

Pro's corner / A college degree in golf

by Anthony P. Patricelli

It is inevitable—within ten or twelve years—private golf clubs will expect their golf professionals to present a degree in golf.

Snorting will not drown out the steady, implacable voice of education and higher learning that has been heard throughout the land. The voice grows louder and more insistent.

The admonition, "Go West, young man," has become "Go to college, young man," whether it be in the west, east, south or north—but GO!

For many years, golf equipment and sportswear manufacturers have decried the golf professional's lack of business acumen and sophistication. It continues.

"You have a captive market!" shouts the manufacturer to the golf professional. "All you have to do is display the merchandise in a prominent place and you have it made." It's a cliché. Worse, it's a booby trap. There are far too many other factors involved.

It is time for the two great promoters of the game—the golf professionals and their suppliers—to declare a moratorium on charges and merchandising demagoguery and begin to plan together for the future—through higher education for the golf professional.

As in so many professions—medicine, law, engineering, architecture, dentistry—only higher learning can prepare young men for the ever-increasing demands of the future, in or out of the golf shop.

Today, it is not unusual for a club professional to be invited to address businessmen at a downtown club. It may be the Rotarians, the Lions or the Chamber of Commerce. Or the club professional may be invited to participate in a civic program, totally removed from golf. Or he may be required to attend a social function sponsored by a community cultural group (of which his club president or greens chairman is a member).

The variations are many and

diffused simply because golf has penetrated every level of our society. Stratification demands versatility, higher education.

The present PGA business schools, although offering only truncated courses, do help to orient men (in golf) to various pro shop functions and responsibilities. (The author is familiar with the PGA business school curriculum. He created the original blueprint for a business school, and with Bob Kay, a Connecticut section PGA member, presented it at the 1955 PGA National Meeting in Atlantic City. As a result the PGA established its first school in 1956.)

However, we are concerned with the future—equating the club professional with his club members, many of whom are college or university-oriented. Today, there is a widening spectrum of new responsibilities for the club professional: social, business, civic and cultural. In short, he will have to be a "fuller man."

Thousands of club professionals live and work in a twilight zone of apprehension. Club administrations, greens chairmen change annually. And annually, the club professional must adjust to new administrations, personalities, ideas and responsibilities. Is he, will he, be mentally equipped to cope with these? The perennial abrasion goes on. It is the unusual professional who does not experience this trauma.

Is there a panacea? Hardly. But if we admit to the need for versatility and a multi-dimensional golf professional, then the solution can lie in only one direction, higher education (and also, in enlightened club members).

A UNIVERSITY DEGREE - B.G.

Bachelor of Golf. A young man takes the usual assorted courses, including the humanities, in his freshman and sophomore years. In his junior year, he begins to specialize or "major" in Golf—to prepare him for a career as a

club professional. (Note: his specialty courses are too obvious to list here).

When he receives his B.G. degree, he is thoroughly prepared to serve as an assistant professional. And if the PGA recognizes the value of such a background, the young man may become a Junior A or Class A member in less than the usual five years (or 32 points, including a session at the business school).

There is such an acute shortage of qualified assistants that the first graduating class with a B.G. degree would find itself deluged with offers!

Importantly, not only is our graduate in golf qualified, but he is also a multi-faceted man, the first of a new breed.

RULES MAKE IT A DREAM

Unfortunately, it is only a dream, a soap bubble that is instantly shattered by a few words in the Rules of Golf: "Definition Of An Amateur Golfer. Forfeiture of Amateur Status At Any Age. Rule 1-2. Professional Intent. Taking any action which clearly indicates the intention of becoming a professional golfer."

If at the end of his sophomore college year a young man declares his intention to become a professional golfer by planning to major in the profession in his junior and senior years, "He ceases to be an amateur," said Joseph Dey, Executive Director of the USGA, in a recent telephone conversation. Under the rule as written, Mr. Dey had no alternative opinion, and the rule is clear and unequivocal.

When pressed for further definition, Mr. Dey said, "You might say he is a non-amateur."

Neither fish nor fowl, our young man is non-amateur and non-professional. He lives and plays in no-man's land. He's a nonentity.

Briefly, one amateur rule stymies higher education for the entire golf profession. It explodes the educational explosion in Amer-

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ica. And it nails the golf profession at the high school or college drop-out educational level. That is unilateral power. And it negates our national effort to raise career standards.

WHAT PRICE AMATEUR?

Is it possible in our 20th century America that one amateur rule or body can freeze the educational level of a rapidly growing profession? Is it ethical? It may appear to the layman that the USGA's reason for maintaining its stoic posture is the preservation of its keystone—integrity.

