedge formed the basis for modern wedges.

A biography of Horton Smith, *The Velvet Touch*, by Mrs. Robert A. Benton was recently published by Ann Arbor Press, Ann Arbor, Mich. Smith's successful use of the club is related in the book.

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period is more like two years. Will doesn't particularly like to see a player pare his score too quickly, even if he has been the player's sole teacher. A couple years ago, one of his women members, a beginner dropped from a 61 to 45 within a few weeks. It was the worst thing that could have happened to her because the next time out she was back in the 60s. Her game hasn't improved much since then because she can't become reconciled to the fact that she shouldn't be playing in the 40s all the time.

"A player who is too successful at the beginning and then fades," says Will, "usually never recovers from that one exceptional score or the few good rounds he shot. I've noticed that he becomes much more quickly discouraged than the person who struggles and slowly improves his game."

If the Overbrook pro had his way, persons who are playing their first year of golf wouldn't be permitted to carry scorecards. He discourages those that he can from doing so. He constantly tells his members that they should forget the poor holes they have had during a round and only remember the good ones.

### Puts Patches on Players' Games

Thirty years of teaching have convinced Will that a professional is more of a doc-  
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- August  
 27-29 Open
- September  
 3-6 Open  
 9-12 Eugene (Ore.) Open, Eugene CC  
 16-19 Visalia Open, Visalia (Calif.) CC  
 23-26 Ladies PGA Championship, Stardust  
 GC, Las Vegas
- Sept. 30- Oct. 3 - Mickey Wright Inv., San  
 Luis Rey GC, Bonsall, Calif.
- October  
 8-10 Open  
 14-17 Haig & Haig Scotch Mixed Foursome,  
 La Costa CC, LaCosta, Calif.  
 21-24 Phoenix Thunderbird Open (Site to be  
 announced)  
 29-31 Las Cruces Open, Las Cruces (N.M.)  
 Open  
 CC
- Nov.  
 5-7 Tall City Open, Hogan Park GC,  
 Midland, Tex.  
 11-14 Alamo Open, Pecan Valley CC, San  
 Antonio  
 19-21 Open  
 25-28 Titleholders, Augusta (Ga.) CC

## Instruction Materials Help

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tor of poor swinging faults than an instructor. He actually teaches very few new players. Of Will's 400 playing members, at least 350 of them have been playing golf for several years. Their faults are ingrained. When they come to a pro for a lesson it is for the purpose of correcting what they think is wrong and not necessarily to acquire a better swing.

This may be the result of the pupil having seen too many "position" illustrations in instruction articles or books. Or, it may be that people are conditioned to concentrate on only one thing at a time. Getting them to think of the swing as a series of flowing actions in which there is quick and coordinated meshing, rather than a sequence of choppy motions that are tied together in a kind of stop-and-go fashion, should be the aim of the professional.

### Doesn't Overemphasize Anything

Thus, Will tries to avoid overemphasizing any phase of the swing. "Spend too much time on the grip," he says "and you get your student thinking that the swing is all grip."

The Overbrook pro maintains that more

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golfers than is realized are preoccupied with wrist action. When a person comes into his shop to talk golf or takes a lesson, he almost invariably gets around to mentioning the cocking and uncocking of the wrists. Will doesn't like to dwell too long on the subject, especially when he is talking to high handicap players. He teaches that wrist action should be kept at a minimum, that enough of it comes naturally the more a person plays golf, and that only confusion results when the pro goes into too much detail in attempting to explain it. This is in keeping with Will's overall theory that the teaching pro should stress the whole swing and not just a few of its parts.

### Teaching Has Improved

Will feels that teaching has improved quite considerably in the last decade because pros have learned to express themselves in more explicit fashion and because they realize the necessity for not proceeding in their teaching until they are reasonably sure that the pupil understands what they are trying to put across. This could mean that today's teaching pro is a little more patient with his pupil than he was before. He doesn't assume that the person taking the lesson is an athletic robot that immediately grasps whatever is shown him. Possibly this patience has had to be acquired because more and more women are taking lessons.

Then, too, Will adds there are probably fewer "don'ts" in the golf teacher's phrasing than there ever were before. Pros now approach the lesson by demonstrating how the swing should be executed saying, "do it this way." It used to be that they'd have the pupil swing the club and then say, "don't do it that way." Sometimes they wouldn't go on to explain exactly what they wanted done. The improvement in teaching is the result of the many clinics and skull sessions PGA sections stage for their members and going back to the books and instruction articles, the need for the pros to stay ahead of their well read players.

Like many pros, Harlan Will has a slight preference for teaching Junior players and beginners. "With them," he says, "you are not correcting faults but are

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teaching in a positive way. You can take them right through your step-by-step program, keep them off the course until they have taken at least four lessons and then turn them loose with some assurance that they'll play reasonably sound golf."

**Programs for Beginners**

Here is how Will sets up his beginners' program:

1. Fundamentals of the full swing, with nothing but coordination emphasized;
2. Chipping, following a review of the fundamentals that were taught in the first lesson; then a brief workout with the woods;
3. Emphasis on hitting 9-iron shots; then practice with the irons from the 8 through the 3, and then the woods;
4. Putting
5. A playing lesson as quickly as it can be arranged.

Does Will guarantee success after those five sessions? No! He still sticks to his theory that it takes from two to three years to make reasonably finished golfers of 95 per cent of the people who take

up the game. Improvement in the meantime is the most the players and the pro can hope for. That should satisfy most players.

**Promotion Budget**

(Continued from page 54)

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- a. Leaves you freer to take advantage of special media deals or unexpected club events.
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