



by Herb Graffis

SWINGING AROUND GOLF

Golf business education

Officials of private and public courses seldom are aware of one important development since golf became big business. That development is the planned education and identification of competent department heads. This work by the Club Managers Assn. of America, the Professional Golfers' Assn. and the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America recently has been marked by the managers' awarding certified club manager diplomas, the PGA bringing together its empirical educational program and the superintendents' association executive committee voting to add an education director to the GCSAA headquarters' staff.

All this makes it easier for club officials to hire the right man for the job. The blunt, costly truth is that golf officials haven't been educated in the art and science of hiring men properly qualified to run departments or to manage overall golf operations. There's been plenty of good sound business judgment, but luck is exercised far more in the selection of men for top operating jobs at golf clubs or pay-play plants.

Immense investments in real estate and resort projects, based

fundamentally on the attraction of golf, must have expert golf management. That type of money can't be managed incompetently or haphazardly.

Employers of professionals at most active top resorts awakened to the greater responsibilities and value of working pros sooner than professional golf in general did. That's why the golf director job pushed out the mere "pro" job at the more attractive, better managed resorts. Give **Fred Waring** and his then golf director, **Harry Obitz** at Shawnee-on-Delaware, Pa. (practically the birthplace of the PGA), credit for discovering and proving that a pro had to be more than just nice and old-fashioned to meet the new conditions and possibilities. Waring and Obitz both are adept at breeding profits. They showed pro golfers and golf resort operators that the way to profit is through a pro department operation that draws golfers from everywhere and keeps golfers happy and spending.

Obitz killed the old idea of a name professional associated with a resort. Name pros who got that sign-carrying gravy often weren't at the advertised places and were haughty and costly when they were there. Customers went back home and enthusiastically broadcast warnings to stay away.

The home club professional jobs were changing too. At what it costs to belong to a first-class private country club today one has to have ultra-fancy resort service and the pro has to be a super-pro with quite a service staff.

Superintendents, back when they were greenkeepers, really were pioneers in golf business education because of their association with the state agricultural stations and the United States Golf Assn. Green Section. Actually the superintendents with educational sessions and attending lectures by experts and with their short courses at state agricultural

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colleges were far, far ahead of the pros and managers in efforts to make their part of golf a business.

But the problem with the superintendents was that their part of golf business combined the perplexities of science, art, the will of God and luck. I don't know how they'll ever solve that bind.

Managers in the general manager spot, maybe, have a much easier job than the house manager or steward job used to be. Most managers have to cope with a generation raised on hot dogs and hamburgers. So if it's tough to get chefs to build and maintain the reputations of private country clubs as the rendezvous of epicures, what of it?

Club officials get elected, serve their time and get out of office often without learning what it's all about. The time and effort they devote certainly isn't worth the criticism they get. They depend on the specialists they hire. A golf operation private or public, if successful, is based on the classic pattern: organize, deputize, supervise. But you have to have the score in figures that can be read.

Despite the determination of the pros, superintendents and managers to make their phases of golf business something that can be forecast and measured definitely, golf club business still is pretty much of an art rather than a science.

I have to the left of my typewriter the annual statements of three clubs I know very well. Their officials are fine, successful businessmen. The clubs' figures are audited by the firms specializing in club accounting. And I defy anybody to discover actually the club's financial status and past year's operations from these statements.

So much for education in golf business. The member and the pay-play course golfer are getting educated the hard way. He (or

she) is paying more for golf.

Score on Farmers' Home Administration backstopping of golf course and other club facilities financing is that 767 country club projects involving \$102,192,970 have been approved since 1962. The program apparently comes to a halt with the \$18.3 million for the Federal fiscal year 1969-70.

FHA guaranteeing of country club loans had the poorest job of public information and publicity I've seen from a government agency in 50-some years of newspaper and magazine work.

FHA guarantees of country club and other recreation facility loans made from local banks were no more Government gifts than the Federal insurance of bank accounts.

It would be very interesting to get the box-score of the FHA country club loan guarantees telling the operating financial records of the clubs the Government guarantees brought into being; the investment and present appraised value of the club properties and the value and taxes of surrounding property at the time the recreation facility was started, and now.

There are reasons to believe that the FHA country club loan guarantees have been one of the smartest business and social jobs in Washington. But nobody may ever know about the results of the Farmers' Home Administration work in that field. Secretary of Agriculture **Clifford M. Hardin** and Farmers' Home Administrator **James V. Smith** themselves won't know, for the simple reason that whoever they're paying for public information service isn't much, if any, good. □

Panorama of Golf

A four-day conference and exhibition for professionals, superintendents, managers and golfers in the western states will take place March 12 to 15 at the Riviera Hotel & CC, Palm Springs, Calif.