



THE BEST OF GOLFDOM

"Pros" progress as businessmen

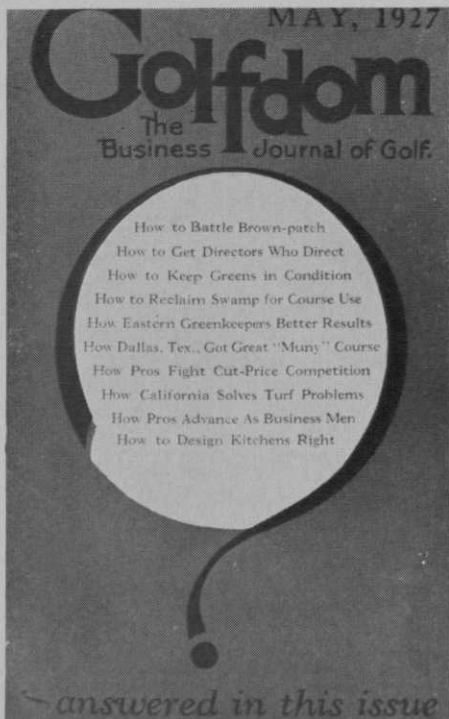
*Even in 1927 the PGA was
not without critics—both
constructive and destructive.*

By ALEX PIRIE

President Professional Golfers' Association of America

There has been some thoughtful and valuable criticism of the golf professional as a businessman. The professionals have welcomed it because constructive criticism is a valuable aid to the sincere efforts being made by all reliable professionals to elevate the standards and practices of their profession. But there also has been much said and printed about the pro that is spoken and printed without thought or deliberation and in wide variance with the facts. It is for the purpose of establishing a more thorough understanding and respect for what we have done and for what we are now doing, as well as for answering many baseless and ill advised comments regarding the business integrity of a characteristic majority of professional golfers, that I believe it well to state our position.

In the first place, I am confident that any thinking businessman will agree that the business ethics of professionals generally are above those of most small retailers. Ask any of the experienced golf goods manufacturers and they will tell you that their credit losses among the representative pros with whom they do business are smaller than those they suf-



An outline of the work that was being done by the Professional Golfers' state associations to secure warranted recognition for their members as businessmen of high standing was presented in the May, 1927 issue of GOLFDOM by the PGA's president. Then, as now, the PGA was vitally concerned in upgrading the status of their profession.

fer as a result of doing business with the usual type of small sporting goods dealer, or other small retail outlets. Golf goods manufacturers who complain of credit losses among pros are those who do not exercise the simplest kind of business judgment in picking their customers. "You cannot condemn a nation," said Edmund Burke, and we might say, "You cannot condemn a profession," so why any sweeping indictment because of the shortcomings of a few? There are professionals who are hopeless as businessmen. We know it. But they are an exceedingly small minority and they are without standing in their association circles the way association affairs are being conducted today. The great majority of professionals are very careful of their credit standing, their service to their club

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and its members, and their helpfulness to the young men who are potential desirable recruits for professional golfing positions.

Oklahoma Demands Credit O. K.

As an example of the way in which professional golfer state associations exercise vigilance over the business standing of their members, we may take the Oklahoma Professional Golfers' Association, which is one of the state and section groups, distinct by itself, but allied with Professional Golfers' Association of America as a unit of a national body. This typical sectional professional golfers' association has among its officers associated with Neal O'Sullivan, its president, such men as M. S. Fellers, vice president, Arthur J. Jackson, secretary, C. P. Vance, treasurer, and on its executive committee and board of governors, E. H. Dinwiddie, G. S. Hensley, G. T. Larson, H. E. Cole and R. B. Atkinson.

From its characteristic constitution and by-laws we quote:

1. "The object of the Association shall be to promote interest in the game of golf; to protect the mutual interest of its members; to hold meetings and tournaments for the benefit of its members; to assist any deserving professional golfer or assistant who may be out of employment to obtain a position, and to effect any other object of like nature that may be determined from time to time by the Association.

2. "To assist golf clubs to secure the services of capable professionals."

And note in the following quotation from the Oklahoma constitution and by-laws, the first requirement of active membership.

"Professional golfers, regularly employed as such, who have a satisfactory credit rating with the manufacturers and dealers of golf supplies. Their assistants, provided they are over the age of seventeen years and have served for at least two seasons under a member of this association, shall be eligible for election as associate members."

Now, with standards like this, I main-

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tain that the P. G. A. member in good standing has not only evidence of his superiority to the average group of small businessmen, but shows plainly, speedier progress in business methods than any similar class of men you can call to mind.

Golf Business in Its Infancy

You have only to think back a few years when the first tidal wave of the golf deluge swept over the country. The pros were imported from England and Scotland where their income in their profession had been so small that when they got to this country with their families many of the pioneers were compelled to have the golf goods manufacturers finance them. I am confident that the history of these cases will show that these early professionals were prompt to establish a high reputation for business integrity, and one that has exercised a strong influence over the majority of pros ever since.

The professional golfers' associations, in promoting the progress of their members as businessmen, are confronted by situations that would deeply discourage most other organizations less confident of the high character of their membership. Golf's great growth has created such a demand for professionals that many who are unfit are given jobs. Some of the able professionals are worthy men who have been denied not only the benefits of a business education, but of a goodly part of any schooling whatever. The associa-

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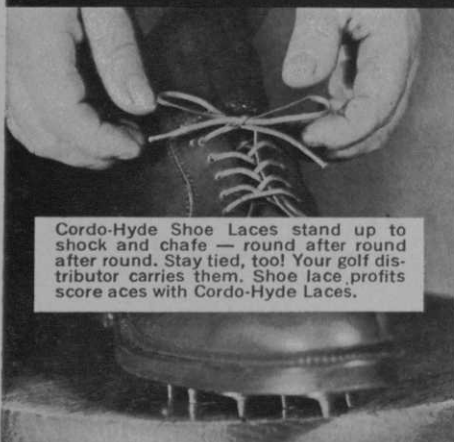
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tions' job is to see that only the qualified are admitted to their ranks, and to help all their members learn the details of good business operation. It would surprise many to learn the extent to which the associations are going in these respects. The work is such that it is certain to earn the endorsement and co-operation of golf club officials and manufacturers.

One should not forget that the progress made by the professional golfers' associations is the result of work engineered by officials who have plenty of work to do in handling and properly servicing their primary responsibilities, their own club positions. The association work is done by elected and unpaid officers sacrificing their own time and energy from their busy schedules.

Pro Bodies Co-operate

The national and sectional professional golfers associations are making rapid

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progress in their respective fields and it requires no great flight of the imagination to foresee the day when they will be recognized as a businessman's organization, second to none. They are in harmonious relations with the United States Golf Association, the Western Golf Association and all other territorial associations with whom they, as golfing organizations, come into contact. Much of this confidence has been established because they have gone quietly about attending to the things that concern them and doing their level best to put their houses in order. The substantial golf professional (and there are many of them) is weary of being unceasingly preached at by those who are most profuse with criticism and advice that unfortunately is lacking in constructive elements. He (or they) will go on however, in the future, as in the past, and the game of golf shall not lose anything by their steadfast adherence to the basic principles of their calling. •

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