



# Where did those 40 years go?

*GOLFDOM's pioneer editor reviews the solid achievements and contributions to the industry the magazine has made.*

By HERB GRAFFIS

The hunch that among the pros, greenkeepers and managers of the '20s were very smart businessmen who could and would make a pasture pastime a big business was the beginning of GOLFDOM.

That surmise was sound. It developed GOLFDOM into one of the world's foremost business magazines. It resulted in recognition, earnings and opportunities for pros, greenkeepers and managers beyond the dreams of those fellows 40 years ago.

Looking back one point sticks out clearly; it was the business talent and application of pros, greenkeepers and managers that made golf business big. That growth was not the result of clubs having as officials thousands of the most successful businessmen and lawyers. The private club isn't too often a sound business in structure or financial operation as anyone who has looked at hundreds of club financial statements has learned. Usually it's like a home; You spend too much on it—but what are you to do?

### Lesson for Tomorrow?

The private club operation in the U. S. has set the standard for the fee course operations whether the fee courses are publicly or privately owned. The public courses haven't tried to go on the fancy dining room basis of the private clubs. That's one reason the public courses often show operating profits sufficient to finance additional courses. Not paying taxes, of course, is the other reason.

For many years GOLFDOM has referred to the unfair tax beating golf clubs'

take. Probably due to the high turnover of club officials we never were able to get very far with our campaigns. Finally the situation in California got so serious the Southern and Northern California golf associations conducted a well planned, vigorous campaign to educate voters and legislators. In that successful effort GOLFDOM was quick to cooperate and was able to report that the California associations, cooperative action seemed to get the USGA at work on tax matters.

Pros have been victims of the tax crush. Strictly private clubs and those that are parts of real estate sales promotion are having financial problems due to high taxes on land having its value increased by golf use, and by shortage of necessary operating funds.

Hence, the pro shop is considered by uninformed officials as the source of the needed funds. So the pro in the club that is close to the fiscal edge loses his "concessions" which at best are only giving him the chance to make a living that will attract and hold the sort of man who's needed on the job.

GOLFDOM's been on that problem for years and has worked editorially on the lines that whatever is good for a good pro is better for his club, for the simple reason there are more members than pros to profit.

Crystallization of GOLFDOM's pro education work with progressive professionals began in the early '30s with the pro business schools held in the spring at the Morrison hotel, Chicago, as a co-

operative project of the Illinois and Wisconsin PGAs and GOLFDOM. R. W. (Doc) Treacy, who later became PGA national secretary, and Tom Walsh, who became national PGA president, owner of several golf courses and a banker, and my brother Joe and I set up these schools.

After long campaigning by GOLFDOM the school idea was adopted by the PGA nationally, with Harry Moffett and Horton Smith giving strong official endorsement and help to the PGA Business School pattern which was established by Emil Beck and his associated pros and businessmen and educators from outside.

#### Make multi-million dollar market

PGA sections, reading of the Illinois-Wisconsin PGA business schools, adopted the idea for their own spring meetings. Stores had begun to push cheap goods at the market the pros had developed and pros and their assistants needed merchandising education.

The superintendents, due to the golf course management schooling of experts of state agricultural colleges, the Green Section and manufacturers and the monthly educational meetings of their regional organizations got far better business training than the pros had available on an organized basis.

The professionals in that phase of GOLFDOM's history, as a catalyst of progressive elements in golf business, saved the quality market.

Review GOLFDOM during the '30s and you see the merchandising educational programs that put the foundation under every successful quality sales campaign by the golf playing equipment manufacturers today. The pro at the private club is in a unique position to plan, conduct and appraise a quality merchandising campaign. He has the select market of buyers whose purchases influence all other buyers and he can closely appraise results of the advertising and the appeal of the merchandise. GOLFDOM kept on showing how these advantages worked out for benefit of the pro and the smart manufacturer who worked with the pro.



Cover of GOLFDOM'S first issue.

That pro picture has kept the golf market from going to pieces and manufacturers competing fiercely for a dime a club or a dozen balls price difference.

Any year there's a new club put across with a big profitable bang you can be sure it was the pro push that did the job, regardless of any other advertising or merchandising factor. In about 80 per cent of all top quality club sales old clubs are taken as partial payment.

Extension of pro merchandising and its coordination with the advertising and sales plans of manufacturers of quality golf playing equipment always has been a valuable service of GOLFDOM. Because leading makers of pro quality golf goods asked for an advertising medium concentrated on pros' members GOLFING was begun in 1933 with a controlled circulation of 300,000 to members of leading golf clubs.

