



by Herb Graffis

SWINGING AROUND GOLF

Of golf babies and champions

Now the wail of the cry babies is loud in the land. In heartening, intelligent contrast is a message that makes news that the sports sections of newspapers, sports magazines and other so-called instruments of information have missed.

The good words of which all golfers of sound mind and body can be proud, were in the farewell address of **Hord Hardin**, retiring president of the United States Golf Assn. He told the USGA annual meeting delegates something about a menacing trend in golf.

"Golf has remained the charming, challenging, even frustrating game it is because wise men have fought off the constant harrassment of those who would change it—soften it—make it a game of less demanding skill. I cannot recall a single suggestion in my 13 years of committee service which was aimed at making the game harder."

"Aimed at making the game harder!" That means aimed at making the game so it determines genuine champions. The bellyaching is laughable. A genuine champion isn't afraid to have his championship qualifications tested by demonstrations of his skill. The USGA, Professional Golfers' Assn. and the Masters have so many ex-

emptions one is inclined to wonder who's left to qualify with a ball and clubs. Still, golfers who are supposed to have superior skill howl like infants for more exemptions.

The exemptions have cheapened championships as far as valid tests of competence are concerned. Lately, the kingergarten league pros have been moaning in print and blaming Joe Dey because they have to play or cruise six days a week. Nothing could show more sharply why the lads are bushers.

Tournament golf should heed Hardin's warning and beware of becoming like other merely mercenary sports that have become trades of high earning, but inferior in public service and entertainment.

Home pros aren't sympathetic to the boys on the fringes of the big time. Those professionals who make good know that there is no substitute for demonstrated merit in making a living. Tournament youngsters and some of the older ones, too, can't escape that test.

One part of the annual Green Committee Seminar of the Chicago District Golf Assn. was devoted to "Keeping membership apprised of green committee decisions." That is a subject which accounts for considerable bellyaching about superintendents. Yet the possibility often exists that the green committee rather than the superintendent primarily is to blame for defects in course conditions.

CDGA officials involved in exploring this situation are **Don Johnson** of Medinah, **Ralph Peterson** of River Forest, **Ken Klehr** of Ridgemoor and North Shore, **Bob Owen** of Flossmor and Ridge, **Dave Root** of Gary, **Bob Van Nest** of LaGrange and **Ralph Janetz** of Park Ridge. Perhaps the discussion they engineered will develop a program of member information that will be useful to clubs. But the chance is remote.

Over many years in golf business I've seen hundreds of campaigns for member understanding get a lot of talk, planning and hope from earnest green committee members but only a little brief action and slight,

Continued on page 16



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Continued from page 15

if any, beneficial result.

At a public course not in good condition players are somewhat resigned unless the layout is in terrible shape. When a fee course is not well-kept players stay away and the course owner goes into the red. Golfers at all sorts of pay-places

wish they belonged to private clubs where playing conditions are supposedly perfect.

But at too many private clubs when courses are unattractive it isn't altogether the fault of the superintendent or the green committee, but of careless, uneducated or hopelessly sloppy members. What can a committee do to "appraise" a member that he or she is the cause

of easily preventable unsightliness on the course?

When you've been around to a great many clubs during many years you learn that the quality of a club is invariably, accurately indicated by the appearance of its course and locker rooms.

If greens are pock-marked by unrepaired pitch shots and have cigarette butts scattered on them and if the tee areas are littered with bottles, cans, package wrappings and other trash, even though trash containers are handy, what's that do for the "class" of the club's membership?

Could people responsible for this disorder have the slightest interest in "Green Committee Decisions"? They are the sort who insist on playing on thawing greens, driving golf cars in the wrong places and when the ground is soggy, leaving unraked footprints in the bunkers and otherwise fouling a course.

Don't say it out loud but there also are course superintendents who are good hard workers and excellent grass nurses, yet don't get much ahead in their profession because they are sloppy.

Their tees stay chopped for days, divots are scattered like brown raw blobs. It used to be a player's job to replace divots but now it's usually the practice at first-class courses to repair divots with soil, seed and fertilizer applied by the maintenance staff.

Are sloppy edges of traps and weedy traps the result of inadequately informed members or of green committee's neglect in supervising course appearance or a superintendent's tendency to excuse sloppiness by labor and budget shortages? Or is it failure to direct available labor so it will make him and his course look good? Are streams and ponds polluted, weedy and generally looking like sections of sewers instead of beautiful elements of the course picture? The clean-ups effect wonderful improvements on courses, in natural features and in paint jobs. Whose fault is it when the course makes the members look bad?

