

The Professional's Status

First section of nationwide survey shows concern for contracts, pension plans and erosion of profits.

Moved by mounting reports that the golf professional's domain is shrinking and that he is not receiving his fair share of the continuing golf boom, GOLFDOM recently undertook an ambitious plan to measure the true picture of the pro's current status and provide an opportunity for him to air his complaints. An elaborate questionnaire was mailed to a cross-section of golf professionals throughout the U. S. seeking pertinent information. Out of a sample group of 2,000, approximately 500 responded—an amazing 25%—and the responding professionals were not hesitant to cast new and brighter light on their problems.

All told, they took time to answer more than 60 questions about their status and the state of their business.

The first part of this analysis appears

here. Others, dealing with more specific areas of sales and profits will appear in future issues.

This first section covers an analysis of the answers as they concern the pro himself—his duties and responsibilities; ownership of pro shop or profit arrangements; how he spends his vacation; how much golf he is able to play himself, and his attitude toward contracts, pension plans and the PGA.

The majority of the questions could be answered "yes" or "no," and are included in that manner on the following pages.

Three specific questions on pension plans, contracts, and current activities of the PGA required written answers. The most cogent of these replies have been collected and are given in separate sections under the appropriate heading.

PROFILE OF CLUBS IN SURVEY SAMPLE

TYPE OF CLUB					
Private	Semi-Private	Public	Municipal	Resort	
56.6%	13.1%	10.6%	11.6%	8.1%	
TOTAL NO. CLUB MEMBERS		NO. WOMEN MEMBERS		NO. JUNIOR MEMBERS	
1- 99	6.1%	1- 99	56.8%	1- 99	87.1%
100-299	41.4%	100-299	38.6%	100-299	11.3%
300-499	32.7%	300-499	2.8%	300-499	.4%
500 over	19.8%	500 over	1.8%	500 over	1.2%
SIZE OF GOLF COURSE					
9 Holes	18 Holes	27 Holes	36 Holes	Over 36 Holes	
26.3%	66.6%	3.7%	2.6%	.8%	
FACILITIES OFFERED OTHER THAN GOLF					
Bar	Restaurant	Locker Room	Swimming Pools	Tennis Courts	
69.2%	84.4%	76.9%	54.4%	31.7%	

THE PRO AND THE SHOP

Who operates (owns) the pro shop?

Club Pro	92.7%
Club	6.3%
Concessionaire	1.0%

If club operates (owns) pro shop, what percentage of the profits do you receive?

None	37.5%
Under 10%	12.5%
10-19%	18.8%
20-29%	12.5%
30% and over	18.7%

How many months a year is your pro shop open?

Under 3 months	1.9%
4-6 months	7.7%
7-9 months	26.4%
10-11 months	6.4%
12 months	57.6%

What do you do in the off-season?*

Vacation	56.6%
Other pro job	17.6%
Job outside golf	35.1%

PERSONAL DATA

How long have you been at your present club?

Up to 3 years	33.3%
4-6 years	24.1%
7-10 years	8.6%
Over 10 years	34.0%

How many rounds of golf do you play a week?

None	5.9%
1	38.9%
2	32.5%
3	10.4%
4-6	10.0%
7-10	2.3%

Have you attended any of the PGA Business Schools?

Yes	No
31.9%	68.1%

If so, when did you attend the Schools?

This year	11.1%
1 year ago	17.3%
2 years ago	12.3%
3 years ago	11.1%
4 years ago	13.6%
5 years ago	12.3%

*Multiple answers, do not add up to 100.

Continued on next page

The PGA and pensions

Golf professionals were almost unanimous in their desire for a pension plan to be worked out by the PGA. Most felt that it would be necessary to have such a plan drawn up by outside experts, and that steps in this direction should be taken immediately.

All in favor of a PGA pension plan seemed to be willing to pay higher dues, or to make payments into the plan by other means, but many felt that there should be outside help. Far and away the most often "outside help" suggested was that the PGA use the monies it collects from television and tournaments, and that the touring pros should be made to contribute proportionately and heavily to the plan. Quite a few suggested that manufacturers of equipment sold only through pro shops could be assessed for contributions.

Still others felt that this was a job for the individual club, and a few outspoken individualists felt that they should do it all themselves.

Sample comments on what the PGA could do to establish a pension plan for the golf professional follow:

"Install a plan making the clubs pay 75%, the pros 12.5% and the PGA 12.5% of the desired benefits."

"Consider a type of membership for pros who are in the golf business—i.e., golf range pros, limited summertime pros—but do not have the qualifications for PGA 'Class A' membership because their major income can't come from golf."

"The PGA is strictly a touring pro type of organization. Very little is done or considered for the club pro."

"Engage a law firm in Washington, D. C. to effect legislation in Congress. Many club pros work 80-90 hours per week, and with the present high U. S., state and local taxes cannot put enough away for retirement. This is one reason they are forced to work until they are very old. Clubs don't seem to care, or dodge the question as a whole."

"Invest in our own golf courses throughout the entire U. S., especially in areas that would have long seasons. We are the professionals in the sport and

Continued on page 78

PERSONAL DATA (cont'd.)

6 years ago	12.3%
7 or more years ago	9.9%

If you have an assistant, has he attended the PGA Schools?