GOLFING, now absorbed by GOLF magazine, proved to be a prime mover of merchandise sold in the pro shop and

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## YEARS GO

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helped to demonstrate the pro mastery of the golf quality market.

To expand the scope of pro merchandising GOLFDOM started the Christmas Shopping at Your Pro Shop which became an immensely useful annual publication for service to professionals' customers and adding a thirteenth month to the pros' profit year.

GOLFDOM put that idea of leadership of the progressive pros to work when the National Golf Foundation was started with such a small budget that the GOLFDOM and GOLFING publishers, who had sold the promotion idea to leading manufacturers were spending too much of their own money to establish the Foundation. The pros and golf course superintendents helped at the critical time. Long before there was a Foundation budget for a field staff, pros and superintendents—spending their own money and at considerable inconvenience — would meet people who wanted to have golf clubs and give them invaluable advice.

### Greenkeeping grows up

When GOLFDOM began in 1927 greenkeeping was full of "secrets". These were the methods and materials used with success by fellows who didn't want to pass along what they believed they alone had discovered with their unique genius. Come bad weather, disease, or pests and the geniuses with their "secrets" had their courses just as bad as anybody else—maybe in worse shape. The cures often were in some article a progressive cooperative superintendent or agricultural school specialist had written in GOLFDOM or in a GOLFDOM advertisement.

The "secrets" idea passed out and it was generally realized that the fellow who didn't have the policy of sharing his course management experiences usually was one who was on a second-rate job—second-rate in pay and course condition.

Rather early in its life GOLFDOM discovered that superintendents and pro-

professionals are excellent business writers with a capacity for getting to the point quickly and clearly.

The turf scientists, too, had the gift of putting their findings into GOLFDOM stories readers could clearly understand and apply on the job. The late O. J. Noer turned in the most practical copy that readers and the editor of a business magazine could want.

Veteran superintendents say the introduction of 2, 4-D was the dividing line in turf maintenance science; after 2, 4-D came extensive use of chemicals in developing and treating turfgrass. That statement is backed up by GOLFDOM's editorial contents.

Among the earlier campaigns of GOLFDOM was one on course drainage. Wendell Miller, a drainage specialist who'd been with Ohio State university and the U. S. Department of Agriculture, was promoted by a vigorous advertising and editorial campaign in GOLFDOM with the result that officials of existing and new clubs were convinced of the financial wisdom of adequate drainage. This campaign on officials was tied in with propaganda for the superintendent or the greenkeeper as he was called before GOLFDOM suggested and put across "golf course superintendent" as a term giving a good idea of the man's scope and importance.

This drainage campaign was directly instrumental in lengthening the golf season. At many courses it added at least two weeks' pleasant play in the spring. It also prepared the way for fairways watering installations, effective treatment of turf and, eventually, for golf cars and carts and today's heavy traffic.

There were plenty of emergency campaigns that called for quick action and money in the earlier days. One of them concerned the Jap beetle destruction of turf that hit first in New Jersey. B. R. Leech with his GOLFDOM articles on use of arsenate of lead as a control checked that menace. Now Chlordane and

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DDT do the job, but they weren't around when the beetles were cutting the turf roots in those days.

What amazes us every time we look into the standard and invaluable operating manual "Turf Management" that Burton Musser produced for the USGA Green Section is how few mistakes were made in handling maintenance copy for GOLFDOM, especially when quantities of materials for turf treatment were involved and an error could mean serious damage to courses.

Something else that sticks out as you go through the first 40 years of GOLFDOM is the accent put on good housekeeping and practical, artistic landscaping.

Especially in the south have the courses improved in looks primarily because of superintendents' accent on neatness. The achievements of Glenn Burton and others in developing fine Bermudas for southern greens have been historic but maybe equally notable has been the work of southern course superintendents in educating players in good housekeeping on the course and the development of beauty and neatness on their courses. ●



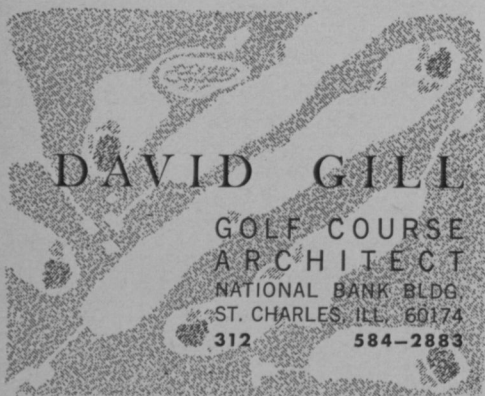
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