

# Swinging around golf

by Herb Graffis



**G**olf course equipment dealers are not inclined to dream brightly . . . They are in a tough, tight and realistic business which, by improving conditions of play, has done more to develop popularity of golf than the equipment dealers themselves realize . . . What they have done to beautify the entire residential picture of USA outdoors, by making the golf turf the grass standard is one of the great achievements of American business . . . But the dealers haven't had a publicity campaign to get themselves due appreciation . . . They're not getting fiscally fat for what they've done for golf courses, lawns, roadways, parks and even for that blanket slapped over mortals after the last sad rites.

Though not chronically optimistic, dealers are forecasting the next few years will be exceptionally big ones in golf course machinery sales . . . Labor shortage, heavy play, demands for superior playing conditions, course competition for play and the demonstrated economy of two or more sets of equipment operating on a first-class (or even second-class) course at the same time, are combining to force good clubs and well-managed public or fee courses to update and increase machinery.

Furthermore, the equipment manufacturers are so consistently bringing out exceptionally useful new items they're accenting obsolescence of old stuff . . . One thing wrong with the golf business is that golf course equipment and golf clubs last too long.

Time is running out rapidly on loose trade-in allowances for used maintenance equipment . . . When the dealer is taking it in he's assured it's top quality and in fine condition . . . When the dealer tries to sell it to a next-to-nothing

budget country course or some guy who's trying to convert a pasture to an estate, the dealer is told the stuff is junk . . . Trade-ins on course mowers, like trade-ins on new top price club sales, are factors in most sales of new equipment.

Equipment dealers are getting hard-headed . . . They say too much of their operating costs and profits are tied up in trade-in allowances on used equipment so they've got to take a cold second look at the situation.

Other trade-in headaches are those of the pros at private clubs who gave the aluminum shaft an immense boost by taking used clubs as allowances on new sets . . . The back-room unsold stocks of these trade-ins represent a substantial percentage of aluminum-shafted club profits for pros.

To further confuse the trade-in job done by pros in supporting the quality market are the slumping values of some tournament big name pro brands of clubs . . . Home pros who have made and control the quality market and developed acceptance for clubs bearing playing star's names say that now, with very few exceptions, the big name pro brands of clubs and balls mean cheap stuff for beginners . . . Bad case of market milking while the golf playing equipment sales in 1967, as reported to the Athletic Goods Manufacturers' Association, at factory prices, was almost \$162,000,000; more than four times the sales of baseball and softball goods; the second volume bracket in athletic goods sales . . . It might have been much smarter not to be hungry.

Some advertising experts who are golfers and several tournament sponsors think the rocket is about

ready to explode and that playing pros in a few years will be getting burned sticks . . . These viewers believe the quality appeal of golf as a marketing factor is in danger because of the tournament pro policy that cash outranks "class."

Among interesting aspects of the cheapening of pro big names is the way that leading manufacturers' own brands are getting more attention as first class products worthy of recommendation by home pros who think of golf and the customer . . . There's also been a significant increase in sale of home pro custom-made clubs.

Something else about the cheapening of pro big name value on clubs and golf balls is that with the PGA educational program progressing, the home pros who sell an estimated 90 per cent of the quality club, ball and bag market and strongly influence the cheap golf equipment market are learning how to adeptly switch consumer requests . . . That's going to have effect in a few years on cutting testimonial income of playing pros who'll endorse anything for money.

Feature article on *Jim Scobee*, superintendent, Kokomo (Ind.) CC, written by *Mark Morrow* in Kokomo Tribune, shows how men in charge of courses are getting great publicity these days . . . Jim Scobee is 24 . . . His father was superintendent Highland CC, Indianapolis, for years . . . Pro *Mal Mc Mullen* and members of Scobee's staff boosted the club's new superintendent to the sports writer . . . *Sam Rodkey*, foreman at Kokomo, has been with the club for 21 years . . . *Wayne Bennett, Jr.*, has been on the staff 25 years . . . His father, who retired three years ago, was superintendent for 35 years . . . *Robert Donoghue* has been working on the course 13 years . . . Scobee

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succeeded John West last fall.