Yes	No
40.3%	59.7%

If so, when did he attend the Schools?

This year	27.0%
1 year ago	29.1%
2 years ago	27.0%
3 years ago	9.0%
4 years ago	3.4%
5 years ago	3.4%
6 or more years ago	1.1%

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Are you responsible for duties other than your regular duties as a pro?

Yes	No
62.3%	37.7%

Are you responsible for maintenance of the course?

Yes	No
36.9%	63.1%

To whom do you report?*

President	18.9%
Owner	15.3%
Board Chairman	32.9%
Manager	13.3%
Executive Committee	11.2%
Mayor of City	2.4%
Superintendent of Parks	3.2%
Secretary-Treasurer	.8%
Greens Committee	1.2%
Board of Directors	2.0%
Golf Committee	.4%

What club meetings do you attend?*

Golf	22.4%
Tournament	14.7%
Rules	1.7%
Handicap	4.3%
Greens	10.3%
Board of Directors	15.5%
ALL	29.3%
NONE	17.7%
Publicity	1.3%
Social and Hospitality	4.3%

*Multiple answers, do not add up to 100.

Continued on page 26

Comments on contracts

Contracts present a real enigma to many pros, although most who answered this question stated that they feel a contract is desirable. The answers would seem to indicate that younger pros, who are entering the field under new or changing conditions want contracts, while the older "entrepreneurs" prefer to "let things ride" as they have for years.

Job security was the reason most often cited by those favoring contracts. It was also pointed out that a contract outlines the responsibilities of both pro and club—each knows where he stands at all times. The fact that many clubs elect new officers each year and that they do not feel bound by or have no proof of previous verbal understandings was often cited as back-up argument for contracts. Also, the pro's risk in having to dispose of his merchandise if he were summarily dismissed.

Sample pros and cons on contracts:

"Yes. It gives me a certain amount of security. Am able to purchase merchandise in ample quantities rather than just short two-week supplies."

"Yes. When I came here the club was drowning (no carts, no play, and no course, even). I have built a fine course; have built a pro shop; have carts and a nice bar business, including slot machines. *They are being taken away.*"

"No. If not wanted, why stay; if unhappy, why stay?"

"No. A fellow has to think twice—first to be able to move into a new opening, if offered; then at the same time he must work hard to warrant keeping his job."

"Yes. Because of investment in pro shop merchandise and the seasonal aspects of job openings."

"Yes. Verbal agreements made with snow on the ground tend to look different from both sides involved as the grass starts growing."

"Yes. Because it spells out the obligations and responsibilities of each of the parties concerned, and I believe serves to promote a better understanding between the professional and the Board of Directors. *It would be nice if the*

Continued on page 75

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Continued from page 24

What club committees do you serve on?*

Golf	26.0%
Tournament	28.6%
Rules	5.2%
Handicap	6.9%
Greens	16.9%
Publicity	1.3%
Social and Hospitality	4.3%
Pro Shop	.4%
Board of Directors	3.5%
ALL	17.7%
NONE	20.3%

PENSION PLANS

Does your club provide a retirement plan or pension program for its employees?

Yes	No
11.4%	88.6%

If so, how long has it been in effect?

Up to 3 years	27.5%
4-6 years	25.0%
7-10 years	10.0%
Over 10 years	37.5%

If the club does not have a plan, is one being considered?

Yes	No
14.5%	85.5%

Do you feel that the PGA should have a pension plan for all PGA pros?

Yes	No
94.2%	5.6%

Do you feel that the PGA is doing enough to institute such a program?

Yes	No
21.0%	79.0%

(See accompanying comments.)

CONTRACTS

Do you have a contract with the club?

Yes	No
58.9%	41.1%

Do you have only a verbal understanding?

Yes	No
98.0%	2.0%

*Multiple answers, do not add up to 100.

If you have a written contract, what is the length of contract time?

Under 1 year	12.8%
1 year	37.9%
2 years	8.4%
3 years	13.3%
4 years	.5%
5 years	17.2%
6 years	.5%
7 years	.5%
Over 7 years	2.5%
Lifetime	6.4%

Do you feel that a contract is desirable?

Yes	No
70.4%	29.6%

(See accompanying comments.)

Should the PGA do more?

A key question in the survey asked professionals what, if anything, the PGA should be doing to help further the interests of the club professional, which it is not now doing.

Most felt that the framework of the Association should be strengthened—along the lines of labor unions, if necessary—to aid pros in obtaining better contracts and pension plans. The friction between the working club pro and those “glamor boys” of the tour became evident from the answers, and there were many pleas that touring pros’ endorsements be limited to pro shop lines of golfing equipment.

Other battles in which the working pros felt that the PGA might offer more assistance include the barring of pro lines from shops not owned by PGA pros, and those owned by the clubs; help combat price-cutting and discount houses; help pros keep clubs from taking over the pro shops and golf cars, and a public relations campaign by the PGA to “educate” the public on the value of the home club professional.

Typical answers to this question:

“Just about everything. Junk their red coats and insignia and get down to promoting the PGA member with traveling clinics and advertisements.”

“Withdraw Class-A rating from pros who take jobs without full concessions.”

Continued on page 88