Continued on page 18

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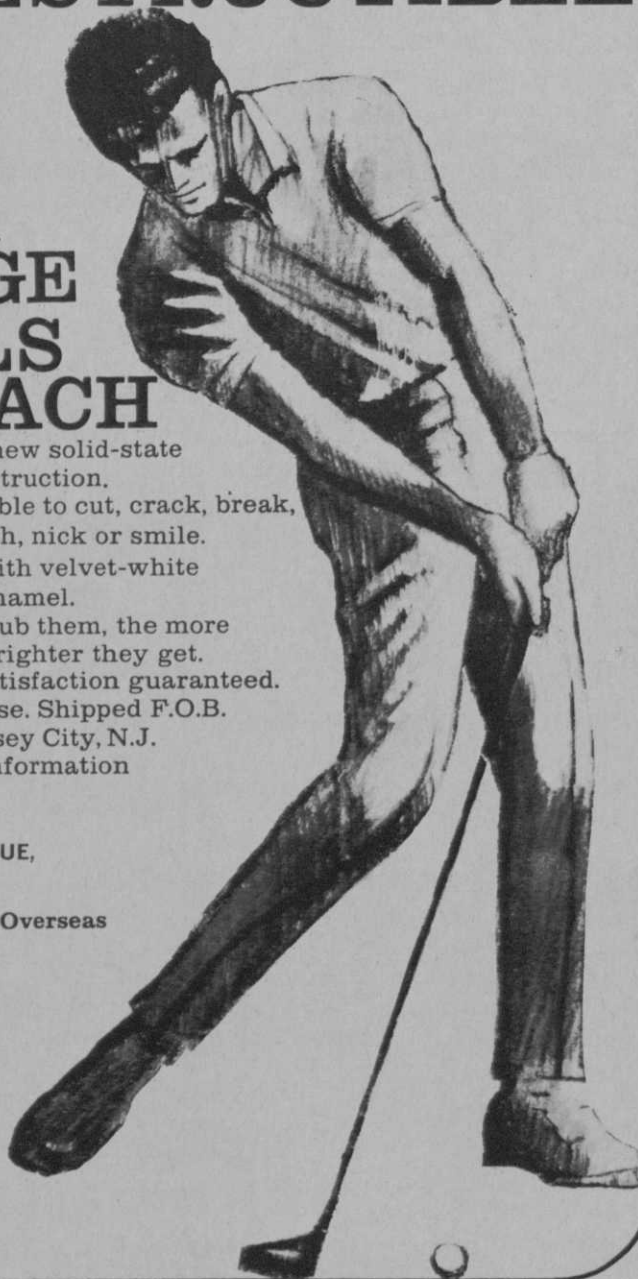
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Continued from page 16

Tournament pros on TV deserve thanks of golfers in general for two excellent jobs. One is in repairing ball-marks on greens. It's a valuable example. The other is the vivid schooling in the Rules of Golf that's done by **Jack Tuthill**, the tournament division field boss. Arrangement of the picture problem and Tuthill's wording make rules so understandable some viewers may even begin playing golf by the rules. In some cases I've seen and heard on TV Tuthill tells the rules better than the wording in the rule book.

Award of a British "Club Professional of the Year" prize in Britain had one veteran, A.S. Watson of Barnard Castle, Durham, recalling his work 50 years ago:

"As professional and greenkeeper at this then nine-hole course, I cleaned the clubhouse, including the windows, everyday and saw that there was a supply of clean towels available. In the summer I cut the greens, tees and grass bunkers, at first with a hand mower, walking over 30 miles a week. I had to catch the farmer's horse before I could cut the fairways. I cleaned up after the sheep, cattle and horses, took the green fees and dues, tried to help the members and boys from the local school to become golfers, filled sand boxes with sea sand before wooden tees came into use. In the winter I overhauled and cleaned the drainage system (very important). I also carried hundreds and hundreds of gallons of water in three-gallon cans until I thought my arms were coming out of their sockets.

"I played off a handicap of two but after all this I found that golf and work did not mix and decided to work by designing and laying out an extra nine holes, with the help of two boys and total labor cost of the equivalent of about \$500. I also painted the outside of the clubhouse."

That's the way to hold a job, friends. □