Let us examine it. On one hand, the USGA limits an amateur's prize to a "retail value not exceeding \$100." On the other hand, it allows an exception worth thousands of dollars: part of the amateur status rule reads: "Exception: A scholarship or grant-in-aid awarded and administered by the establishment (college) concerned and not in excess of commonly accepted educational expenses are defined by the National Collegiate Athletic Association." Obviously, the rules create a double-standard.

Of course, the frosting on the cake is the paragraph in the "Rules" that precedes the above. The paragraph strictly forbids "... accepting the benefits of a scholarship . . ." Here it is: "12. Scholarships. Because of golf skill or golf reputation, accepting the benefits of a scholarship or any other consideration as an inducement to be a student in an educational establishment."

The contradiction is quite obvious. Would a college award a scholarship or "grant-in-aid" unless the young man *did* possess unusual golf skill? To put it affirmatively, in the USGA's own words—scholarships and grant-in-aids are awarded "Because of golf skill or golf reputation . . ." Can there be any other reason?

No effort is being made here to belabor the rules of the game or the amateur body. The USGA has made many valuable contributions to golf. Rather, archaic rules must not stand in the way of educa-

tional processes or the natural and honorable growth of the golf profession.

Reluctantly, it must be stated that the USGA actually transforms honest young men into dishonest young men. Shocking, but true. Here's the classic example: a promising college golfer, winner of many amateur titles, is asked by the press if he intends to "turn professional."

Horrors! Of course not! The thought never crossed his mind.

Yet the young man knows, his friends assume, his golf coach believes, his fellow golfers suspect, and golf writers KNOW that he has no intention of doing anything BUT going on the PGA golf tour!

The sham must be lived. Our honest young man must disclaim such an intention or else face forfeiture of his amateur status.

THE TRUTH - WHERE IS IT?

It is time that transparent accommodations and deceptions be replaced by honest, realistic rules.

Geoffrey Cousins, English author of *Golfers At Law*, that highly informative and oft-times amusing book on the history of the rules of the game, ends his treatise with this statement: "The rules, as I have tried to show, have their roots in tradition, but are now operated in a great democracy of golf in which plain speaking and plain dealing are alike essential . . . that the rules are not just a collection of regulations in a closed book, but a living code followed and honoured by every man, woman and child playing on the links." Amen.

THE SOLUTION - WHERE IS IT?

The USGA must face its responsibility and acknowledge that its present amateur status rules are contradictory, and equally important, constitute a roadblock to higher education for the golf profession. The "Rules" have always been subject to change.

Again, Geoffrey Cousin stated in *Golfers At Law*, "Now it remains to look at the future and see what the rules are likely to become. Because no one, with the history of the last two hundred years in mind, can believe in the

immutability of the present code. The old rules were destined not to endure 'in all time coming,' and the present rules must change—if not in this decade, then in the next. And all thinking golfers ought to ask themselves the question: How must they change? What in fact do we want in the Rules of Golf?"

Here is ample authority for change, but we cannot wait from one decade to the next. The need exists now.

AN ALTERNATE SOLUTION

If the USGA fails to act, then the resolution of the problem lies in the hands of the PGA, and specifically, the Connecticut Section, PGA.

Recently, I proposed a complete blueprint for higher education for the golf professional to the members and the executive committee of the Connecticut section. They concurred. Exploratory discussions with officials of the University of Hartford revealed that they were interested in working with the section with a view towards the establishment of a curriculum that would prepare a young man for a career in professional golf.

The problem of forfeiture of amateur status was raised. I suggested an honest and forthright solution, as follows: do not abridge the rule—merely disregard it; when, after his sophomore year, the young man declares his intention to pursue a higher education in golf, invite him to live in your house (the Connecticut section). Allow him to play in professional and pro-am events, as a professional, it's a fine way to meet and know professionals, and vice versa. Create a special section membership classification for the so-called undergraduate "non-amateur," and if these changes require re-writing section by-laws, rewrite them, it has been done many times; and if the young man is from another section, request the national PGA to send out a bulletin to all sections suggesting that similar privileges be granted in all sections.

It is a simple, uncomplicated and thoroughly honest solution, which, let it be said, was enthus-

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astically endorsed by the Connecticut Section.

Enlightened and progressive as it is, it would be difficult for the Connecticut Section to undertake this task alone. Manufacturers who supply the golf profession and who have cooperated in the past can do much to come to the aid of the Connecticut section.

If, as it was earlier stated, suppliers wish to improve their sales positions in golf shops, here is a plan by which they can accomplish their objectives and help to perform a major service to the profession.

Without exception, every noted figure in this country has voiced his support of more and better education.

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