New department heads at Nakoma GC, Madison, Wis., this year . . . Jerry O'Donnall succeeded Peter Miller as superintendent when Miller went to Firestone . . . O'Donnall and Miller both were star students of Professor Jim Love at U of Wisconsin . . . Ted Cappas is the new manager . . . Allan Mitchell is in his fifth year as pro . . . Richard Lussier of Granby, Mass., formerly superintendent, Chicopee (Mass.) CC, now owns Mill Valley Golf Links in Belchertown, Mass. . . The club previously was called College CC, then Jabish Brook CC . . . Lussier bought the nine-hole club with 175 acres at a foreclosure sale . . . Leo Johnson, Sioux City, Ia., is building a nine-hole course with residential sites adjacent, two miles north of Sioux City . . . He owns the Sun Valley CC in Sioux City . . . About 35 years ago Johnson started in golf working on the Sioux City CC course . . . Then he became superintendent . . . Ten years ago he went into business for himself designing and building courses and has produced a lot of good ones.

Floyd Farley is designing munny 18 for Edmond, Okla., near Oklahoma City . . . Tim Berg now pro at new Emerald Valley GC, Crews-well, Ore. . . He was assistant to Wendell Wood at Eugene (Ore.) CC . . . Rolling Hills high school at Cambridge, O., to build a six-hole course by the school for use by high school golf team and, week-ends, by others . . . Andy Evancho, Cambridge CC superintendent, helping school's golf coach Chad Moore and its maintenance supervisor Lewis Supperier to build the course.

Golf courses are figuring in corporation planning to give esthetic value and recreational utility to property left in unsightly and unusable condition by their operations . . . Among companies considering courses are Truax-Traer Coal Co. on strip mine property in Illinois and several companies that have mined phosphate in Florida and left the mined areas ugly

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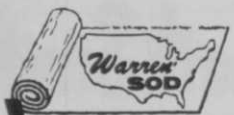
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pits . . . American Cyanamid has donated some Florida sites for game preserves and recently sold acreage east of Tampa for a deluxe golf club.

Tyrus (Ty) Stroud now pro-manager Jasper (Tex.) CC . . . Mr. and Mrs. Stroud have owned Bellewood CC, Tyler, since 1947 . . . It's a pay-play course that started with nine holes that Stroud enlarged to 18 in 1960 . . . Camden (N.J.) County Park Commission's new 18 at New Brooklyn opens with Tom Dentino as pro . . . Tom was briefly with the N.Y. Giants football club and with the San Francisco Seals baseball club before it vanished . . . He also was active in amateur and pro golf in New Jersey . . . He's starting free classes for Camden County blind or otherwise handicapped children . . . Which reminds us of the tremendous amount of work home pros do for the handicapped in their vicinities . . . They don't get any big fees for playing "benefits" and seldom much publicity credit.

Ray and Roy Shields building Twin Valley GC 18 in Calvert County, Md . . . Roy Shields, superintendent, Woodmont CC, Rockville, Md. was president GCSA in 1965 . . . Brother Ray is superintendent Glenn Dale (Md.) CC . . . Don Collett, pro at Brae Burn CC, Houston, Tex. heads group of Houston businessmen buying Inwood Forest CC . . . It's a \$1 million plus deal with Brae Burn, River Oaks and Lakeside members as stockholders . . . Collett and Wm. Luper designed new nine added to club's operating 18 . . . Mike Baker is Inwood's pro . . . Jack Ayles, formerly assistant superintendent Brae Burn CC, is Inwood superintendent . . . Bob Duke is vice president and general manager, Inwood . . . Mrs. Faye Lyon, prominent Houston area player, is administrative assistant and will direct women's activities at Inwood.

. . . Jack Waryan now pro at Detroit Lakes (Minn.) CC . . . Club is building second nine . . . Waryan was pro at Bois de Sioux CC, Breckenridge, Minn. . . John Hegge is manager Amery (Wis.) GC. □



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